

**Approval of Minutes -**

Commissioner Sanborn made a motion to approve January 7, 2020 Meeting Minutes.  
Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed 3-0.

**Public Comment –**

Rep. Lawrence Lockman from Bradley addressed the issue of Commissioner Baldacci's question last week if refugees are a net plus or a net minus in terms of their contribution to Maine's economy.

Rep. Lockman has researched data. He was unable to find applicable data from Maine Catholic Charities on the education attainment levels or average household income of the refugees that has re-settled in Maine. Rep Lockman was informed that the organization does not keep track of those numbers. So in the absence of Maine-specific data, Rep. Lockman relied on national data derived from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) 2016 report which covered fiscal years 2011-2015. Rep. Lockman states that the statistics found on ORR's 2016 report, was not favorable. The bottom line is that open-borders advocates have failed to bear the burden of proving more refugee resettlement is good for Maine. Rep. Lockman states that considering the fact that we have life-long Mainers languishing on Medicaid waitlists, homeless veterans freezing to death in their sleeping bags, and low-income Maine seniors being evicted from under-funded nursing homes, why is it a good idea for us to subsidize the resettlement of poor people from foreign countries here?

Commissioner Baldacci asked Rep. Lockman if he understands the difference between refugee's vs asylum seekers. Refugees have been vetted and can begin work immediately.

Responding to "life-long Mainers languishing on Medicaid waitlists, homeless veterans freezing to death in their sleeping bags, and low-income Maine seniors being evicted from under-funded nursing homes that the last eight years under Gov. LePage funding was cut for DHHS and Medicaid.

Angela Okafor – Bangor City Councilor came to America as an immigrant. Councilor Okafor is insulted by Rep. Lockman's remarks stating that refugees are coming over uneducated. She for one, owns three businesses, her husband is a pharmacist and they have three children. Councilor Okafor states that she has not taken a dime from this economy. Councilor Okafor is here to diffuse Rep. Lockman's statements.

Marwa Hassanien, a resident of Bangor. My husband and I moved to the Bangor area in 2005 because of it being a medically underserved area. We have three children here. There are many beautiful stories to be told. It is a mutual benefit to have immigrants come and serve the community that are underserved. Marwa stated the following:

*"This country is a nation of immigrants. Other than the native peoples, every one of our families came here from somewhere else. As we have developed as a nation, each of us has contributed to the growth and prosperity of America in our own special way. And our nation have been most successful and most true to its ideals when that prosperity has been shared among all of us. We have welcomed those who seek the American dream, built our communities and strengthen our economy. More importantly, we have served as a place of refuge and a beacon of hope for those fleeing persecution and danger in their native countries, leading the world by example.*

*This was the ideals of our founding fathers, both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson viewed the United States as a place for refugees. "I had always hoped that this land might become a safe and agreeable Asylum to the virtuous and persecuted part of mankind, to whatever nation they might belong," wrote Washington. This definitely rings true today in Maine. Our state has welcoming and vibrant communities, safe and close-knit neighborhoods, and beautiful natural environment. It's a great place to live for many, including refugees and other immigrants. It is also much needed for our struggling economy."*

Because there has been so much misinformation and lack of information with Catholic Charities Maine and the refugee resettlement all over social media, a friend of mind – Director Hannah DeAngelis sent the following statement that she wanted to have shared.

*"Catholic Charities Maine is Maine's only refugee resettlement agency. We believe that individuals fleeing violence and persecution have the right to safety, security, and welcome in their new communities. It is our role to support folks in their resettlement and integration in Maine.*

*In late September, Executive Order 1388 was issued asking refugee resettlement agencies to gain state and county level consent for refugee resettlement. Since that time Catholic Charities has been meeting with officials across the state educating officials about the resettlement program and asking for consent for resettlement. We obtained consent from the State of Maine, Cumberland County and the City of Portland by the end of December 2019. On January 15<sup>th</sup>, an injunction was put on EO 1388 that halted the implementation of the order.*

*Resettlement agencies nationally have been instructed to pause on the process of seeking consent and continue to resettle refugees as we have previously: based on family relationship, availability of house, and employment opportunities.*

**Public Comment – Continued:**

*Refugees resettled through our agency have been processed through the State Department and the UNHCR overseas and come to Maine because of family or community ties. In the last five years, we have resettled refugees in Cumberland, Kennebec and Androscoggin counties:*

*Currently CCM has no plans to resettle refugees in Penobscot or Hancock County. We will continue to prioritize communities where new refugees will be reunified with their family members and supported by access to the services and resources they need for successful resettlement. In the fiscal year (since October 1, 2019) we have only resettled nine refugees. We anticipate resettling less than 100 people total in this fiscal year. In FY19, we resettled 140 people total statewide.*

*CCM will continue to support the refugee resettlement program in Maine and advocate for refugees to be welcomed into communities where they can reunify with family, have access to language and education resources, afford housing and seek meaningful work opportunities.*

*Same as true with other immigrant statuses. There are other immigrants who choose to come to Maine for many other groups or new residents do. They come here for "The way life should be." Over the past years, a number of individuals seeking asylum have joined our communities in Maine. These people are also fleeing violence and persecution, they have just entered the US through a different process and once in the country are seeking asylum or protection. That "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution" is enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and supported by the 1951 Geneva Convention. These individuals are not eligible for any federal supports funded by the State Department or Office of Refugee Resettlement until they are granted asylum."*

Amy Roeder, a citizen of Bangor stated that she moved to Maine from Minnesota. What she had witnessed from her small town in Minnesota was a town dying and facing economic ruin. The town had a turkey processing plant that was outsourcing jobs. The first wave of refugee resettlement and all of a sudden there were more jobs and the economy picked up a little more. The second wave were Mexican immigrants and again, the economy improved a little more with downtown has more individual businesses open by immigrants. The latest wave have been Somali immigrants coming in and the last time I was home the downtown was full of new businesses. There are people walking around and the economic future of Kandiyohi County is looking up. This County was profiled in the New York Times and are being a model for how you accept immigrants and refugees in your community. Amy spoke of statistics that a 30 year study in European and Western European Countries that shows within five years immigrants and refugees improve the economy of the countries they immigrate to.

**Public Comment – Continued:**

Katharine Appleyard, a citizen of Bangor and business owner. She and her husband chose to move back to Bangor after living in Washington State. We were thrilled and beyond delighted to move back to family and community to raise our family here in family. Katharine wanted to stand up and support Angela and Marwa and Amy and not agree with Rep Lockman's comments. I would also lend myself more research and data if this discussion is continued. I support their inclusion in our area.

Stephen Brough, a resident of Bangor and from the Libertarian Party. Stephen prefaced his remarks that this has absolutely nothing to do with race, color, religious, immigration status and creed, but everything to do with financial aspects. As a county, towns, and state we have a responsibility to ourselves first to ensure the success of the people that are currently here. PC is a poor county and indeed we're going to hear from Sheriff asking for money that we don't have for a jail that we badly need. We have schools struggling for funding in budgets. Towns trying to expand bus structure. As a working class individual Stephen wants to know where this money coming from. Who is going to cover additional staffing for schools?

Dina Yacoubagha, a citizen of Bangor, immigrant and Social Worker. Dina has been here for 14 years and her husband is a professional in the community. Dina has listened to the statements of concerned citizen worried about refugees resettling in the Bangor area. The refugees did not leave by choice, no one wants to leave home away from their families and the roof over their heads. Following the news on war and conflicts, this will not get any better. Rather more civilians will be forced out of their homes and countries to escape persecution, torture and death. Those refugees seeks liberty and want to resettle and live peacefully with their families and adhere to the laws of the country they have fled to.

Rep Lockman refers in his statement that Maine is struggling to meet the needs of its own population and that bringing more refugees will take away from the funds that could be allocated to help its struggling citizens.

Dina stated even though refugees need help the first few months of arrival, these refugees are hardworking individuals, many of them are entrepreneurs. They are consumers, taxpayers who will contribute to the growth of the economy and create jobs.

The US Refugee Resettlement Program is designed to help refugees achieve self-sufficiency quickly. Data shows in 2016, over 80% of the refugees in the international rescue committee's early employment program were economically self-sufficient within six months. Refugees pay on average \$21K more in taxes than they receive in government benefits. (rescu.org)

**Public Comment – Continued:**

Dina continued with a statement on how funding for refugee resettlement is handled.

*"The US government works with the United Nations to provide resettlement opportunities in the United States. Catholic Charities Maine (CCM) Refugee and Immigration Services (RIS) has held the federal contract in Maine to be the primary provider of resettlement services to refugees since 1975. Every refugee is given \$975 one time by the federal government to support their resettlement in the first 90 days. This money is supposed to cover initial rent, food, clothing, furniture and any other immediate needs. It is the role of the resettlement agency to support refugees in making these funds cover those needs. The funds are supplemented with in-kind clothing and furniture donations from Maine's generous communities. The resettlement agency receives \$1,000 of administrative funding for every refugee arrival in order to provide intensive case management for 90 days. This funding comes through the State Department. Since October 1, 2019. We have only resettled 9 refugees. This means our agency has received only \$9,000 for our resettlement program. CCM Refugee and Immigration Services additionally holds several grants through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) through the Federal Administration of Families and Children. These federal grants support services to refugees for up to five years after arrival including employment services, services for older refugees, and health literacy services. CCM RIS utilizes zero state dollars to administer these programs. Overall, Refugee Resettlement is a federal program designed to temporarily host refugee families while they transition to self-sufficiency. Because the program is only partially funded by the government, CCM RIS depends on local volunteers, in-kind support, and cash donations. Catholic Charities Maine services over 50K Mainers each year through 25 programs. Last year the refugee program served just under 300 immigrants. This far below 1% of the total population served by Catholic Charities Maine programs statewide."*

Dina states if you go to the Portland area there is a totally different picture. The mall is flourishing with people buying, and restaurants full of customers dining.

