

Commissioners' Workshop Meeting
Tuesday, March 29, 2005

I. CALL TO ORDER:

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, March 29, 2005 at 10:30 A.M. 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. PRESENTATIONS:

Mark Lundquist, Managing Director of S&Lutions and Financial Advisor to the County, to the County, made a presentation regarding proposed Ordinance 01-05. The ordinance has been advertised for consideration by the Board of Commissioners at the regularly scheduled meeting on March 31, 2005. The ordinance authorizes the County to enter into interest rate management agreements with respect to the County's outstanding General Obligation Bonds, Second Series of 1992 and the General Obligation Bonds, Second Series of 1993. Both series of bonds are not subject to optional redemption by the County. Pursuant to the interest rate management agreements for the bonds, the County and one or more financial institutions as counter parties would agree to a swap of short-term tax-exempt interest rates and short-term taxable interest rates. By entering into the interest rate management agreements, based upon historic interest rates, the County can anticipate that it would recognize approximately \$4.5-\$5.0 million of interest rate savings. If ordinance 01-05 is enacted by the Commissioners, Financial S&Lutions will obtain bids for the County from financial institutions. It is anticipated that settlement could occur prior to the end of April, 2005. Mr. Lundquist indicated that the Commissioners would need to determine the manner in which they would like the County to recognize the economic benefit of the transaction: as cash benefit in 2005, as net savings annually over the life of the outstanding bonds, or as a combination of cash benefit in 2005 and annual savings over the life of the Bonds. This determination could be made by a separate resolution to be considered after enactment of ordinance 01-05. presented proposed Ordinance 01-05 regarding the 2005 Interest Rate Management Plan that has been advertised for adoption at the Thursday March 31, 2005 Commissioners' meeting. He described this transaction as a "synthetic" refinancing for "non-callable" general obligation bonds issued by the County of Berks in 1992 and 1993. His estimate of savings for the county following this transaction was \$4.5 to \$5 million. He indicated that the board will need to decide what method of distribution they will choose for to received these benefits such as a total lump sum payment in 2005 or some other calculation for the funds to be distributed over a period of years or used as a reduction in future debt service payments.

III. PROCLAMATIONS/CERTIFICATES:

- A. Commissioner Gajewski, presented a proclamation on behalf of the Commissioners for the 35th Anniversary of the Berks County Meals on Wheels program. Attending to accept the proclamation on behalf of their organizations was Barbara Coffin, Director of the Berks County Office of Aging, Tamara _____, Meals on Wheels Manager of _____ and Martha Sitler, Director of Services for the Berks Senior Citizens Council. Barbara Coffin reported this program that consists of over 100 volunteers serving approximately 700 county citizens per day actually saves the county 1/3 of our program costs to provide these needed services in the homes of our residents. For more information about the Berks County Office of Aging's Home Delivered Meals Program please call (610) 478-6500 or e-mail us at aging@countyofberks.com or visit the Berks County Office of Aging, County Services Center, 633 Court Street, Reading, PA 19601-4303. To volunteer for Meals on Wheels home deliveries, please contact the Berks County Senior Citizens Council at (610) 374-3195 or log on at: <http://www.berksseniors.org/mealsonwheels.htm>

IV. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS / REQUESTS:**Budget Director:**

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing 2005 Budget Transfers in the total amount of \$3,398,951.00, also 2005-Appropriations in the total amount of \$4,800.00 per list dated March 31, 2005.

Human Resources Director:

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing the Director of Human Resources to develop a one-time Voluntary Severance Program to be offered to all full-time employees of the County of Berks during 2005. Beth Schiepan said that savings to the County will not be determined until the employees have indicated their interest. She said the proposed cut off date to submit a request will be June 8, 2005. Commissioner Gajewski said that this was an important step in keeping the county budget under control. Commissioner Schwank stated that it would also force the county to re-examine the need to rehire individuals and continue programs. Commissioner Scott felt it could provide cost saving either way as newer employees would most likely be hired at a lower rate.
- B. Adopt Resolution authorizing the Human Resource recommendations as per list dated March 29, 2005.

