

Commissioners' Workshop Meeting
Tuesday, November 9, 2004

I. CALL TO ORDER:

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, November 9, 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. The minutes of the November 4, 2004 Commissioners meeting were approved as published.

II. PROCLAMATIONS/CERTIFICATES/PRESENTATIONS:

Kurt D. Zwinkl, Executive Director of the Schuylkill River National & State Heritage Area, representing the Schuylkill River Greenway Association, presented a funding request of \$100,000 (over a three period) for the completion of a section of the Thun Trail which runs between Reading and Pottstown. Kurt provided an overview of the existing trail, which is 1.8 miles in length and located between the Morlatten Village, in Berks County and the Montgomery County line. He stated that the trail will connect to an existing 4.5 mile section that runs to Birdsboro and a proposed 1.3 mile section that will connect to the existing 1 mile Schuylkill River Trail in Pottstown, Montgomery County. This grant if approved starting in 2005 will help to fund the acquisition and construction of several gaps in the above described area of the trail.

Shannon Rossman, Planner from the Berks County Planning Commission and the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Council said that the Greenway Association applied for Open Space Funds through the County application process as requested by the Commissioners. She said the Open Space Advisory Council reviewed the request and despite the fact that they missed this year's grant application deadline, the Council voted unanimously to endorse the concept of the project and stated that it is consistent with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan, Vision 2020 and the County's Open Space and Recreation Plan. They also commented that despite their supportive view of the project, it really doesn't fit under the realm of the current Open Space and Recreation Grant Program due to its size and the fact that the Open Space funds are strictly limited to acquisition and construction. She stated that design costs are not part of the County's funding program and that is what a large portion of the costs associated with the Thun trail project involve at this point. It was recommended that the County set aside funds as a special line item rather than change the Open Space Grant program guidelines to fit this project.

The Commissioners expressed support for the project but concern with the County budget for 2005. They thanked representatives for the presentation and indicated that they would take it under consideration as part of this year's budget process.

Bob Behling, Executive Vice President of River Place Development Corporation (a 501 C-3, community based, non-profit organization) presented a request for funding from the County's Growing Greener Fund (Landfill Closure Trust Fund) for the development of a Master Plan which will propose to address safe parks, trails and open space as well as opportunities for museums, shops and cafes, revitalized neighborhoods and vital downtown areas along the Schuylkill River throughout Berks County. Commissioner Scott described the way the Landfill Closure Trust Fund began. He indicated that previous State statutes required that operators of landfills deposit \$.25 per ton of garbage disposed in their landfill into a closure fund. Recent legislative changes now require landfills to utilize a different funding mechanism for closure and environmental protection, which is why this Trust Fund can be transferred to the host Counties for land conservation purposes. He expressed a desire to see these funds directed towards projects that would benefit those municipalities that have had to host the landfills within their borders instead of funding projects surrounding the City of Reading. Commissioner Schwank stated that as a member of the River Place Board, she has attended a number of events surrounding the promotion of this project and feels that it will represent a regional asset, which could eventually provide both economic and environmental gains to the County. Commissioner Gajewski stated that he had also received positive feedback from the community and felt that this deserves serious consideration from the board.

Commissioner Gajewski presented a Certificate of Recognition to Pagoda Skyline, Inc. for their efforts in the restoration of the William Penn Memorial Fire Tower - Mike Reinert was be present to receive the Certificate.

Commissioner Gajewski presented a Proclamation for Veterans Day to Leigh Tallas, Director of the Berks County Department of Veterans Affairs on behalf of the Veterans and their families of Berks County.

III. REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS:

1. Commissioner Gajewski made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Scott to authorizing the following consent agenda items:
 - 444.04 A. Resolution to Re-appoint Brian D'Amico, 510 Locust Street, Reading, PA 19604 to a four (4) year term (to 8/29/08) as a County Representative to the Berks County Convention Center Authority.
 - 445.04 B. Resolution ratifying, confirming and approving execution of a Contract Agreement – One year renewal letter Contract ID No. 06-04-SF, by and between the County of Berks (Adult Probation) and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, in connection with the reimbursement of 2003-2004 County Supervision Fees.

- 446.04 C. Resolution to execute the 2005 CDBG Action Plan. The complete text of the plan will be attached to these minutes.

Commissioner Scott suggested that there are several categories of funds within the CDBG program that could be used to off set county general fund expenditures. He then spoke generally about the funding of low cost housing as he feels that it drives up the cost of government at all levels especially the school districts that have a large population of low income residents. He then said that despite these remarks, which he hopes could be considered as a future policy change, he would support the resolution to approve the 2005 plan. Commissioner Gajewski supports any way to reduce the County budget but would caution that municipalities that receive these funds should be contacted in advance of any proposed change. Commissioner Schwank expressed her disagreement by saying that the funding of joint municipal plans is encouraging intergovernmental cooperation and she indicated that is the County doesn't fund it via CDBG funds, then the money will have to come from other tax payers. Commissioner Scott stated that he too was very much in favor of funding joint municipal plans, he reiterated that he supports using some of the CDBG funds for County General Fund purposes not all.

- 447.04 D. Adopt Resolution authorizing approval of grant agreements with the PA DEP extending the deadline for completion of the Sacony Creek and the Maiden Creek Act 167 Plan updates.
- 448.04 E. Adopt Resolution re-appointing Glen R. Seidel, 1101 N. Water Street, Womelsdorf, PA 19567 as a Farmer Director to the Berks County Conservation District for a 4 year term ending 12/31/08.
- 449.04 F. Resolution authorizing 2004 budget transfers in the amount of \$26,600 and Appropriations in the amount of \$620,787 as per listing dated, November 5, 2004.

V. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

It was noted that there will be an Election Board meeting scheduled for November 18, 2004.

VI. CITIZEN COMMENT/BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:25 P.M.