

Commissioners' Workshop Meeting
Tuesday, October 12, 2004

I. CALL TO ORDER:

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, October 12, 2004, at 10:30 AM, in the thirteenth floor Board Room of the Berks County Services Center, pursuant to due notice to Board members and the public.

Commissioner Chair Judith L. Schwank called the meeting to order with Commissioner Thomas Gajewski and Commissioner Mark L. Scott in attendance. Also present were County Administrator, William E. Dennis, Solicitor, Alan Miller, Esq. and Chief Clerk Terry Styer.

Commissioner Schwank opened the meeting with a moment of silence and Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

II. PROCLAMATIONS/CERTIFICATES/PRESENTATIONS:

Commissioner Gajewski presented a Proclamation to Berks Women In Crisis proclaiming October 2004 as DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH and encouraged the citizens of Berks County to support the efforts of the Berks Women in Crisis to end domestic violence. Linda Patton, Executive Director was present representing the organization and discuss an upcoming event called "An Empty Place at the Table", sponsored by the Berks Women in Crisis, which is an exhibit that memorializes and celebrates the lives of women and children from Berks County murdered in acts of domestic violence.

Commissioner Scott emphasized the support needed for this organization and reported that in an attempt to prevent acts of domestic violence, the County has increased funding for counseling of those citizens with a pre-disposition for violence. He also mentioned that it is unfortunate that some individuals take advantage of the law and Protection from Abuse filings and use the action to add fuel to domestic disputes. Commissioner Gajewski mentioned that as Prothonotary he witnessed the numerous occasions where individuals filing the PFA orders failed to show up for the hearings. Maryann Sutton, the current Prothonotary reported that the number of PFA's her office handles had doubled and reported that she has seen individuals use the PFA process as a wedge in custody battles. Commissioner Schwank reported that the County has made extraordinary efforts to streamline the PFA process. She said the protection is there and it works for those that need it and that the County has pledged to work on Domestic Violence issues.

Commissioner Schwank presented a Proclamation for the 1st place Search for Excellence Award received by the Berks County Master Gardeners. Present to receive the proclamation was Elizabeth Findlay, Master Gardner Coordinator/Horticulture Program Assistant and Kathleen Neiman, Master Gardner. Commissioner Schwank also recognized her Administrative Assistant Sandra Stief (Master Gardener) for her efforts and involvement in this worthy program.

Commissioner Schwank also presented a Proclamation for the 90th Anniversary of the Berks County Penn State Cooperative Extension Association.

III. REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioner Gajewski

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing Edward McCann to sign On-The Job Training Contracts and Subsidized Employment Agreements per list attached to these minutes dated 9/27/04.

Commissioner Scott

- A. Adopt Resolution approving a grant agreement between Berks County Office of Aging and the PA Department of Aging to receive funding under the Tobacco/Bridge Grant program in the amount of \$57,057 for the period of 7/1/04 – 6/30/05.
- B. Adopt Resolution authorizing the re- appointment of Victoria Kintzer, and Dr. Robert Ziegenfus, to the Berks County Agricultural Land Preservation Board for a three year term ending 12/31/07.

Commissioner Scott indicated that he had received a letter from the Home Builders Association stating their objection to County Bond issues to pay for Ag Land Preservation.

IV. OTHER REQUESTS:

Solicitor:

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing execution of Amendment to Lease by and between the County of Berks and Francesco and Ilda H. Avanzato to amend Lease Agreement dated October 24, 1996 to lease property located at 242 Exeter Street, Reading, Pennsylvania and currently used for a District Justice Office.

Budget Director:

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing 2004 budget transfers in the amount of \$43,500 per listing dated October 7, 2004. Bob Patrizio, Budget Director was present to discuss the budget transfers. Commissioner Gajewski expressed his appreciation to Bob for the many late nights he has been spending dealing with the County budget.

Contract Coordinator:

- A. Motion authorizing execution of Contract Agreements/ Amendments as furnished by the Contract Coordinator, per attached listing dated, October 7, 2004.

V. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Administrator Bill Dennis gave the board an update on the progress of the Elections Office. He indicated that the absentee ballots are caught up and will continue to be entered into the system as they come in. He indicated that registrations continue to be processed, county employees and other volunteers are getting scheduled to assist during the day, evenings and weekends and is confident that the job will get done. He announced that Poll workers are needed for work at the polls on Election Day.

Commissioner Schwank reported that the County will receive \$15,000 from the state to help defray the costs of overtime and that four new lines and PC's have been added to the State's system along with four more that are expected to be available soon.

Commissioner Gajewski reported that along with the \$15,000 the State Department of Elections will be providing personal trainers to assist with the additional employees entering on the Sure system.

Commissioner Scott stated that he felt this has the makings of a controversial election including challenges to absentee balloting, provisional ballots and the number of voter registration forms including those allegedly fraudulent forms. He indicated the continuing indication for potential fraud seems to come from a registration drive by Voting is Power and suggested that there have been allegations of a connection with them to an Islamic Extremist Group with the motive and intent to bog down the elections system. The commissioner suggested that this potential issue should be reviewed by the Attorney General's Office and recommendations made to the Board of Elections. On this subject, Commissioner Schwank noted that while there may be fraudulent registrations, most are innocent mistakes and the fact that the staff is catching these errors; it should assure us that the system is working. Commissioner Scott agreed that the system is working but these issues should be made public and those involved in any fraudulent actions should be held accountable.

VI. CITIZEN COMMENT/BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:15 AM.