

## **Commissioners' Workshop Meeting Tuesday, June 10, 2008**

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

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, June 10, 2008, 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 Mark C. Scott called the meeting to order with Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt and Commissioner Christian Leinbach in attendance. Also present were County Administrator, William E. Dennis, Solicitor Alan Miller Esq., and Chief Clerk Terry Styer.

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

### **II. PRESENTATION**

- A. Dr. Craig Fraser, Director of Management Services for The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) attended the meeting to provide a brief overview of the anticipated Countywide Police Services Study. He began by explaining that PERF is a private non-profit organization whose mission is to improve police services nationwide. He said they have worked in over 150 different Police Departments to provide consulting services for resource allocations and to define methods for more effective and efficient ways to provide services. In the Berks plan he said that he expected to contact all 60 of the participating municipalities with about 25 anticipated site visits. He explained that they will be reviewing, among other things, labor agreements, cost studies, work loads, crime data, crime investigation, special units and their underlying agreements, with plans to begin in July and a projected completion report at the end of November.

### **III. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS/REQUESTS:**

#### **Berks Heim:**

Jerry Fudeman, Administrator for the Berks Heim Nursing Home discussed some recent articles regarding the cost of Long Term Care and the change in funding streams to provide more Home Health Care Aids which will allow elderly citizens to remain in their own homes. He said County's decision to build the new facility with approximately 50% less beds fits with this new trend; however, he did say that he has a growing concern for the Governor's budget which shows a 0% increase towards long term nursing facilities. Commissioner Leinbach indicated that he would support holding the Berks Heim meetings again. Commissioner Scott agreed that the meetings are beneficial to the residents and staff when the board visits the Heim. It was decided that the meetings would be held on a monthly basis, as necessary.

**Budget Department:**

- A. Budget Director Bob Patrizio presented the June 6, 2008 budget report showing 2008 Budget Transfers in the amount of \$57,000.
- B. Motion authorizing Mark C. Scott as Chairman of the Board, to execute Contract Agreements/ Amendments as furnished by the Contract Coordinator, per attached listing dated June 9, 2008.

**Solicitor**

- A. Resolution authorizing execution of a Lease Agreement between the County of Berks and Greater Reading Corporate Center, L.P. for the retaining wall located between the Berks County Courthouse and the bank building used to retain the parking lot area.

**IV. COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

Bill Dennis presented his weekly administrator report – copy attached to these minutes.

**V. REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS****Commissioner Leinbach**

- A. Commissioner Leinbach announced the Boyertown sidewalk sales day on Tuesday June 17, 2008 from 10 AM to 4 PM.
- B. Commissioner Leinbach said that he has received feedback on the Hay Creek Trail that was overwhelmingly in opposition of the project and that letters were received from two townships asking additional questions. Commissioner Barnhardt indicated that he has also been receiving the comments in the form of e-mails and phone calls however he said he met with the Union Township officials in response to their questions because the Southern Berks Joint Comprehensive plan (which Birdsboro, Robeson, Union, and Caernarvon Townships have adopted) identifies the Hay Creek trail (named the “proposed Joanna Trail”) as one of the County’s highest recreation priorities. He also said that he met with the Secretary of the DCNR (PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources) and received assurances of a million dollars in grant funds towards the proposed Hay Creek Trail’s construction as the State also lists this proposed trail as a #1 priority in the entire Commonwealth. The Commissioner noted that he regrets the letter that was sent by the previous board and doubts that the county did very much marketing of this project. He said he will continue to meet with those concerned by this project in his office or on site as he feels that the County has not exhausted all avenues to deal with the potential problems the trail presents.

Hay Creek Trail comments continued:

Commissioner Barnhardt said he feels that the recent negative ads are giving people the wrong impression of this board's intention. He said he ran for office committing his support towards Ag Land and Open Space preservation however, he said he will need additional research before he will be ready for a decision on this project. Commissioner Scott said he is now concerned over whether there was an effective abandonment of the rail line because it is still registered in the name of Norfolk Southern on the tax rolls and found what appears to be clear evidence of this fact on one of the deeds of a preserved farm protected under the County Ag Land Preservation program. Commissioner Leinbach then suggested that the County's consultant developed offers to property owners based on inaccurate information and questions the payment to this firm hired to represent the county in acquiring the necessary easements.

**Commissioner Barnhardt**

- A. Commissioner Barnhardt announced that the evening meeting proposed for 7 PM on June 26, 2008 in the Lower Alsace Township building for the purpose of beginning discussions on the master plan for the Antietam Lake Property has been confirmed and the public is welcome to attend.

**Commissioner Scott**

- A. Resolution establishing Clean and Green land values: Commissioner Scott asked Ag Coordinator Sheila Miller to review the Clean and Green Agricultural Values used by the Assessment Office because of a letter prompted by the Pomona Grange's request of the Commissioners to address the annual increases in Ag. Land enrolled in the County's Clean and Green program. She explained that several amendments were added to Act 319, the Clean and Green Act (which provides preferential assessment for qualifying agricultural land.) One change provides counties with the option to adopt the State's valuation of farm land on an annual basis. She explained that the Berks County Assessment office reviews these values on an annual basis and determines whether or not to adopt them absent any input or oversight of the Commissioners. She said that the result of this is that farmland outside of the preferred assessment program doesn't change in value until the county implements a county wide reassessment program, yet these farm properties enrolled in the clean and green act are re-assessed nearly every year. She encouraged the county to adopt this resolution thereby eliminating the cost to the county to annually establish agricultural values and to encourage farms to remain in Clean and Green, regardless of the fluctuating state valuation reports.
- B. Adopt a resolution authorizing a contract / agreement with John Heffner, Esq. as Special Legal Counsel on rail road rights-of-way issues for the Colebrookdale rail spur.

**VI. CITIZEN COMMENT/BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR**

Ed Cone, who stated that he is representing adjoining property owners of the proposed Hay Creek Trail, asked the Commissioners when a decision on the future of the proposed trail would be made. Commissioner Barnhardt said he would need an additional month or two for more research. Commissioner Leinbach said he has already decided but preferred to wait for his colleagues to promote his position to vote no on eminent domain proceedings for a trail project.

Karen Dietrich Schwartz, Employment Representative, Pennsylvania CareerLink Berks County, took issue with a financial report presented to the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and now to the County Commissioners from Ed McCann, Director of Career Link. The report projects savings as a result of restructuring the workforce from county paid employees to privatizing some of the jobs. Commissioner Barnhardt responded by saying that he had attended the two hour WIB meeting last Friday and felt that the WIB board is not taking this recommendation lightly but rather with considerable thought as will the Commissioners. He added that the financial reports as well as the numbers provided by Ms. Dietrich Schwartz will be reviewed by the County Administrator and Budget Director before the Commissioners will make any decisions.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 12:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Terry L Styer, Chief Clerk