

Commissioners' Workshop Meeting
Tuesday, December 7, 2004

I. CALL TO ORDER:

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, December 7, 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 Schwank announced that she will present a Proclamation for Re-dedication of the Amity Township Municipal Building on behalf of the Commissioners at a public open house scheduled at the Amity Township building on December 12, 2004.

Pat Blackwell, Author of Along the Route 100 Corridor presented a pictorial history of towns along Route 100 and discussed her recent publication.

III. REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS:

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing execution of the 2005 Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant (JAIBG) Application by and between the County of Berks (District Attorney) and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), with respect to funding in the amount of \$14,857.00 (Federal Funds - \$13,371.00, Local Matching Funds - \$1,486.00) covering the project period 4/1/05 to 3/31/06.
- B. Adopt Resolution authorizing execution of the 2005 Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant (JAIBG) Application by and between the County of Berks (Chief Public Defender) and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), with respect to funding in the amount of \$14,857.00 (Federal Funds - \$13,371.00, Local Matching Funds - \$1,486.00) covering the project period 4/1/05 to 3/31/06.

Commissioner Schwank

Commissioner Gajewski

- A. Adopt Resolution re- appointing Mary Brooke, Brooke Estates, 252 Haycreek Road, Birdsboro, PA 19508 to the Berks Housing Authority Board for a 5 year term expiring 12/31/09.

Commissioner Scott

IV. OTHER REQUESTS:

Solicitor

- A. Resolution authorizing execution of an Amendment to Lease between Bern Partners, L.P., 1420 Clarion Street, Reading, Pennsylvania 19601, and the County of Berks for office space for District Justice Thomas Gauby (23-3-05).
- B. Resolution authorizing the Berks County Solicitor's Office to advertise Ordinance No. 5 providing for the Rules and Regulations Governing the Use of the Berks County Park System and Providing Penalties for Violation of the Same, to be enacted at the meeting on December 23, 2004.

Contract Coordinator:

- A. Motion authorizing execution of Contract Agreements/ Amendments as furnished by the Contract Coordinator, per attached listing dated December 6, 2004.

Budget Director:

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing 2004 Budget Transfers in the amount of \$961,816 and Appropriations in the amount \$285,591 per listing dated December 3, 2004.

Human Resource Director:

- A. Adopt Resolution approving the Human Resource Policy recommendations:
 - Sick Time Donation Policy
 - Tobacco/Smoking Policy
 - Human Resources Record Retention Policy
 - Fair Labor Standards Act Guidelines, Overtime, and Compensatory Time Policy

V. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

VI. CITIZEN COMMENT/BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Jim Troutman, Clerk of Courts, discussed aspects of the Sick Time Donation Policy suggesting that consideration should be given to occasional sick time off for employees undergoing chemotherapy treatment for example where they don't necessarily need to take a full 10 day sick period but have exhausted the rest of their vacation and sick time for the year. He also added suggestions regarding the smoking policy to make sure that locations approved for smokers are within reasonable distance to their workplace.

John Morgan of Ruscombmanor Township questioned recent comments made regarding the funding for services of children of illegal immigrants. It suggested if services are not provided to the children up front, the taxpayer will pay the burden in the end. Commissioner Scott responded by saying that the issue of illegal aliens is a Federal Law Violation and the taxpayers of Berks County should not bear the burden of educating them. It is an issue of fairness when elderly county citizens who are in danger of losing homes due to increased taxes should share the burden of educating children of people who are here illegally, taking advantage of government services without any financial contribution to share the tax burden.

Dorothy Reilly, Exeter Township, suggested that the Board should recognize that the county budget was under Republican Control in prior years. She also expressed her disagreement with Commissioner Scott's comments on the poor and his suggestion that better retirement planning needs to be made by all citizens.

Mary Jane Reinhart suggested that certain big business is perhaps a strong driving force towards the use of illegal aliens in this area.

Joan Schley also expressed dismay regarding Commissioner Scott's comments, which she described as elitist and divisive. Commissioner Scott responded to the above by describing a vicious cycle that occurs when a city expands the concentration of poverty, the demand for human services and cost of government goes up. He said the county is forced to raise taxes to pay for fighting crime and providing additional human services, which causes business to leave and people to lose their jobs increasing poverty to an even greater level.

Commissioner Gajewski stated that the Federal Government, while looking at a recent bill on National Security issues, elected not to deal with illegal immigration issues as part of the bill. He also stated that Real Estate taxes are not as elastic as sales and income tax but until the State Legislature approves a tax reform plan there are few options. He continued to point out the 9.45 million dollar payment that the county is required to contribute to the employee pension plan as one of several uncontrollable factors facing the county in 2005. He also mentioned that the change in the vesting requirement from 8 to 5 years has dramatically increased the county cost as well. In a final comment he stated he that continues to support the idea of a community corrections facility.

Commissioner Schwank reflected on the difficulty of this budget by saying, "the county has big city problems with a revenue stream based on a 1700's model." She said people (the citizens) have reached a boiling point so we must continue to look at cutting expenditures.

Commissioner Scott presented several suggestions for potential cost cutting: the first would involve a change in the compensation policy attached to the county pension plan, the county is legally permitted to do so and co-pays for required (court ordered) drug and alcohol testing.

Edward Terrell questioned the tax exoneration for the Cabalas store and wondered how small businesses could apply for the same treatment. The board explained the

concept of a TIF (Tax Incremental Financing) project which was designed to entice business development and jobs to a depressed area but agreed that it can have a negative impact on some of the smaller "mom and pop" businesses in an area.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned to an Election Board meeting at 12:10 P.M.