Laurie Osher, resident of Orono. I appreciate you giving citizens the opportunities to respond to the statement of immigration and refugees. Laurie is the grandchild of three refugees of Eastern Europe before our country started putting quotas on how many people can enter from other countries. Laurie respects free speech, but unfortunately that can lead to a lot of negativity about people who are different. Laurie ended with the statement from Rabbi Hillel, "If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?" In closing Laurie wants to support the resettlement of refugees in Penobscot County as she feels it will make our County better.

**Public Comment – Continued:**

Doug Dunbar, resident of Hermon reported that “refugee” means fleeing persecution and violence. Doug feels that we are a good welcoming people and we will reject Rep. Lockman’s philosophy.

Doug made mention to the recent death in the jail. Responding to Board of Visitors looking out for the well-being of the inmates. Doug would like the Commissioners to add another layer of oversight so that the County Commissioners could see reports from law enforcement agencies if there is a serious incident in the jail.

All three Commissioners thanked everyone for their comments regarding this discussion and in keeping them informed. Commissioner Baldacci feels that refugees can make the pie bigger. They’ve done that for over a hundred years. Commissioner Baldacci is also concerned that the political issue is that somehow helping other people, hurts themselves. Commissioner Baldacci feels we need a strong statement that refugees are welcome to Penobscot County. It’s not just about money, but what kind of people we are. Right now the executive order is not in effect and the Penobscot County Commissioners would like to show their support.

**Sheriff’s Update –**

- Sheriff spoke about an event (Volunteer Literacy Awards Ceremony) he attended years ago with many folks who came to our county. Their stories were told of how and why they came to our County; of leaving their homes and families and bringing with them their skills and talents. Sheriff says this is so much more than a political issue. We should support and celebrate some of the stories we heard today.
- Sheriff stated that today’s jail population is 190, in-house with 43 boarded out to other county jails. There are no federal inmates, no county swaps and 97 inmates in Pre-Trial Services.
- Sheriff sadly reported that there was a tragic death in the jail. He cannot report many details since Bangor PD, Sheriff’s Office and DOC are investigating the death. What can be said is a 34 year old female took her own life. NAMI states that every 36 hours a Mainer takes their own life.
- Sheriff states that there is still a struggle with staffing shortages. The Department is conducting exit interviews to see what are the leading causes to leave the positions are. This is a challenging job and it doesn’t help with forced overtime and long shift hours.
- The Sheriff’s Department will roll their first Day Reporting Program this week. This is for low risk, no risk individuals who will have the opportunity to attend without having to go spend time in jail. Currently there are 12 signed up.

**Sheriff's Update – Continued:**

We are in hopes that the number will grow in the future.

- Sheriff's Department is in the process of replacing the patrol vehicle that was totaled during a snow storm.
- Sheriff will be hosting the Maine Sheriff's Association Conference in Penobscot County again this year. (March 25 and March 26).
- Sheriff spoke of his meeting with WBRC last week and looking at some of the draft structures that were presented.

**UT Update –**

- Director Shaw Weeks presented the regional animal control agreements with the Towns of Orono and Veazie. Commissioner Sanborn made a motion to approve the contracts as presented. Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Vote to approve passed 3-0. Signed.
- George Buswell reported that in the past storm a contractor broke down on the Grand Lake Road in Matagamon. George received a call a few hours later that he was back to plowing. The biggest problem is that there is no cell service in that area, so when something happens it takes a while for communication to be relayed.
- George reported in Prentiss that they are running low enough on sand that we need to put up more. George is requesting approval to change the formula similar to the Millinocket Lake Road that had been changed a few years back. Commissioner Sanborn moved to approve a new formula for Prentiss for next year's budget. Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Motion approved 3-0.

**Public Hearing – Special Amusement Permit Sawmill Grill, IP 3**

- Commissioner Baldacci opened the hearing at 10:00 a.m. Director Shaw Weeks presented the Commissioners with a permit to be signed for Sawmill Grill in IP 3 for comedy and live music. Hearing no comments from the Public opposed, Commissioner Sanborn made a motion to approve the permit. Commissioner Cushing seconded the motion. Motion to approve passed 3-0. Signed. Hearing was closed at 10:01 a.m.