Purchasing Department***Contract Coordinator***

- A. Motion authorizing execution of Contract Agreements/ Amendments as furnished by the Contract Coordinator, per listing dated March 25, 2005. Candace Noll reviewed the contracts and introduced Pam D'Antonio MH/MR, Health Choices Program Administrator who described the contract with Community Care Behavioral Health Organization who will provide treatment services for high-risk transition aged adolescents and young adults. She explained that this program is completely funded from 2003 state funds and does not require a County Match. The program goals contain measured outcomes and hope to reduce the need for future treatment that historically followed this category of our MH clientele.

Solicitor

- A. Resolution expressing the County's support of the Reading Regional Airport Authority's negotiations with the Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to acquire certain property adjacent to the Airport for the purpose of extending Runway 18/36.
- B. Resolution rescinding Resolution 139-04 expressing the County's approval of an election by Mr. and Mrs. Cyril Ganter to have property located at 1994 Highland Avenue designated in Cumru Township and further expressing that the County takes no position concerning the location of such property.
- C. Resolution terminating the County's participation in the Local Revitalization Tax Assistance Act (LERTA) and the Residential Tax Abatement Program (RTAB) in accordance with City of Reading Ordinances 54-2004 and 55-2004.

V. REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS:

- A. Resolution Authorizing the Chair, Judith Schwank to execute a document, Pursuant to the amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws of the Berks County Prison Society, Inc. (the "Corporation"), ratified by its membership at a special meeting on December 15, 2004 and subsequent notification filed with the Pennsylvania Department of State, the Corporation shall change its name to Berks Connections / Pretrial Services; Effective April 1, 2005. No changes to the Corporation's operating policies or mission statement were voted upon or approved by its membership at the December 15, 2004 meeting.

Commissioner Schwank

Commissioner Gajewski

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing payment of invoices under the following Community Development Disbursement Vouchers:
1. No. 2128-Community Development Block Grant funds - \$42,861.50
 2. No. 490-Home Grant Program - \$2,711.00
 3. No. 1240-Property Rehabilitation Program - \$136.00

Commissioner Scott

V. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

CITIZEN COMMENT/BUSINESS FROM T

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 11:45 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terry L Styer, Chief Clerk

All Berks County employees will be offered an opportunity to resign in exchange for severance payments based on their years of service, the county commissioners said Tuesday.

The one-time offer is a cost-cutting measure, but the amount of savings can't be determined until the employees who take advantage of the offer are identified, Human Resources Director Beth Schiepan said.

She said program details would be provided next week.

Employees will have until June 8 to decide, Schiepan said.

"It's strictly voluntary," she said. "It's not a layoff. It's not an early retirement."

Commissioner Judith L. Schwank, board chairwoman, said county officials concluded something had to be done to stop staff growth.

Commissioner Thomas W. Gajewski Sr. called the program an important step in getting the county budget under control.

The county will save money even if replacements are hired because the new workers would be paid lower salaries, Commissioner Mark C. Scott said.

In other business, the commissioners:

Agreed to vote Thursday on refinancing \$120 million borrowed through bond issues in 1992 and 1993 to save \$4.5 million to \$5 million.

Mark Lundquist, the county's financial adviser and managing director of Financial S&Lutions, Reading, recommended the county take some of the money immediately and use the rest to reduce future interest payments.

Agreed to vote Thursday on rescinding support of Cyril Ganter's declaration that his property at 1994 Highland Ave. is in Cumru Township.

The property atop Neversink Mountain is partly in the city and partly in Cumru. State law allows him to choose which municipality he prefers.

He chose Cumru because his real estate taxes would be \$900 a year less and because he believes the property would be easier to sell in the future if it was in the Gov. Mifflin School District.

Cumru and Gov. Mifflin officials have appealed Ganter's choice with the county assessment board, saying trash and snow removal at the property would be expensive and running school buses there would be a problem.

City officials also have appealed to the assessment board because they don't want to lose the taxes on the property.

Expressed approval of a name change for the nonprofit Berks Prison Society to Berks Connections/Pretrial Services.

Nikki Slapikas, community program director for the agency, said the new name reflects what the agency does.

In addition to providing bail for indigent defendants, the agency does community outreach programs and participates in various court committees and the community corrections task force, she said.

Announced that a meeting will be held tonight at 7 in Kemp's Catering on the Fleetwood-Blandon Road, Richmond Township, to discuss Steve Burkholder's plans to expand his hog-raising operation.

Schwank said the county agricultural land-preservation board canceled its meeting so officials could attend the Burkholder session.