

Commissioners' Board Meeting Thursday, August 24, 2006

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Thursday, August 24, 2006 at 10:30 A.M. in the Board meeting room on the thirteenth floor 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 C. Scott in attendance. Also present were the Chief Clerk Terry L. Styer, County Solicitor Alan Miller, Esq., and County Administrator William E. Dennis.

Commissioner Schwank opened the meeting with a moment of silence and Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Scott made a motion that was seconded by Commissioner Gajewski to approve the August 15, 2006 Commissioner workshop minutes and the August 17, 2006 Commissioners meeting minutes, all voted yes to approve, with Commissioner Schwank abstaining from voting for the August 15th minutes, as she did not attend that meeting.

Consent Agenda Items

1. A motion was made by Commissioner Gajewski, seconded by Commissioner Scott and all voted unanimously to approve the items listed below:
 - 257.06 A. Human Resource Recommendations as list dated August 24, 2006.
 - 258.06 B. Adopt Resolution authorizing 2006 Budget Transfers in the amount of \$44,700 and 2006 Appropriations in the amount of \$22,050 per listing dated August 18, 2006.
 - 259.06 C. Adopt Resolution to appoint Patricia Pingel to the Open Space and Recreation Council for 4 year terms ending 8/31/2010.

Commissioner Scott raised an issue for the possibility of a conflict of interest for Noel Karison to serve on the Open Space and Recreation Council as she is also a board member of the Berks Conservancy and the Conservancy would likely be applying for grant funding under this program. A lengthy discussion followed resulting in the Board requesting Solicitor Miller to obtain an opinion from the State Ethics Commission to make a determination regarding this for this advisory board as well as others the Commissioners appoint to.

- 260.06 D Resolution authorizing execution of Addendum to Lease Agreement with the Township of Exeter for office space for Magisterial District Court 23-2-03.
- 261.06 E Adopt Resolution authorizing Commissioner Schwank, as Chair of the Board, to Execute Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Labor and Industry, Grant Recipients Release, Assignment and Closeout forms pursuant to the terms of the Workforce Investment Act Grants for the SPCO program which serves welfare recipients to help them transition from public assistance to gainful employment these PA Dept. of Labor Grants funds total to \$1,798,914.00.

Reports

County Treasurer – Administrator Dennis presented the treasurer's report

County Controller – Commissioner Schwank reviewed the Controllers' report

Citizen Comment/Business From The Floor

Commissioner Schwank opened the discussion on establishing a Countywide Police Evaluation Committee by asking the other Commissioners for their thoughts on the proposed committee structure proposed to include the board of Commissioners; a member and an alternate from the following organizations: Berks County Police Chief's Association; the Berks County Fraternal Order of Police; the Berks County Sheriff's Department; the District Attorney's Office; Mayor of Reading; a Borough Mayor; Township Supervisor; and the Chief of Police of Reading. She also suggested that John Kramer of the Center for Community Leadership could facilitate the meetings.

Commissioner Scott suggested that the Commissioners review an outline he is drafting for a possible RFP to a professional consultant to evaluate and make possible recommendations towards improvements for the police protection services in the county including the possibility of a countywide police force. He suggested that the county needs input from the police professionals but too many committee members may protract things. He also recommended that the ultimate decision remains with the Board of Commissioners and that much of the information gathering regarding the existing police personnel and resources should be completed and presented to the selected consulting firm rather than paying professionals to perform that task.

Commissioner Schwank suggested that visits to or with other county police departments outside of Pennsylvania would also be a good first step in this evaluation process.

Commissioner Gajewski suggested that the county should assure that a state legislator was committed to take on this change in legislation before conducting a study or contracting with consultants. He also suggested that if funds are ever requested from the municipalities, then those municipal officials may want to be part of a governing body that oversees the department and how those funds are spent.

Michelle Kircher, Supervisor of Exeter Township, suggested that Exeter Township's Police Chief should be involved on this study committee, representing one of the largest police departments in the county, as well as being one of the departments that experiences the Rt. #422 corridor crime incidents as recently depicted on the Detectives Crime mapping presentation.

Commissioner Scott agreed that representation from a township with a large force as well as one with only State Police coverage would be important.

Mark Gillen resident from Mohnton Borough suggested that public hearings with this committee would be an ultimate goal to build community consensus towards regionalization.

Jim Troutman Berks County Clerk of Courts stated his agreement with Commissioner Gajewski that the legislation providing the ability for county's to establish a countywide police department should be assured prior to spending any money on a study.

Commissioner Schwank indicated that there is a proposal by the PA State Planning Board that the state legislature establish a Regional Police Services Act to provide a clearer path under Pennsylvania law for creating and providing funding for start-up costs of regional police agencies.

Commissioner Scott said that information to show that a new concept is viable and worthy of legislation change is why the county should pursue this study now.

Sheriff Jozwiak offered to obtain information and models of county based police departments from the National Sheriff's Association.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Terry L. Styer, Chief Clerk