**PRCC Update –**

- Director Chris Lavoie presented the Aroostook 911 contract to be signed. Signed.
- Chris reported the RFP for the radio system has been sent to the attorney for review. Bill Collins reported that pending further modifications from the attorney's we are ready to move forward. Commissioner Cushing made a motion to approve the RFP for Radio Systems to go out subject to additional modifications from the attorney's. Commissioner Sanborn seconded the motion. Motion approved 3-0.
- Chris is still writing the RFP for a project manager for the radio upgrade and will present for review.
- In 2019 Penobscot County was the busiest 9-1-1 Center in the State of Maine with 63,831 9-1-1 calls, 1,523,360 radio traffic calls and 289,301 business line calls. Chris commends the men and women upstairs with their work ethic. You can see they are very busy. Thank you to the Commissioners for your support. It is an exciting time for us with the different projects taking place.

**EMA Update –**

- Deputy Brad Nuding reported the following:
  - The airport will have a full scale active shooter scenario exercise in the spring
  - US Post Office in Hampden has reached out for emergency planning and guidance for their facility
  - Emera Maine is still trying to build their relationships with local Emergency management directors and coordination especially for extended power outages. There are still concerns how Emera does restoration priorities for municipalities and for critical infrastructure within those municipalities.
  - As for training and exercises - there are two set up: cyber security for critical infrastructure for all levels of government for security in which we're hosting; and economic recovery from a disaster – trying to strengthen the private sectors we have.

**Administration Update –**

- Administrator Bill Collins reported that there will be a workshop next Monday with the City of Bangor officials.
- Reservations have been made for Commissioner Cushing and Treasurer John Hiatt to attend the Chamber's dinner January 24<sup>th</sup>.



**Administration Update – Continued:**

- Bill shared an email with Clair Mundell and Dr. Bill Wood and their positions on the refugee resettlement.
- Mr. Don Dudley would like to provide an update on the Matagamon Dam Repairs at one of our Commissioners meeting.
- Tomorrow is Human Relations Director Erika Honey's first year anniversary.
- Bill and Erika will be having contract negotiations for the General Contract on Friday.
- Bill and Erika will be holding their quarterly review for workers comp on Friday as well.
- It looks as though the Monday meeting with AG Frey and our Attorney Shayna Sacks may be rescheduled
- Last Thursday the County closed at 3:00 pm because of the snowstorm
- Maine County Commissioners are holding a conference call today.
- Shaw Weeks has been scheduled to attend the marijuana workshop that will be held in Augusta next Tuesday.
- Commissioner Baldacci stated that he has been contacted by Mike Michaud to expand broadband in the Katahdin Region.
- Payroll Change Notices signed for: None
- Payroll Warrant to be approved for: \$249,584.60
- A/P Warrant to be approved for FY19 Paydate 1/21/20: \$ 27,959.46
- A/P Warrant to be approved for FY20 Paydate 1/17/20: \$ 925.86
- A/P Warrant to be approved for FY20 Paydate 1/21/20: \$24,019.38
- Unorganized Territory Warrant to be approved for: \$ 14,729.67
- Unorganized Territory TIF Warrant to be approved for: \$ 7,914.08

**Executive Session**---Commissioner Cushing made a motion to go into Executive Session at 10:30 a.m., under 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (D) Contract Matter. Commissioner Sanborn seconded the motion. Motion approved 3-0. Present were: Commissioners, Administrator Bill Collins, Finance Director Judy Alexander, Treasurer John Hiatt, Sheriff Troy Morton and Attorney Ed Bearor. Session ended at 10:45 a.m. No votes taken.

**Executive Session**---Commissioner Cushing made a motion to go into Executive Session at 10:46 a.m., under 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (D) Contract Matter. Commissioner Sanborn seconded the motion. Motion approved 3-0. Present were: Commissioners, Bill Collins, Sheriff Troy Morton, Deputy Chief Bill Birch. Session ended at 11:12 a.m. No votes taken.

**Executive Session**---Commissioner Cushing made a motion to go into Executive Session at 11:13 a.m., under 1 M.R.S.A. § 405 (6) (D) Contract Matter. Commissioner Sanborn seconded the motion. Motion approved 3-0. Present were: Commissioners, Bill Collins, Finance Director Judy Alexander and DA Executive Secretary Kristine Higgins. Session ended at 11:23 a.m. No votes taken.

**Meeting Adjourned-**

Commissioner Cushing moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:26 a.m. with no further business on the agenda. Commissioner Sanborn seconded the motion. Moved to approve 3-0

**Certified By:**

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Administrator, William Collins

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Peter K. Baldacci, Chairman

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Laura J. Sanborn, Commissioner

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Andre E. Cushing, III, Commissioner