

SPECIAL COMMISSIONERS BOARD MEETING
November 29, 2006 – 6:00 P.M.

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in special session on Wednesday, November 29, 2006 at 6:00 PM 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. Chairperson Judith Schwank called the meeting to order with Commissioner Thomas Gajewski, Commissioner Mark C. Scott, First Assistant Solicitor Christine Sadler, Esq. Chief Clerk Terry L. Styer, and County Administrator William Dennis in attendance.

In addition to the board members, other ROW offers including Recorder of Deeds Ellie Antoine, Treasurer Nelson H. Long, Controller Sandy Graffius and Prothonotary Marianne R. Sutton were in attendance.

The purpose of the meeting was to consider action on Resolution 342.06 fixing the salaries of certain elected officials to be elected in 2007 for terms to begin in 2008 including the Berks County Commissioners, Register of Wills, Controller, Sheriff, Clerk of Courts and Recorder of Deeds. The Chief Clerk was then asked to read in its entirety, the text of the proposed Resolution as currently drafted.

On motion by Commissioner Schwank seconded by Commissioner Gajewski (for the purpose of discussion) the text of the proposed resolution was discussed. Prior to calling for a vote Commissioner Gajewski asked to read a prepared statement in which he read the following;

“In 2003, when this Board of Commissioners was elected, one of the important responsibilities that we all had was to manage the affairs of County Government. One of the ways we did that was to act as a liaison to certain department heads. In fact, most of the departments were divided so that each Commissioner had one-third of them to interact with on a regular basis. In the middle of the term, two of the Commissioners, not me, decided to end the responsibility of having Commissioners act as liaisons to the Department so that we lost the opportunity to better keep the pulse of county government. I thought it was wrong then, and I think it is wrong now. Even if I were inclined to consider a pay raise for the Commissioners, which I am not – I think the pay of Berks County Commissioners is still high when compared to other counties of comparable size, reducing our responsibilities and having less management of county government would make a pay raise a slap in the face to the residents of Berks County. I have not focused on pay raises for the ROW offices and am will to look at that issue separately if time permits.” Commissioner Gajewski then asked First Asst. Solicitor Sadler to respond to his question about holding a separate meeting to decide the ROW offices salaries. She responded by saying that the meeting would have to be advertised specifically noting its purpose. Commissioner Scott noted that a separate meeting would serve no purpose as any increase or decrease for the Commissioners Salaries for the next administration would have to equal to the same percentage basis for the ROW officers. He also referred to the State Statute, that upon a literal interpretation, infers that a single meeting is required for the purpose of setting the elected officials salaries.

Commissioner Schwank discussed the stipends that have historically been set for the Chair of the Commissioners similar to those set for the Controller for serving as Secretary of the Retirement Board. She said she felt that the Chair's stipend should be reduced and separated from the base salary and removed from any future percentage increases if any are approved for the future boards. Commissioner Schwank then made a motion to amend proposed Resolution 342.06 to include the change to the Commissioner Chair's stipend to match that of the County Controller set at \$1,500. The motion died for lack of a second. Commissioner Gajewski made a motion to set the stipend at \$2,000 and the motion died for lack of a second. Commissioner Scott suggested that the stipend be eliminated and discussed the reason being that the Commissioners are all equals and that the position of Chair isn't required to perform additional responsibilities that would require a supplemental salary. Commissioner Gajewski argued that there should be some distinction. Commissioner Schwank said that she agreed with Commissioner Scott that during the last four years, the operation of county government has become more efficient making the Commissioners jobs somewhat easier. She then asked Assistant Solicitor Sadler to explain any legal or county code requirement regarding this stipend and was informed that CCAP indicated that the code clearly states an intended distinction for the position of Chair but does not require it to remain as originally established in the County Code. Hearing this explanation, Commissioner Schwank made a motion to set the stipend for the Chair to the amount matching that of the Controller at \$1,500; the motion was then seconded by Commissioner Gajewski with both voting yes and Commissioner Scott voting no.

Following some additional comments by the Commissioners, the board asked for comments from the public:

Dave Kurzweg, citizen of Laureldale asked if what he understood from the reading of the proposed resolution was that the Commissioners intent was to cap all elected officials salaries starting in 2008? He was told that was a correct understanding.

John Morgan of Ruscobmanor Township asked for clarification on the stipend of the Chair of the Commissioners matching that of the Controller, he was informed that the amended resolution will include that change.

Hearing no additional comments Commissioner Schwank made a motion to approve Resolution 342.06 as amended by the above motion to include the language on the stipends, Commissioner Gajewski seconded the motion with all voting yes to approve noting that while Commissioner Scott voted to approve the resolution he voted against approving a stipend for the commissioner Chair.

With no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 6:55 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Terry L. Styer, Chief Clerk