

Commissioners' Workshop Meeting
Tuesday, July 26, 2005

I. CALL TO ORDER:

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, July 26, 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. The Commissioner opened the meeting with a moment of silence and Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

II. PRESENTATIONS/ PROCLAMATIONS/CERTIFICATES:

- A. Commissioner Schwank will be presenting Certificates of Recognition for Outstanding Family Farm FFA members at the Reading Fair Banquet on July 27, 2005.
- B. Commissioner Gajewski presented a Certificate of Recognition to Deputy Sheriff John K. Reber, Sr., on the occasion of his induction into the Pennsylvania Police Hall of Fame. Attending the meeting with Deputy Reber was Brian D. Heister, Chief of Police of the Cumru Police Department, Assistant Chief Deputy Gene Klinger and Chief Deputy Eric Weaknecht of the Berks County Sheriff's Office. Commissioner Gajewski noted that Deputy Reber is one of only two officers from Berks County ever to receive this prestigious award. Deputy Reber became a deputy sheriff after retiring from 32 years of service at the Cumru Township Police Department. The Commissioner noted that in addition to Deputy Reber being the father of 6 children he has served as a foster father to an additional eight foster children. Sheriff Barry J. Joswiak who was unable to attend this meeting was quoted in the Reading Eagle as stating – " John has been an exemplary policeman and deputy sheriff, he has dedicated his entire life to law enforcement." He stated further "John K. Reber Sr. deserves this honor of being in the Hall of Fame with only one other Berks Countian, former Hamburg Police Chief Thomas J. Selinsky Jr."

III. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS / REQUESTS:

Budget Director:

- A. Adopt a resolution authorizing 2005 Budget Transfers in the total amount of \$51,900.00 and appropriations in the total amount of 11,000.00 per list dated July 22, 2005. Kim Grinage, Deputy Budget Director presented this week's appropriations.

Human Resources Director:

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing the Human Resource recommendation as per list dated July 26, 2005. Beth Schiepan H. R. Director presented the recommendations to the board.

Purchasing Department

Contract Coordinator:

- A. Motion authorizing execution of Contract Agreements/ Amendments as furnished by the Contract Coordinator, per listing dated July 22, 2005.

IV. REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS:

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing Judith L. Schwank, Chair of the Board, to execute The Emergency Food Assistance Program –TEFAP (Inventory – Reimbursement Request Form for the Third Quarter (April, May, & June) FFY 2004-2005, in the amount of \$14,768.69 for distributing 14,768.69 pounds of food at \$.10 per pound and to authorize Margaret Bianca, Executive Director, Greater Berks Food Bank for apply for the funds on behalf of Berks County.
- B. Adopt Resolution authorizing the County Treasurer to make six (6) monthly retirement fund contributions to the Berks County Retirement Fund throughout the remainder of 2005.
- C. Adopt Resolution authorizing the opening of a checking account with Wachovia Bank for the Employee Thrift Plan.

Commissioner Schwank

- A. Authorizing Judith Schwank, as Chairman of the Board, to execute a Grant Application by and between the County of Berks (Parks & Recreation) and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, for funding to support the Summer Concert Series (\$5,000.00) and for re-granting to the Berks Arts Council (\$5,000.00), for a total funding request of \$10,000.00 for FY 2005-2006.

Commissioner Gajewski

- A. Adopt Resolution reappointing Lynn Millar to the CYS Board to a three-year term ending 12/31/05.
- B. Adopt Resolution reappointing Connie Archey to Reading Area Community College Board of Trustees to a six-year term ending 07/21/2011.

Commissioner Gajewski continued:

- C. Adopt Resolution reappointing Kathleen Dautrich to Reading Area Community College Board of Trustees to a six-year term ending 07/21/2011.
- D. Adopt Resolution for State budget cuts - Commissioners Gajewski expressed his appreciation to George Kovarie Director of Children and Youth, Ed Michalik Director of MR/MR, George Vogel, Director of COCA (Council on Chemical Abuse), Bob Patrizio Budget Director and Bill Dennis County Administrator for assisting him in the development of a resolution urging the Governor and the Berks County State Delegation to restore the needed Human Service especially, child protective service funds to the State Budget. He then read the Resolution proposed for adoption at the July 28, 2005 Commissioners' meeting. * see additional notes below:

Commissioner Scott**V. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS**

*George Kovarie thanked the board for endorsing a letter to the state that addresses child welfare funding. He said that the state budget which was just passed, was tantamount to a tax increase to counties for forcing them to cut services as the 200 million said to be allocated can only be acquired with matching funds that makes counties the size of Berks ineligible. He said that this change in the State budget has caused the county to attempt to restructure the budget to make better use of the TANF funds and other ways to provide these needed community services using available resources.

When asked By Commissioner Scott if these reductions will in turn create more of a potential for a child to fall victim to harm. George responded in saying that we are in the business of managing risk. We try to keep all children from harm but as the services curtail, the risk increases. Mr. Kovarie added that in the last three years the county lost \$10 million in prevention program funds. He added that we really do have some good parenting programs such as parents anonymous but we need to do more – “taking children is really not what we’re about.”

Commissioner Scott began a discussion regarding the assessment appeal process and the issues surrounding the recent tax increase and the calls from constituents regarding what appears to be an unfair system of assessing the newer homes at today's rates while the older assessed homes don't pay nearly the same amount in property taxes. He suggested that due to these issues he would like to begin discussion to consider extending the assessment appeal dealing from August 1 to September 1 giving the home owner a longer period of time to file an appeal. The Solicitor was asked to research the law to allow this possible extension.

Commissioner Gajewski said there are possible solutions but re-assessment is only a temporary remedy. He said the Tax Reform Plan as proposed by CCAP (County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania) is currently in the hands of the House Finance Committee. The Commissioner encouraged all citizens to write to the Chair of that committee and urge them to stop the debate and act on the bill.

Commissioner Scott stated that tax reform is a subjective topic he said the real issue is how much should we have to pay? Shifting taxes around does not fully reform without reducing the cost and size of government.

VI. CITIZEN COMMENT/BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Kirby Power, resident from Exeter Township returned with a letter responding to Commissioner Gajewski request for possible solutions and alternatives to the proposed Cross Town Connector road in Exeter Township.

Kathy Duffy, representing the Taxpayers Association of the Brandywine Heights School District invited the Commissioners to join them in a bus ride planned in October to go the Capital to request our state legislators to rescind the recent 16% pay hike just approved. She then commended the Commissioners for their efforts at downsizing county government with the voluntary severance plan.

Michelle Kircher, spoke as a resident of Exeter Township and reported to the Commissioners that a recently enacted zoning ordinance amendment included the provision for schools in the Townships Ag. Preservation Zone. She indicated that this additional item was added after the Supervisors had advertised the proposed ordinance, thereby violating the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code's public notice requirements.

Commissioner Gajewski then presented what he felt is a problem with recently approved easements by the Agricultural Land Preserve Board. He stated that while he supports Agricultural Preservation in the County he didn't vote favorably on the resolution certifying the funds to the Ag. Land Board as he wanted to see it reduced. He also questioned the easement purchases and why they weren't presented for approval at the Commissioners meeting.

Commissioner Schwank asked the Chief Clerk to look back in the records for information regarding the various resolutions involving this issue.

Commissioner Gajewski stated that if easements are presented to Commissioners for approval, he would not vote favorably for them unless the County Planning Commission has reviewed the application to determine that it is not located in a planned growth area.

Commissioner Schwank suggested that the Agricultural Land Preservation board could consider adding a policy statement that farms locate in planned growth areas of a municipality will not be considered for preservation.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 11:59 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terry L Styer, Chief Clerk