

Operations Minutes August 11, 2020

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, August 11, 2020 at 9:30 a.m. via Microsoft Teams Live, pursuant to due notice to Board members and the public.

Participating were Commissioner Christian Y. Leinbach, Commissioner Kevin S. Barnhardt, Executive Assistants Mary Buerer, Jessica Blauser and Barbara Lopez, Chief Administration Officer Ronald R. Seaman, County Solicitor Christine M. Sadler, and Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk. Commissioner Michael S. Rivera and Human Resources Director Jessica Weaknecht were absent.

The following matters were discussed:

1. Rebuild Berks Status Report – Pam Shupp Menet, VP of External Affairs and Leah Fasnacht, Director of Communications, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (“GRCA”) and Matt Strunk, Strunk Media.
Leah Fasnacht provided a brief overview of the Phase 1 and Phase 2. Phase 1 began in July where an integrated marketing campaign in both English and Spanish was created. Phase 2 took a more segmented approach focusing on projections and a new website, a Connect Local campaign and training for small businesses.
Matt Strunk provided an update on how they are tracking the campaign, and reported to date there over 300 photo shoots incorporating real Berks County businesses; have billboards up in 19 different locations.
In August they will have print ads featuring real businesses, will run articles in local newspapers, including digital ads, send out direct mailer and run radio ads on most local radio stations. All will be in both English and Spanish.
Matt also reported the Rebuild Berks website has a live interactive Dashboard, and at the end of each month there will be a comprehensive overview/summary of the market campaign.
Commissioner Barnhardt reported the County budgeted CARES Act funds for the Rebuild Berks campaign.
2. C-PACE – (Commercial - Property Assessed Clean Energy) –
Ron Seaman, Holly Edinger, Sustainable Energy Fund, Pam Shupp Menet, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance, Dennis Adams, Berks County Treasurer and Ashley Showers, Berks County Planning Commission.
Ron Seaman reported a presentation on this Program was held earlier this year at an Operations Meeting, and it being brought up again because there is interest from a business in applying for this Program.
Holly Edinger said this Program provides long term funding for energy efficiency, renewable energy and water conservation, and is repaid through a special assessment similar to property tax assessment. Ms. Edinger noted 11 Pennsylvania counties have adopted this Program, which would be approved by a county resolution. There is no cost to the County, as the costs are reimbursed from the tax.

Pam Shupp Menet said this Program promotes the adaptable reuse and rehabilitation of existing buildings, brings in additional financing methods to projects and brings private dollars to Berks County thereby removing full reliance on government funding, and promotes sustainability and commitment to energy savings.

Ashley Showers fully supports this Program and believes this is the time to utilize the Program in developing the County's commitment in strengthening the City/County relationship and promoting change in Berks County, and to promote sustainable and green energy.

Dennis Adams agrees it is a good program, but has questions on how the special taxes should be collected. Mr. Adams will reach out to some of the other County's who have approved C-PACE on how they are handling receiving the money.

Commissioner Barnhardt supports the Program, making sure all the details are worked out and it has been reviewed by legal.

Commissioner Leinbach supports moving forward cautiously making sure all the pieces have been reviewed and all concerns have been addressed before a final resolution is put before the Board.

Ron Seaman was directed to lead the effort, and will also bring Commissioner Rivera up-to-date. Mr. Seaman will ask Holly to submit some resolutions from other counties that we can review with the group, our legal department and Dennis Adams then bring before the Board.

3. CARES Act funded Berks County COVID-19 Restart Fund: Guidelines and concept paper for the program – Ken Pick, Redevelopment Authority, Pamela Shupp Menet, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance, Joan Brodhead, Community First Fund and Jeff Caltabiano, Witt O'Brien's.

Ken Pick reported Commissioner Rivera, Pam, Joan and himself have been working to design a program using some of the CARES Act funding to help small businesses. Mr. Pick said they used the State's program, made modifications and that is what is being presented today. The amount of funds being requested from the County's share of CARES Act funds is \$10,000,000.

Ms. Brodhead reported grants can be used only by Berks County based small businesses with annual revenues up to \$2 million and with 50 or fewer full-time employees and range from \$10,000 to \$50,000 based on annual business revenue. Priority will be given to certain industries such as restaurants, hospitality, personal care and child-care and adult day care. Businesses must be primarily located in Berks and are eligible if they did not receive financial support through the County's Small Business Restart Program or the Pennsylvania Small Business Grant Program.

