

**Commissioners' Workshop Meeting
Tuesday, September 26, 2006**

I. CALL TO ORDER:

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, September 26, 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 Chief Clerk Terry Styer.

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

II. PRESENTATION

Gene Burkhart – Berks Guild of Craftsman discussed his organization's representation of Berks County in the Capitol Centennial Celebration Parade in Harrisburg on September 30, 2006. He said that the Berks Guild is the largest chapter in Pennsylvania and were very please to participate in representation of the County. Commissioner Schwank also announced that the Reading High School Marching Band will be performing in a pre-parade performance before the VIP stand at the Capitol building.

III. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS / REQUESTS:

Budget Department:

- A. Resolution authorizing 2006 Budget Transfers in the amount of \$11,000 and 2006 Appropriations in the amount \$14,262 per listing dated September 22, 2006. Bob Patrizio, Budget Director, presented the report.
- B. Motion authorizing execution of Contract Agreements/ Amendments as furnished by the Contract Coordinator, per attached listing dated September 25, 2006. Candy Noll, Contract Coordinator, presented the list of contracts.

Human Resource Director:

- A. Human Resource Recommendations per list dated September 26, 2006. Jennifer Biehn, Assistant Director of Human Resources, presented the recommendations.

Facilities:

- A. Resolution accepting the proposal from L. Robert Kimball & Associates dated 8/28/06 to amend contract number VC-1996-04 dated 2/12/04 (resolution numbers 91-04 and 439-05) for a additional professional services to expand the kitchen design scope for the Berks County Prison Alterations and Additions for a lump sum fee of \$19,500.00. The additional design fee is to accommodate service for 2,000 persons per meal. Jim Strohecker presented this proposal.

Solicitor:

- A. Resolution authorizing execution of a Lease Agreement between Edward J. Dimarcantonio 24 Louella Court, Suite 240, Wayne, Pennsylvania, and the County of Berks for offices space located at 414 Blair Avenue, Reading, for Magisterial District Court 23-1-05 for a five (5) year term beginning January 1, 2007 and ending December 31, 2011.
- B. Resolution authorizing execution of an Extension to Lease Agreement between the Township of South Heidelberg, 68A North Galen Hall Road, Wernersville, Pennsylvania, and the County of Berks for office space located at 68B North Galen Hall Road, Wernersville, Pennsylvania, for District Court 23-1-01 for a one year beginning September 1, 2006 and ending August 31, 2007. Faith Phillips, Special Courts Administrator, explained the lease agreements.

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

- A. Resolution to appoint Chris R. Ehret to the Berks County Environmental Advisory Council for a 2 year term ending 6/11/2008, replacing Tom Powers, who resigned.
- B. Commissioner Schwank said she received a call from John Dillobar of the PA Dept of Agriculture, Office of Weights and Measures, in response to a letter that she sent to him regarding the Berks County program. He reported that assessments of all gasoline pumps and scales in Berks County will begin this week and will continue for approximately three months. She said he also expressed an interest in either buying or borrowing the County's scale equipment.

Commissioner Gajewski

- A. Commissioner Gajewski read from a Reading Eagle news article regarding the increasing costs of government pensions and reiterated the need for the State Legislature to provide changes in the law to allow Counties to change from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution pension plan for its employees.

- B. Commissioner Gajewski updated the board on the NACo Discount Card program and said he would be meeting with the Office of Aging to discuss the plans for this County sponsored program.

Commissioner Scott

- A. Commissioner Scott also discussed the impact the investment market has had on government pension plans and reflected on the prior years where the plans through the investment interest were able to pay for themselves. He said that due to the downward stabilization of the market, many counties will be required or supply the shortfall and used this year's contribution of between 8 and 10 million as the example. He encouraged member of the general public to attend the Pension Board meetings where requests from retirees to add cost of living increases and items such as health care benefits are regular discussions.
- B. County Wide Law Enforcement Study - Commissioner Scott expanded on the article that was in this morning's Reading Eagle, adding comments that he felt were overlooked by the reporter. He said that many citizens in the rural areas that believe the crime problems in Reading don't affect them should be aware of a 2004 crime statistic report that showed an increase in crime in the city by 7.1% while an increase in crime in the suburbs of Reading increased by 10.2%. He also pointed to the largest increase in the cost of County government paid by all of the county's taxpayers is attributed to police and criminal activity due and increase the cost of prosecution, the increasing number of judges needed to hear the cases and then the need to operate and expand the prison due to the increased success in prosecution of the ever increasing number of criminals. He wanted citizens to fully understand that they are already affected by this increase in the crime rate regardless to what part of the county they live and it would be a failure of leadership if this board failed to analyze this and keep an open mind on possible improvements in law enforcement countywide. He indicated he was determined to move ahead with this study and then reflected on what he described as a similar criticism the County received when the Sheriff initiated the plans for the Central Processing unit yet the program has been a success and recently lauded in a professional consultant's evaluation (Management Partners.)

Commissioner Schwank agreed and hoped that this study would provide a thorough analysis to determine how much public safety actually does cost and allow all involved to help determine methods for improvements to how we provide those services. She said the crime rate seems to be on everyone's mind these days and she is certain that some efficiencies will be the outcome of this study.

V. **CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION/ PROCLAMATION:**

Commissioner Scott presented a Proclamation for Wallace Stevens, poet born in Berks County. Marilyn Klimcho accepted on behalf of Berks Bards.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 11:15 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terry L Styer, Chief Clerk