

## **Commissioner's Operations Minutes July 6, 2021**

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, July 6, 2021 at 9:30 a.m. via Microsoft Teams Live pursuant to due notice to Board Members and the public. The Meeting was called to order by Chairman Leinbach who announced the agenda topics to be discussed as follows:

1. Loss of Revenue funds consideration under the American Rescue Plan.
2. Discussion of the Airport Authority letter to the Commissioners requesting the consideration of the dissolution of the Airport Authority.
3. Review proposed new language on Public Comment Resolution.

Commissioner Leinbach recognized Pamela Shupp Menet, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and Director of Economic Development to begin the discussion relative to the potential allocation of American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding to the Reading Fightin Phils Stadium Project and the Santander Arena. Joining the discussion was Scott Hunsicker, Reading Fightin Phils General Manager and David Farrar, Santander Arena Manager. Mr. Hunsicker stated that for 2020, the negative economic impact realized by the Fightins was 8.64 million dollars. Mr. Farrar stated the combined loss for the Arena and Performing Arts Center was 6.11 million dollars. Ms. Menet noted that the final ARP regulations have not yet been fully promulgated, it appears that ARP funds could be appropriated to assist these organization under the interim rule which reads as follows, "To respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses and non-profits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel and hospitality; also described as economic harms to...impacted industries..." Given the sizable losses realized by these organizations, Ms. Menet indicated her recommendation would be to consider an appropriation of up to 3 million dollars to each entity. Both Mr. Hunsicker and Mr. Farrar stated that they will also be requesting funding from the City and are confident they will receive support for their request. After further discussion, on motion by Commissioner Rivera, seconded by Commissioner Leinbach, it was voted to have an appropriate Resolution prepared for formal adoption at the July 15, 2021 Commissioners' Meeting, with Commissioners Leinbach and Rivera voting, "Yes," and Commissioner Barnhardt dissenting based on his earlier request that any County funding support be based on a proportionate share of the total funding request being provided by the City of Reading.

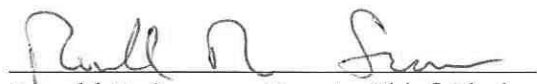
Commissioner Leinbach recognized Michael Setley, Esq., Chairman of the Berks County Airport Authority, who addressed the Authority's Letter of Request that the County consider dissolution of the Authority, assume the existing Authority debt and subsequent operation of the airport. He noted that a recent financial review of the Authority finances indicated that it would become insolvent sometime in the next seven (7) years. Commissioner Leinbach then recognized Pamela Shupp Menet, Deputy CAO/Economic Development Director and a member of the Airport Authority, to review actions that would be necessary to consider the dissolution of the Authority. The listing included the following actions: Initiating a conversation with the FAA and any other regulatory agency with approval authority; a review of all existing airport contracts; a review of current cash flow projections for the current operation of the airport and the development of cash

flow projections for its continuation as a County Department; an evaluation of the function, potential expansion and monetization of the sewer treatment plant; determination of the appropriate succession of airport management (which may or may not include a private contract); a review and identification of marketing and growth opportunities; an assessment and review of the legal ramifications and liability to the County and the engagement of a private consultant to evaluate capital projects and potential opportunities. Commissioner Leinbach indicated his support for the recommended next steps to assist the Commissioners in arriving at an informed decision on the Authority's request. Commissioner Barnhardt noted that he spoke with almost all the Authority Members and at this point in time, only supports undertaking the recommended due diligence as outlined by Ms. Shupp but given the current workload of the Departments that would need to be engaged in this endeavor, postpone this task for one (1) year. Commissioner Leinbach disagreed with any postponement. Commissioner Rivera requested additional information before making a final decision on the matter, specifically a prioritization of tasks to be undertaken to provide the required information. It was requested that Pamela prepare such a prioritization and distribute it among the Commissioners. Pamela then requested and a majority of the Board agreed, to potentially engage a Consultant with the expertise in regional airport operation and management to assist in this process.

Lastly, Commissioner Leinbach recognized Christine Sadler, County Solicitor, to review proposed new language to the current Resolution that sets forth the policy covering Public Comment at meetings of the County Commissioners as we move to utilizing hybrid meetings where the public is involved in-person as well as virtually. The proposed additions/revisions were reviewed in detail with Ms. Sadler explaining the rationale behind the proposed changes. She specifically noted that none of the changes were intended to limit the public's ability to comment or otherwise express concerns with County business but rather to limit such comment to actual County business or activity. It was also noted that these changes would impact the content of the statement read by a Commissioners' Executive Assistant at the start of the meetings and therefore, that would also require some revision. On motion by Commissioner Barnhardt, seconded by Commissioner Rivera, it was unanimously voted to have the proposed revised Resolution covering the policy for Public Comment at Commissioners' Meetings listed for formal adoption at the July 15, 2021 Meeting.

Commissioner Barnhardt brought from the floor, a request that the proposed letter of response to the PA Fish and Board Commission prepared by Cody Kauffman, First Assistant County Solicitor, be reviewed by his fellow Commissioners for action at an upcoming meeting. It was noted that there was no Commissioners' Meeting to be held on July 8<sup>th</sup> nor any Operations Meeting to be held on July 13<sup>th</sup>.

There being no further business to come before the Board, it was on motion by Commissioner Barnhardt, seconded by Commissioner Rivera, unanimously voted to adjourn.

  
Ronald R. Seaman, Deputy Chief Clerk