

Berkeley County Commission Meeting

August 7, 2025

400 W. Stephen Street, Suite 205

9:30 A.M.

Martinsburg, WV 25401

Present:

G. Edgar Gochenour, President

R. Stephen Catlett, Vice President

James P. Whitacre, Commissioner

Gary A. Wine, County Administrator

Aleah Tucker, Executive Assistant

Commissioner Boyd and Commissioner Hardy were not present for the meeting.

Also Present: Anthony Delligatti, Legal Director; Will Lorensen, Fiduciary Supervisor; Martin Roberts, Fire Chief; Chad Winebrenner, Deputy County Administrator

Re: Call to Order

President Gochenour called the August 7, 2025, Berkeley County Commission meeting to Order at 9:35 A.M.

Re: Items from the Public

Dorothy Smith, a resident of Chestnut Hills Estate spoke to the Commission in regard to the ATV Ordinance that was on their agenda to approve. Ms. Smith stated her approval of being added to this Ordinance.

Re: Approval of Agenda

Vice President Catlett made a motion to approve the Agenda for the August 7, 2025, Berkeley County Commission meeting. Commissioner Whitacre seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Re: Consent Agenda

1. Purchase Order Log

There were no questions regarding the Purchase Order Log.

2. Internal Budget Revisions

There were no internal budget revisions to be addressed

3. Changes in Status

President Gochenour stated that there was a hiring recommendation received from The Honorable Sheriff Rob Blair, Sheriff for Billie Jean Munson as an Administrative Assistant with an annual salary of \$36,615 effective 8/11/2025.

President Gochenour stated that there was a change in status received from The Honorable Rob Blair, Sheriff for Julie Davis to be promoted from Conservator & Estate Manager to Tax Office Assistant Director with a salary change of \$53,209.80 to \$72,000 effective 9/1/2025.

President Gochenour stated that there was a change in status received from The Honorable Rob Blair, Sheriff for Ryan Kolb to be promoted from Deputy 3 to Corporal with a salary change from \$70,801 to \$74,043 effective 7/30/2025.

President Gochenour stated that there was a change in status received from The Honorable Rob Blair, Sheriff for Chris Farmer, Lieutenant for a step increase for years of service with an annual salary change from \$91,132 to \$92,855 effective 8/1/2025.

President Gochenour stated that there was a change in status received from The Honorable Rob Blair, Sheriff for David Ritchie, Sergeant for a step increase for years of service with an annual salary change from \$79,718 to \$81,959 effective 8/1/2025.

President Gochenour stated that there was a change in status received from The Honorable Rob Blair, Sheriff for Nathaniel Chronister, Sergeant for a step increase for years of service with an annual salary change from \$79,718 to \$81,959 effective 8/1/2025.

President Gochenour stated that there was a change in status received from The Honorable Rob Blair, Sheriff for Ralph Pierce, Corporal for a step increase for years of service with an annual salary change from \$79,713 to \$81,207 effective 8/1/2025.

President Gochenour stated that there was a change in status received from The Honorable Rob Blair, Sheriff for Tyler Turner, Deputy 3 for a step increase for years of service with an annual salary change from \$70,801 to \$72,775 effective 8/1/2025.

President Gochenour stated that there was a change in status received from The Honorable Rob Blair, Sheriff for Jason Miller, Deputy 2 for a grade increase to Deputy 3 with an annual salary change from \$64,446 to \$67,668 effective 8/1/2025.

President Gochenour stated that there was a change in status received from Martin Roberts, Fire Chief for Justin Murphy, Fire Fighter 3 for a grade increase to Fire Fighter 4 with an annual salary change from \$69,521 to \$74,711 effective 8/1/2025

President Gochenour stated that there was a change in status received from Martin Roberts, Fire Chief for Brian Dehaven, Fire Fighter 3 for a step increase for years of service with an annual salary change from \$67,496 to \$69,521 effective 8/1/2025

4. Approval of Minutes

There were no changes to the July 31, 2025, Berkeley County Commission meeting minutes.

