

Commissioners' Workshop Meeting
Tuesday, November 30, 2004

I. CALL TO ORDER:

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, November 30, 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:

The First order of business was a presentation of the proposed 2005 Berks County Budget, which proposes a 1.75 mill increase in County Real Estate Taxes. County Administrator Bill Dennis discussed the members of the County "financial" team who worked hard to develop improvements to the County budgeting process. This was followed by a detailed budget presentation by Budget Director, Bob Patrizio. (A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes.)

Commissioner Gajewski thanked the Department heads, the Budget Director, the County Administrator and the County Controller and her staff for their efforts in compiling this budget. He also insisted that more efforts be made to cut costs and increase efficiencies as well as developing more specificity on available fund balances. He then stated there is an over reliance on property taxes in Pennsylvania and efforts by the State Legislature to provide a solution need to continue. (A prepared statement from Commissioner Gajewski is attached to these minutes.)

Commissioner Scott suggested that the we study the role this county government plays in preventing what is currently a disproportionate share of poverty, low-income citizens and the increased demands for county services such as Children and Youth, MH/MR and the Courts system that seem to follow that segment of the population. He said that solutions are needed to pre-empt this population trend. One method he committed to is voting against any requests to approve low-income housing projects which he believes tends to increase the dependency on government services. He added that efforts to increase law enforcement and behavior modification should be continued to deal with the criminal element of the County. His final point was to repeat a previous suggestion that the County establish an account funded by the Landfill settlement fees that are paid to the county, and maintaining this account as an environmental fund to be preserved for specific environmental reviews and or appeals of land use issues in the County such as with Landfills. He also commended the Budget director and his staff for their efforts in compiling this budget.

Commissioner Scott expressed concern for the expenditures within the court system that are a result of guardian decisions and recommendations for support. He felt that the budget held far too little funds aside for parks. His comments on the Economic Development agencies in the County were followed by a suggestion that the BEP (Berks Economic Partnership) fulfill their mission to consolidate these agencies and make the County contribution to their organization be contingent upon their success. He also suggested that the Berks Municipal Authority fund balance could be utilized to fund the BEP. He complimented his fellow commissioners, especially Commissioner Gajewski for the extra efforts he has taken to fully understand the complex financial structure of the County and its required budget process.

Commissioner Schwank also thanked the budget team for the countless hours dedicated to development of this budget and for working with department heads and ROW offices to understand their needs. She said that work on this budget would continue until its scheduled adoption date of December 23, 2004. She then stated her support for the initiatives undertaken by the County and understands the costs associated with them, but feels that we are beginning to see the results of the investment, however we should not anticipate new initiatives in 2005 unless the cost for those initiatives are offset by cuts. She expressed a desire to see a more targeted effort for economic and workforce development and talked about ideas such as performance budgeting and the possibility of a dedicated tax for Libraries.

III. REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioner Schwank

- A. Adopt Resolution approving and ratifying a Project Modification Request for subgrant #2004-WS-ST-14621 by and between the County of Berks (District Attorney) and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), with respect to funding an additional amount of \$35,000.00 for a total project cost of \$90,250.00 and entitled Gang Reduction/Anti-Violence Initiative covering the project period 07/01/2004 – 06/30/2005.

Commissioner Gajewski

Commissioner Scott

- A. Adopt Resolution amending the contract between the Department of Public Welfare and the County of Berks for the HealthChoices Program.

IV. OTHER REQUESTS:

Budget Director:

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing 2004 Budget Transfers in the amount of \$216,213 and Appropriations in the amount \$352,713 per listing dated November 24, 2004.

Solicitor

- A. Resolution authorizing tax forgiveness including any interest and penalty for all outstanding County taxes for the year 2004 to the Reading Parking Authority for property situate at 201 Washington Street (ID #06-5307-82-60-3962).
- B. Resolution authorizing tax forgiveness including any interest and penalty for all outstanding County taxes for the year 2004 to the City of Reading for properties situate at 424/426 Penn Street (ID #04530783705051), 428 Penn Street (ID #04530783706024) and 450 Penn Street (ID 045306277797952).
- C. Resolution authorizing tax forgiveness including any interest and penalty for all outstanding County taxes for the year 2004 to the Mt. Penn Fire Company #1 for property situate on St. Lawrence Avenue, St. Lawrence Borough (ID #81532605181083).
- D. Resolution authorizing tax forgiveness including any interest and penalty for all outstanding County taxes for the year 2004 to the Bernville Borough Authority for property situate at Garfield Road, Borough of Bernville (ID #29445000738637).
- E. Resolution authorizing the Budget Director and County Administrator to provide written authorization to pay bills and execute vouchers when due in the absence of two (2) County Commissioners.
- F. Resolution authorizing execution of a Lease Agreement between the County of Berks and Citadel Broadcasting Company, Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania, 18002-5096, for antenna space on the Berks County Services Center.

Contract Coordinator:

- A. Motion authorizing execution of Contract Agreements/ Amendments as furnished by the Contract Coordinator, per attached listing dated, November 23, 2004.

Purchasing Director:

- A. Resolution Awarding Request for Proposal #04-11-KL , a one-year contract for the furnishing of auditing services to Reinsel & Company LLP with an office at 1330 Broadcasting Road, P.O. Box 7008, Wyomissing, PA 19610-6008 at their cost proposal of \$62,000.00. The awarded contract will allow for the County to extend the contract for two successive one-year terms.

V. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

Kurt Bellman, Election Services Director updated the board on the final certification process which he indicated will be ready for final approval next week

VI. CITIZEN COMMENT/BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

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