Ms. Brodhead commented that eligible business must be for profit, in operation as of February 15, 2020 and must currently be operating or have a plan to reopen. The application portal will be open for 10 business days and is available in both English and Spanish.

Mr. Broadhead said Community First Fund will assist in outreach, marketing and technical assistance and a 1-800 number will be available 12 hours a day.

Ms. Brodhead went over the grantee selection process and tentative timeline of the grant process, and asked if the County could be ready to move forward by August 19, 2020.

A discussion was held regarding questions and concerns of the Commissioners regarding the \$2 million cap, when to set a budget and the amount of the request.

After discussion, Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to approve the Berks County Small Business New Start Program, and increase the annual revenue to \$3 million, and allocate \$6 million initially from the County's CARES Act funds. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Leinbach with the understanding that the parameters are there to help those who need it most but noting there is a limited amount of dollars and the process is fair. Seeing no further comments, said motion carried.

Ms. Shupp Menet advised the Commissioners the County will need to enter into an agreement with Community First Fund to administer the Program.

Commissioner Leinbach directed Ms. Shupp Menet to follow up with Ron Seaman and Kelly Laubach to get this process completed and listed for the Commissioners' Meeting August 20, 2020.

4. Permittum LTC Solution – Online Weapons Permit Application –
Eric Weaknecht, Berks County Sheriff and Paul Bradshaw, Assistant County Solicitor
Sheriff Weaknecht reported his office went from in-person gun licensing to doing only on-line permit applications, and had to increase staff to perform data entry and the complete the process. To date, the Sheriff's Office has completed 2,500 applications and has 250 apps waiting to be processed, and expects over 2,400 applications will be renewed.
Sheriff Weaknecht said Permittum turns the process to a web-based application process, populates the fields and when the application is approved, schedules the appointments. The Sheriff's Office still controls who and how many come into the building. This program should eliminate 4/5 staff currently dedicated to the process and can be reassigned to other duties. There is no cost to the County. There is a user fee to the applicant and a credit card fee. The Solicitor's Office has reviewed the Agreement and has made modifications which have been sent back to Permittum.
Commissioner Leinbach and Commissioner Barnhardt fully support the Sheriff's request. When the vendor approves the modifications and returns an executed agreement, it can be listed for execution at a Commissioners' Meeting.
5. Discussion regarding the Youth Recreational Fields (YRF) – Kevin Barnhardt
Commissioner Barnhardt provided an update to the Board on the status of the agreement with YFC to use the fields at the Youth Recreation Facility. Because of COVID-19, YFC does not foresee utilizing the fields this year, but hopefully next Spring, 2021. Commissioner Barnhardt reported the condition of the fields is progressing nicely.
Commissioner Barnhardt asked that because of the dangerous and deteriorating condition of the Green Monster, he and Park Staff is requesting approval to

remove what is left of the steel beams and fencing that surround the Green Monster. After discussion and agreement to proceed, Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to remove what is left of the Green Monster, with the exception of the beams for the small score board, and obtain pricing for new fencing. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Leinbach, and the motion carried.

6. Ron Seaman brought to the Board's attention a request for approval for additional work for parking lot improvements at the North Campus. Mr. Seaman said certain driveways and paths at the Youth Recreational Facility ("YRF") are in poor and unsafe condition and were not included in the original scope of work, and because contractor is still performing under the current contract and the equipment is there, Great Valley Consultants has submitted an estimate to include all the remaining repairs for the driveways and paths at the YRF for a total \$225,793. Furthermore, because there is not enough money in the current budget, Mr. Seaman asked to the Board to also approve the transfer of \$175,000 to get the work completed.

After discussion, Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to approve additional work and the transfer of \$175,00. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Leinbach, and the motion carried.

7. Department Head Updates – Kevin Barnhardt
Commissioner Barnhardt asked his colleagues to consider having department heads present current activities within their departments during the last hour of the Operations Meeting, possibly two per hour, thirty minutes per department. Commissioner Leinbach is open to considering the idea.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:10 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk