

**Commissioners' Workshop Meeting  
Tuesday, February 7, 2006**

**I. CALL TO ORDER:**

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, January 17, 2006, 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.

**II. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS / REQUESTS:**

**Budget Department:**

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing 2005 Budget Transfers in the amount of \$ 238,155.00 and 2006 Budget Transfers in the amount of \$ 20,000.00. Also 2005 Appropriations in the amount \$167,000.00 and 2006 Appropriations in the amount \$ 53,475.00 per listing February 3, 2006. Bob Patrizio, Budget Director presented the budget report

**Contract Submissions:**

- A. Motion authorizing execution of Contract Agreements/ Amendments as furnished by the Contract Coordinator, per attached listing dated February 3, 2006.

**Engineer:**

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing Bern Township Supervisors to send their municipal building's wastewater for treatment at the County Wastewater Treatment Plant. Bill Westcott indicated that the approval for this new connection would resolve the problem of a failed on-lot septic system that was previously servicing the Bern Township Municipal building.

**Human Resource Director:**

- A. Human Resource Recommendations as per list dated February 7, 2006. Jennifer Biehn presented the recommendations.

**Solicitor:**

- A. Resolution authorizing tax forgiveness including any interest and penalty for all outstanding County taxes for the year 2005 to the Berks County Conservancy for property situate in Lower Alsace Township on Neversink Mountain and formerly part of the Neversink Mountain Gravity Railroad (Property ID# 23-5316-11-66-7021-001).
- B. Resolution authorizing tax forgiveness including any interest and penalty for all outstanding County taxes for the years 2004 and 2005 to the Daniel Boone Area School District for property at Weavertown Road (Property ID # 24-5355-08-00-0877).
- C. Resolution authorizing tax forgiveness including any interest and penalty for all outstanding County taxes for the years 2003, 2004 and 2005 to Iglesia Evangelica Nueva Vida for property at 9th and Elm Streets, City of Reading (Property ID # 09-5317-69-01-1823 and 09-5317-69-01-2820)

**III. REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS:****Commissioner Schwank**

Commissioner Schwank said that upon reading Mayor McMahon's State of the City Address and noting his renewed effort to fight crime in Reading caused her to pay particular attention to the mention of codes enforcement. She said as a commissioner she is as deeply troubled by the crime problem and stated her belief in the approach to improving the quality of life in the county requires more than just criminal justice initiatives. She emphasized her understanding that the environment we live in influences our behavior and trash and litter strewn on the streets, overcrowded dilapidated housing, doesn't inspire us to live our lives to their fullest potential. She also noted that litter and trash that clogs the gutters and storm sewers or fills the backyards of homes is a public health issue too. She suggested that with the new City administration it may be time to convene a meeting to review current efforts and suggest possible solutions such as in previous years prior to the Weed and Seed initiative. Her suggestions for the outcomes of the meeting were as follows to start:

- 1. New codes enforcement-what is being done?
- 2. What role can the County serve via our courts, tax claim, and IS departments?
- 3. Is a comprehensive approach that involves inner ring suburbs appropriate?

Her list of the possible invitees included: Reading's City Mayor, City Council, State legislators-O'Pake, Caltigirone, Santoni, DA, PJ, Court Administrator, City/ County Manager, DID, Codes Chief, Police Chief, DMJ, Planning Tax Claim, Business Sector, Landlords, Muhlenberg, Mt. Penn, W. Reading officials.

Commissioner Scott said he wasn't opposed to more meetings but all similar studies he participated in previously point to lack of resources and without millions of dollars to provide additional foot patrols and more detectives "we're basically just generating headlines."

He said he would like to support this idea of a summit but wanted assurances that substantive results would be the outcome. He reminded the board that the County on numerous attempts has offered to assist with the codes issue such as a previous effort to take over the responsibility for codes enforcement for the city. He said that that and other offers of assistance have been "rebuffed."

Commissioner Gajewski he agrees with Commissioner Scott regarding the need for additional resources but stated that without proper deployment of those manpower resources the effort would be wasted.

Commissioner Schwank indicated her belief that the receptiveness for future cooperative efforts with the city may be in place now. She indicated that she would like to discuss this further at Thursday's Commissioner meeting.

#### **Commissioner Gajewski**

- A. Adopt Resolution regarding disposition of county-owned cemetery plots in Limerick, Montgomery County. Commissioner Gajewski presented a memo describing a proposal suggesting the county arrange for two appraisals of each of the 690 County owned cemetery lots located in the Limerick Garden of Memories Cemetery in Limerick PA. He suggested that the County could then offer one lot to each Berks County Veteran at no charge and offer for sale a second lot for their spouse at fair market value for a 90-day period. Following this disposition of lots, the county could offer the remaining lots for sale to the general public and further recommended that any net proceeds from these transactions be distributed equally between the IDA (Industrial Development Authority) and the BEP (Berks Economic Partnership) for county job creation expenses. Both Commissioners Scott and Schwank commended Commissioner Gajewski for researching this issue that they described as having been unresolved since 1985. They both discussed their reservations regarding the potential sale of the lots, as they believed the original donation of the lots was made to the Veterans Affairs department and was intended to be a benefit to Berks County's veterans. A long discussion followed with Assistant Solicitor Christine Sadler indicating to the board that with so many unknown factors regarding the status and location of these cemetery lots, the board should proceed with caution.

#### **IV. CITIZEN COMMENT/BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR**

Lynwood Meinig attended the meeting to express his appreciation to the Commissioners and to the taxpayers of the county for supporting this facility. He also expressed his deep appreciation to the employees for the quality of care his mother, Helen Meinig received during the final 15 years of her life while a resident at the Berks Heim.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:25 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Terry L Styer, Chief Clerk