

## **Operations Minutes**

### **May 5, 2020**

Pursuant to due notice to Board members and the public the Operations meeting was held via Microsoft Teams Live at 9:30 a.m..

Participating were Commissioner Christian Y. Leinbach, Commissioner Kevin S. Barnhardt, Commissioner Michael S. Rivera, Executive Assistants Mary Buerer, Jessica Blausner and Barbara Lopez, Chief Administration Officer Ronald R. Seaman, County Solicitor Christine M. Sadler, Human Resources Director Jessica Weaknecht, and Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk. Also attending were, Chief Financial Officer Robert Patrizio, Heather Berger, Application Specialist & Trainer and Producer, Lori Schneider, Implementation Specialist, and Tim Smith, Enterprise Manager, Information Systems.

The following items were discussed:

1. Ag Center Groups and Meeting Policy –  
A request from Penn State Extension for an update on the Ag Center Policy regarding meetings. The Commissioners agreed that until we are allowed to hold group meetings in other County facilities, we will not be allowing group meetings in the Agriculture Center. The Commissioners directed Ron Seaman to reach out to the Extension Office and let them know that until further the status is no internal or external meetings are allowed at the Ag Center.
  
2. Commissioner Leinbach reported to date the advertising budget for all media expenditures went over budget and totals \$32,487.20.  
The Commissioners believe all advertising efforts have been very effective and want to continue.  
Ron Seaman recommended adopting a resolution raising the not to exceed amount from \$25,000 to \$50,000.  
Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to raise the not to exceed amount for advertising from \$25,000 to \$50,000. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera, and all voted unanimously to approve the action.  
It was also agreed to have more bilingual posters on BARTA buses and continue advertising on WFMZ and the Reading Eagle.  
It was also agreed to target the age group of upper teens through 20 something through different medium. Commissioner Leinbach said he can do ‘in app’ advertising that would appear on games, etc.
  
3. Discussed the options regarding Agricultural Center leases with the federal government (NRCS and FSA) and the Berks County Conservation District.  
Commissioner Leinbach asked his colleagues permission to reach out to Senator Toomey, Congressman Meuser and William Crozier at the White House, explaining because we are in a different place now before COVID, the County is not in the position to meet all the build out requirements imposed before COVID 19, and the County’s goal is to keep NRCS and FSA as tenants long term.

Commissioner Barnhardt and Commissioner Rivera agreed Commissioner Leinbach should reach out and suggested including Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue.

Commissioner Leinbach noted the deadline to respond to the lease proposal has been extended to June 16.

The Board decided to see how we make out with the Federal government before we respond to the Conservation District's questions regarding the lease with the Conservation District.

Commissioner Barnhardt brought up the issue of storage of voting machines.

The Board agreed we should look at alternative locations to store voting machines, and time is of the essence with the June 2 election quickly approaching, directed Ron Seaman to reach out to Steve Willem.

The Board also asked Ron to reach out to the Conservation District to see what the Conservation District are willing to pay per square foot, and to obtain numbers for upgrading the warehouse if 1) the County builds out the common space, and 2) if the Conservation District builds out the common space at their costs.

Commissioner Rivera suggested in responding to the federal government to start out with a price per square foot based on the current condition of the facility; and then increase the square footage once renovations are complete.

On a separate matter regarding rental of warehouse space to store PPEs and related supplies, Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to authorize the Chair to sign a lease agreement for rental of a warehouse to store PPE and related supplies, subject to final review and approval by the Solicitor's Office. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera, and the motion carried.

4. Braucher Farms lease –

The Board received a letter from Mr. Braucher requesting a five-year lease extension to the lease for farmland. Because the County is obligated to demonstrate we are getting fair market value for the land, which would be met by going out for bid, and because there has been some interest from the public in leasing the land, the Board directed Ron Seaman to determine how quickly an RFP can be put out. If time does not allow for an RFP, then the Board agreed to reach out to Mr. Braucher offering a short term lease extension.

5. Jessica Weaknecht asked the Board for direction on holding the June 12<sup>th</sup> Blood Drive. Ms. Weaknecht stated the Miller Keystone Blood bank is able to safely and socially distance to accommodate a blood drive. The Board was unanimous in their approval to move forward with the blood drive as long as health and safety guidelines are followed.

6. Epler School –

The Board was notified an anonymous individual stepped forward to fund the balance needed to move Epler School. The Commissioners agreed to let them proceed with the move, but it is the responsibility of Friends of Epler School to provide the maintenance, improvements and management of the School. The Commissioners agreed to finalize the agreement with the Friends of Epler School emphasizing there are no guarantees or costs from the County.

Christine Sadler recommended adopting a resolution withdrawing funding the County agreed to share pursuant to Resolution 441.19 because of the current economic times. The Commissioners agreed to list on Thursday's Commissioners' Meeting Agenda.

Commissioner Barnhardt will contact Bern Township regarding permits.

7. 69kv Line at Airport -

Commissioner Leinbach reported there is an ongoing disagreement between the Reading Airport Authority and MetEd concerning a request to run a line across airport property on the western end of the main runway. Met Ed has received FAA approval to run the line over the property, but the Authority is concerned if they give approval, they will not be able to expand the runway because of the line, and the parties are currently at an impasse.

Commissioner Leinbach asked his colleagues if they would support him attending the next Authority meeting to assist in a possible resolution that would benefit both parties. Both Commissioner Barnhardt and Commissioner Rivera agreed.

8. Public Meetings and Microsoft LIVE –

Ron Seaman advised Information Systems will be the controlling force for all public meetings, both posting and Microsoft LIVE going forward.

Good of the Order:

Commissioner Barnhardt heard back from the Governor's Office about what counties need to do to be engaged in moving from red to yellow and yellow to green. The Governor's staff is aggressively monitoring and watching the counties that will move to yellow next week, are appreciative of what Berks County is doing, and encouraged Berks County to keep pushing the message and make sure people are following the rules. It doesn't appear imminent Berks County will be moving to another color any time soon because of our location in a highly populated area of the State.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:53 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk