

## **Commissioners' Workshop Meeting Tuesday, July 18, 2006**

### **I. CALL TO ORDER:**

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, July 18, 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 W. Gajewski, Sr., and Commissioner Mark C. Scott in attendance. Also present were County Administrator, William E. Dennis, Solicitor Alan Miller Esq. and First Assistant Solicitor, Christine Sadler Esq., and Chief Clerk Terry Styer.

### **II. CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION**

Commissioner Gajewski presented a Certificate of Recognition to Senator Michael O'Pake for his advocacy for "Berks Seniors." The Senator expressed his appreciation by referring to this board as "outstanding." He then stated that Berks County has the best Office of Aging in the state and specifically commended the director, Barb Coffin, for the Agency's excellent reputation.

Commissioner Gajewski presented a Certificate of Recognition for Carey Kaucher, Berks County Special Projects Coordinator for the County for the success of the County's wellness program and other employee related activities and recognitions.

### **III. PRESENTATION**

Tom McKeon, Executive Director, BCIDA (Berks County Industrial Development Authority) and Dr. Christ L. Ganas, Supervisor, Exeter Township presented a request to the County Commissioners to appoint a representative(s) to serve on the Exeter Township Tax Increment Financing Committee. Tom McKeon explained that the committee would meet to determine if a proposed commercial development project (a 430,000 square foot shopping center) in a "blighted area" along Rt. #422 in Exeter Township would qualify for a Tax Increment Financing project. Tom McKeon said that if approved, this project could provide a financing mechanism for a \$10 million transportation improvement project badly needed at the intersection of Perkiomen Avenue and Rt. 422 in Exeter Township. Dr. Ganas indicated to the Commissioners that the township has received all positive comments to date from Township residents and business owners.

Barry Rohrbach from [Crime Alert Berks County](#) presented a statistical update noting that 190 arrests paid a total of \$66,000 to those of the 2000 anonymous tips that resulted in arrests. He also introduced a new fund raising program and media blitz will begin on August 1, 2006.

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

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing 2006 Budget Transfers in the amount of \$71,349.00. Bob Patrizio, Budget Director, presented the report.

**Contract Submissions**

- A. Motion authorizing execution of Contract Agreements/ Amendments as furnished by the Contract Coordinator, per attached listing dated July 17, 2006.

**Human Resource Director:**

- A. Authorize utilization of temporary agency for Administrative Office Support for the Warden at the Prison, effective 7/21/06. Rate not to exceed \$15.00 per hour. (This request is due to the resignation of the Warden's administrative office support. Utilization of the temporary agency will cease as soon as the vacancy is filled.)
- B. Adopt Resolution approving the execution of a collective bargaining agreement by and between the County of Berks and the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 1776, representing the Berks County Home - Berks Heim non-professional staff for the period of January 1, 2006 through December 31, 2008. Tom McPhillips, Assistant Director of Human Resources discussed the highlights of this contract, which he described as being a year long process. The Commissioners commended all involved on both sides of the negotiations for this successful effort.

**IV. REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS:**

- A. Adopt Resolution approving the County of Berks Natural Land, Farmland, and Open Space Conservation Program guidelines. Shannon Rossman, Planner from the Berks County Planning Commission as well as members of the Open Space and Recreation Council attended the meeting to discuss the draft guidelines proposed for the allocation of \$12 million throughout the County through December 31, 2009. Shannon began by describing the three main sections of the application including Municipal Grants / Conservation Incentive Program; Municipal Grants / Municipal Land Protection Program and the Private Conservation Organization Grants and the review process proposed in these guidelines. The following suggestions and comments were provided as follows:

Commissioner Scott wanted to see these funds committed to projects that would provide for more public access such as parks and recreation areas particularly in the eastern side of the county. He said that recreational sites are one of the few direct benefits most people recognize from their tax dollars.

**Berks Natural Land, Farmland, and Open Space Conservation  
Program guidelines discussion continued:**

Commissioner Schwank suggested increasing the per acre price offered as part of the Land Protection program from \$500 per acre to \$1000 per acre.

Commissioner Scott objected to the 1<sup>st</sup> come 1<sup>st</sup> served approach and suggested the program should contain a focused time frame for applications. He also objected to the "bottom up" approach to this distribution of these funds should be determined from a "top down" approach allowing the County target the highest and best use of these dollars.

Commissioner Scott suggested delaying this grant process until such time as an ongoing peer review program evaluating area County Parks systems is completed thereby giving the county an opportunity to review the outcome and helping to define the best use of the funds.

Commissioner Schwank agreed that the funds are limited but that continuing to delay the funding of eligible preservation and conservation efforts may allow valuable land to be lost to development. She also agreed with the highest and best use of these funds and referred to the fact that each application must comply with the County's approved Comprehensive Plan and County Greenway plans thereby encouraging the County's plan for the best use of these funds. She also suggested that delays in this process might prohibit the leveraging of State and Federal funds that are threatening to dry up.

Chip Karasin of the Open Space and Recreation Committee agreed that the County should go for the "best bang for our buck" but argued that allowing recreation projects to include funding for maintenance and upgrades of existing parkland will change the whole direction of this project. She added that municipalities are an important factor in effective land use so she would argue that the "bottom up" approach is more effective.

Helen Olena, Chair of the Open Space and Recreation Committee indicated that each project application would be compared with a standard that will help ensure the funds are appropriated wisely.

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing the 2006 – 2007 Nursing Home Intergovernmental Transfer Program pursuant to the Commonwealth Agreement and Cooperation Agreement; and further granting authorization for any and all lawful actions necessary to effectuate Berks County's participation in said Program.
- B. Adopt Resolution for the joint appointment of Rebecca Wingenroth to the Industrial Development Authority to fill the unexpired term of office to vacated by David Patti ending on 12/31/09.

**Commissioner Schwank**

- A. Discussed funding an updated brochure for Berks County Food and Fiber System.

**Commissioner Gajewski**

- A. Adopt Resolution authorizing the execution of a contract with Lucille Freeman and Associates of Smith Freeman Associates of 4900 Kutztown Road, Temple, PA to provide an advertising book for the Berks Heim Fest at a split of 30% for the county and 70% for the ad agency subject to certain conditions.
- B. Commissioner Gajewski indicated that letters from the County have been sent to Congress opposing Federal Cuts in Child Welfare program noting that the county tax dollars will have to make up the difference from these proposed federal funding cuts.
- C. Commissioner Gajewski advised the Commissioners on correspondence he sent to area colleges and universities requesting financial assistance for the Reading Science Fair.
- D. Commissioner Gajewski introduced Ashley Barrett and Amy Mountz, student interns in the Paralegal course at Reading Area Community College who are currently providing assistance in his office.

**Commissioner Scott**

Commissioner Scott asked to add Melanie Solon, the County Law Librarian to the Berks County Library Board and that a Resolution be added to the Commissioners meeting agenda on Thursday

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 12.19 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Terry L Styer, Chief Clerk