

Operations Minutes January 26, 2021

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, January 26, 2021 at 9:30 a.m. via Microsoft Teams Live pursuant to due notice to Board members and the public.

1. ES&S Electronic Poll Books discussion – Commissioner Leinbach, Commissioner Barnhardt and Commissioner Rivera; Ron Rutkowski, Director of Election Services and Karen Barsoum, Assistant Director of Election Services; Christine Valeriano, Regional Sales Manager and Kyle Dubbert, ES&S (Previous discussions on electronic poll books were held at November 10, 2020 and January 5, 2021 Operations Meetings.)
Commissioner Barnhardt presented a recommendation to move forward with the next phase of the County’s new election system, which includes the purchase of electronic poll books. A proposal was received from ES&S in the amount of \$1,128,530, which includes 440 electronic poll books for the County’s 2020 polling locations, a secondary printer and a 5 year warranty.
Commissioner Barnhardt is advocating that as the County did with the new electronic voting system, a sampling of the electronic poll books is placed in various polling locations for poll workers and public inspection, with the intention of implementing the new poll books in the November 2021 General Election.
Ms. Valeriano explained some of the benefits of electronic poll books is poll workers do not have to set up and manage the large cumbersome poll books and the ability to immediately upload signatures to the State system, saving a huge amount of time at the polling locations. The electronic poll books are not connected to internet and are stand-alone units and very secure.
When asked by Karen Shuey, a reporter with the Reading Eagle, Ms. Valeriano is confident the electronic poll books will receive State certification early February, noting the system has already been tested at Federal labs.
Ms. Barsoum and Mr. Rutkowski talked about how electronic poll books will save staff and poll worker time as well as financial savings to the County.
Commissioner Leinbach and Commissioner Rivera agreed with Commissioner Barnhardt’s recommendation to move forward with the purchase of electronic poll books and test the system at various precincts during the May Primary Election and pending certification by the State.
At this time the Chair entertained a motion that would approve the purchase of electronic poll books based on the current ES&S quote, once there is State certification.
Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to purchase 440 ES&S electronic poll books with the 5 year warranty, and be mindful of additional storage space that may be necessary going forward, and implementing a soft rollout in the Primary, with full implementation for the November election, at a not to exceed cost of \$1,128,530.
Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera.
Mr. Seaman suggested amending the motion to include based on final certification by the State and approval by the Solicitor’s Office of the agreement.
The amendment was unanimously accepted.
The motion carried.

2. Greater Reading Chamber Alliance/County Partnership 2021 discussion – Pam Shupp Menet, Deputy CAO and Director of Economic Development.

As a result of the economic development strategy discussion held at the January 19, 2021 Operations Meeting, Ms. Shupp Menet said the economic development action plan is a plan led by the County while actively engaging County residents and more importantly the business community. Ms. Shupp Menet believes it is the desire of the Commissioners to better coordinate the efforts of the County government with the business community and the organization the County has relied on in is the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA). Ms. Shupp Menet asked the Board of Commissioners to consider entering into an agreement with GRCA and to consider a financial commitment in an amount up to \$500,000. Of that \$500,000, \$200,000 would be provided in the form of a challenge match to use for economic development activity that benefits Berks County. GRCA has committed to business attraction, retention and growth, Agri business promotion and support to Total Berks as part of their organizational strategy.

Commissioner Barnhardt supported the allocation of \$303,000 for 2021 believing GRCA will continue on its economic development plan with or without the County's financial assistance. Commissioner Barnhardt also noted the recent creation of a new Deputy Director of Agriculture as his reason for his support of the lesser amount, and is willing to revisit this in the fall or early 2022, after a review of what GRCA has done the first half of 2021.

Commissioner Leinbach supported the request of Ms. Shupp to enter into a one year agreement with GRCA and to provide \$500,000 of which \$200,000 would be provided in the form of a match, something the County has done the last couple of years, and with his understanding a thorough review will be done after a six month period.

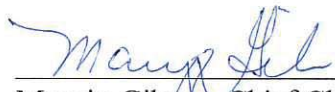
Commissioner Rivera believes the partnership is essential and important, and to focus on attracting and retaining businesses in Berks County. Commissioner Rivera also wants to see a review of GRCA's work in six months.

The Chair asked if there was a motion to approve an agreement with GRCA subject to final review and approval by the Solicitor's Office. Commissioner Rivera so motioned. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Barnhardt to move the motion forward. Seeing no further discussion Commissioner Leinbach and Commissioner Rivera voted Aye and Commissioner Barnhardt voted No. The motion carried by a 2-1 vote.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Commissioner Rivera motioned to adjourn the meeting. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Barnhardt. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Comments are attached hereto.

Respectfully Submitted,



Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk

Source	Type	Identity	Timestamp	Content
Moderator	Announcement	Heather Berger (HBerger@countyofberks.com)	1/25/2021 12:08	Public comment will be accepted through the Q&A function. Comments or questions must be germane to the topic being discussed and include your full name and municipality where you reside. If you are from the media, please put your name and who you are with. Comments will be read during the meeting and should not be considered to be interactive dialog with the Board. Any response to public comment will be done at the discretion of the Chairperson.
Attendee	Question	Karen Shuey, Reading Eagle (Unverified)	1/26/2021 14:42	When are you expecting the state will certify the use of electronic poll books and is there any concern that this particular model would not be certified?
Moderator	Response	Christian Leinbach (CLeinbach@countyofberks.com)	1/26/2021 14:43	I'll ask this shortly(Karen Shuey, Reading Eagle (Unverified) asked "When are you expecting the state will certify the use of electronic poll books and is there any concern that this particular model would not be certified?")