5. Letter of Endorsement Sale of Beer/Wine/Alcohol Private Event Hosted by K&B Events, LLC DBA Toast & Sip

6. Request from Chestnut Hills Estates to be Added to ATV Ordinance

Re: Consent Agenda Approval

Vice President Catlett made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda for the August 7, 2025, Berkeley County Commission meeting. Commissioner Whitacre seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

President Gochenour stated that the Commission is thankful for so many years of service in reference to the employees who had a step and/or grade increase due to years of service.

Re: Correction of Assessment Logs, Apportionment of Assessments, Deconsolidation and Consolidation of Properties Applications – Assessor's Office

The Honorable Larry Hess appeared before the Commission and presented six (6) Personal Tax Exonerations due to Office Error totaling \$1,147.52.

Commissioner Whitacre made a motion to approve the presented Personal Tax Exonerations. Vice President Catlett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Hess presented eleven (11) Real Estate Tax Exonerations due to Office Error totaling \$12,168.

Commissioner Whitacre made a motion to approve the presented Real Estate Tax Exonerations. Vice President Catlett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Hess presented one (1) Apportionment of Assessment per Final Divorce Order.

Vice President Catlett made a motion to approve the Apportionment of Assessment per Final Divorce Order. Commissioner Whitacre seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Re: Board Meeting Reports

Commissioner Whitacre stated that he went to the fairgrounds the previous night. The event was well attended with great weather. Mr. Whitacre commented that the kids did well with presenting their livestock.

Vice President Catlett stated that he went to the fairgrounds as well and got to talk with many citizens which was great. Mr. Catlett had a storm water and sewer meeting this past week. Sewer has fired off with their plant last week. The two biggest issues with continuing are The Woods and Ecolab. Both of these locations will hopefully be resolved by the end of August. We are implementing the first membrane system in our sewer system and it is making our water cleaner than our current drinking water. Vice President Catlett stated that Richard Lewis is optimistic we will be getting a new permit soon. Vice President Catlett concluded with stating that the volunteers down at youth fair are working hard and making the fair great.

President Gochenour stated that he had a meeting Monday in which he met to discuss the North Public Safety Complex. President Gochenour and County Administrator Gary Wine toured the MW Studios team through some of Berkeley County's current fire stations. After meeting with the MW Studios group our teams have been impressed with them so far. President Gochenour also attended a CEC and Lance construction meeting, in which he met with for the Inwood Park project. This project is moving along. Mr. Gochenour stated there was a meeting today for business development. Mr. Gochenour stated there is a "Strive for less than 5 days of Absence" campaign that Berkeley County Schools are running. Mr. Gochenour also went to Youth Fair last night and will go back Friday. He congratulated the

kids and families participating in the fair. Mr. Gochenour stated he spent time with Sleep in Heavenly Peace, which is an organization that provides bedding for children in our Tri County Area. This organization just did their 500th bed. President Gochenour thanked them for their work.

Re: Board and Commission Vacancies

President Gochenour stated that a new application was received from Bradley Wright for the BC 911 Advisory Board and requested that he be scheduled for an interview.

Re: Will Lorensen, Fiduciary Supervisor- August Estate Settlement

Mr. Lorensen presented 35 estates for final settlement.

Commissioner Whitacre motioned to approve the 35 estates presented. Vice President Catlett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Re: Will Lorensen, Fiduciary Supervisor- Estate Hearing- Estate of Joseph Franklin Caton

Will Lorensen, Fiduciary Supervisor, presented that both parties were present without legal counsel and opening the hearing. Mr. Lorensen stated that three and a half (3 ½) years after Joseph Franklin Caton's passing, his daughter came to open the Estate. Mr. Lorensen stated that his office was presented with a will that was unproven and unrecorded, but valid. Janet Marlene Everhart declared herself as sole heir. Jasmine Caton is filing to remove Ms. Everhart due to delinquency and failure to add Ms. Caton as an heir.

Ms. Caton and Ms. Everhart were both given opportunity to speak and decided not initially. After Mr. Lorensen made the request before the Commission, Ms. Everhart asked to speak. Ms. Everhart was sworn in and gave her side of the backstory on this property. She mentioned she had come to the county buildings several times attempting to make sure the processes were followed. She was given the direction to go to Mr. Caton's banks as his administrator and when she did, the accounts had already been closed.

President Gochenour asked Ms. Everhart if there was a reason that from June 2021 she did not follow through with required documents.

Ms. Everhart stated she did come here with all the documents she had. She was given advice that she needed to file the will. The person who worked with her provided her 5 copies then kept the original. She was unaware why her address was returned back to the offices when the county tried to notify her of the delinquencies. On July 8, 2022, she sold the house. She stated she is being taxed for the property even though she doesn't currently own it.

Mr. Lorensen responded that there is an attachment in the read ahead where Ms. Everhart signed an acknowledgement that she needed to provide appraisal information. The unofficial will is on record with the County Clerk, but it is unproven. What is to be decided today, is that Ms. Everhart is the sole administrator of the estate, should that continue? She states she completed all 3 steps of probate, but the Fiduciary office cannot prove that. Mr. Lorensen presented the petition, which is asking for the removal of Ms. Everhart and adding Ms. Caton.

Commissioner Whitacre made a motion to adopt the petition as presented. Vice President Catlett seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Re: Martin Roberts, Fire Chief- Berkeley County Fire Update

Martin Roberts, Fire Chief, presented that it has been a little over 30 days since the Fire Department went on 24-hour shifts with career staffing for firefighters. All fire districts in the county are now receiving more immediate responses. The total number of calls for the month of July was 360. The county is currently capturing data now better than ever, which will help with future grants. Lieutenant Gorman was promoted and came into the office, which has been a big administrative help. Chief Roberts thanked the Commission for making this transition happen. The collaboration with the Fire Board and VFDs is making this transition as good for the citizens of the county as possible.

President Gochenour stated that it is important that as our county grows, our services also grow.

Re: Will Lorensen, Fiduciary Supervisor- Estate Hearing- Estate of Janet B. Schoening

Will Lorensen, Fiduciary Supervisor stated that all parties were present and he presented the petition. Neither of the parties decided to speak during the hearing.

Vice President Catlett made a motion to accept last will and testament in solemn form. Commissioner Whitacre seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Re: Chad Winebrenner- Deputy County Administrator- Worker's Compensation & Long-Term Leave Policy

Chad Winebrenner, Deputy County Administrator stated that two (2) weeks ago there was an unofficial practice eliminated, and he was tasked to return with a new policy. Mr. Winebrenner presented the new policy. New policy adds long-term leave as an option to receive 34% of a work week's pay, to supplement loss of income while being paid 66% Workers Compensation income. The numbers presented are rounding in favor of the employee. Vice President Catlett asked about if this method is making the employees whole. Mr. Winebrenner responded by stating it will keep employees at 100%. County Administrator Gary Wine mentioned that there is also a new option for employees to use Short-term Disability if they signed up for it through our Health Package.

Vice President Catlett made a motion to approve this new policy. Commissioner Whitacre seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Re: Items from the Public

Shawn Wilt appeared before the Commission and stated he did his own personal poll and spoke to 317 people and asked questions such as do they feel the growth in Berkeley County is sustainable and is growth being properly managed? Eighty percent (80%) said "no". Then he asked them if they attended County Commission meetings? Only 1 person said they had attended a Commission meeting. When asked why not, the primary response was that the meeting times conflict with work schedules.

Z "Zondria" Lansdowne appeared before the Commission and stated wanting the Commission's help in getting her free grocery store restarted. She is in Need of a building or space. Her store closed because she could not afford rent and utilities. Vice President Catlett asked how much a month she could afford. Z stated she can afford up to \$2,000 a month.

Re: Recess

Commissioner Whitacre made a motion to Recess the August 7, 2025, Berkeley County Commission meeting.

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Aleah Tucker". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "A" and a checkmark-like flourish at the end.

Aleah Tucker, Executive Assistant