

## **Operations Minutes January 19, 2021**

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 9:30 a.m. via Microsoft Teams Live pursuant to due notice to Board members and the public.

The following matters were discussed:

1. Economic Development Strategy Discussion – Pam Shupp Menet, Deputy CAO and Director of Economic Development; David Hunter, Executive Director of the Berks County Planning Commission; Ashley Showers, Assistant Director of the Berks County Planning Commission; and Jeremy Zaborowski, Executive Director of the Berks County Industrial Development Authority. Note-members of the Berks County Redevelopment were unable to attend today’s discussion.
  - What is Economic Development –  
The Board of Commissioners believes economic development in Berks County should be about creating good business opportunities for people to want to stay in our community and come to our community, and building a tax base to help take some of the burden off taxpayers, and creating a good quality of life for Berks County residents. The Commissioners believe we should create an environment that is beneficial to business growth, and to a better job of keeping our youth in Berks County, both high school and college students. The County should encourage municipal cooperation in economic strategy and developing partnerships, and should provide resources for businesses already in the community to allow for growth.
  - What do you perceive as the gaps in Economic Development in the County –  
The Comprehensive Plan should be updated on a more frequent basis, not less than 5 or more than 10 years. Clarify who is responsible for performing certain duties, define teams and assign responsibility for funding mechanisms.  
There is a major gap between the City and County. The City is the heart of the County, and there needs to be a better understanding from all officials from the City and County, as well as the citizens.  
Agriculture is the number one industry in the county by revenue and part of the county’s character – we need to do more to connect ag to higher-value add processes and opportunities.  
Municipalities need to re-examine their zoning ordinances, many of them have outdated ordinances that hinder rather than help businesses. The time it takes for businesses to get permits and approvals is also a challenge. There should be a centralized effort reaching out to Latino businesses. We need to speed up utility build-out; be more proactive rather than reactive.
  - What is the County’s role in Economic Development –  
County’s policies and activities need to encourage growth of new and existing businesses rather than restrict them. The hiring of Pam Shupp Menet as Berks

County Director of Economic Development demonstrated a major commitment to our local economy that a person is now at the county spending a significant portion of their time on economic development in the county.

Suggestion to utilize more programs like Joint Economic Approval Program (JEAP) to improve processes within the County.

Suggestion to provide \$1 million a for economic development year as we do for agriculture land preservation.

- What are the metrics to measure a plan's success –  
Jobs, both the number of jobs and the wage levels and quality of the job. Broad business growth across multiple industry sectors. Business tax growth on the commercial side. Broad geographic and demographic benefit across the County. We need to make sure development is not at the expense of the character of our communities.  
When we are measuring jobs, we need to measure net new jobs, and must make sure we are also not losing jobs, as well as tracking increase in wages. Reuse of existing buildings versus building new buildings within the county.  
Increase business opportunities for new starts, and they should be a diverse in various industries. Youth retention and inclusivity of all cultures. The City and County entities must focus on Brownfield sites.
2. Jail Projects – Matt Salkowski, Director of Facilities and Operations, Rex Levengood, Deputy Director of Facilities and Operations; Janine Quigley, Warden, Berks County Jail; and Dorn Reppert, Facilities Manager, Berks County Jail.  
Mr. Salkowski presented the following projects for Board approval. Both of these projects have been in process for some time, and Mr. Salkowski was tasked to finalize these projects and is seeking approval to move forward.
    - A. Trailer Project – Mr. Salkowski reported he is asking for Board approval to move forward with the Jail Trailer project at a not to exceed cost of \$800,000. Also included in this amount is the cost to install an emergency generator which was not part of the original scope of the project. Installation of an emergency generator is necessary because of the unexpected and sometimes frequent loss of power at the Jail complex. Mr. Salkowski is recommending and seeking approval to provide the backup generator for the newly installed trailer, the SOG and the maintenance building. The not to exceed cost is all inclusive of plumbing, electric, permitting and moving from the BCRC to the new location; and is expected to be completed with 10 to 12 weeks. No in depth discussions were held because of the security issues surrounding the project.  
All Commissioners said they support the project, including installation of the emergency generator at all three locations.  
A motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt to approve the Jail Trailer Project, including installation of an emergency generator at a not to exceed cost of \$800,000. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. The motion carried.



- B. Switch Gear and Transfer Switch Project – Mr. Salkowski reported this project was on hold for various reasons including the COVID pandemic, and is seeking approval to complete this project in tandem with the Jail Trailer and Emergency Generator project. The Warden also asked for approval today because it will take at least 16 weeks for the parts to be delivered.

A motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt to approve moving forward with the switch gear and transfer switch project at a not to exceed amount of \$300,000. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. The motion carried.

Comments - None

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt to adjourn. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. The meeting adjourned at 10:37 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk