

Operations Minutes August 25, 2020

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, August 25, 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, Commissioner Michael S. Rivera, Executive Assistants Mary Buerer, Jessica Blausler and Barbara Lopez, Chief Administration Officer Ronald R. Seaman, County Solicitor Christine M. Sadler, Human Resources Director Jessica Weaknecht and Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk.

The following matters were discussed:

1. Exide Cleanup Report – David Hunter and Fred Osman, Osman Environmental Solutions, LLC –
David Hunter reported that on June 9, 2020, the EPA issued a Public Notice of proposed corrective actions for cleanup at the Exide property in Laureldale. Mr. Hunter provided a brief report on past activity to cleanup the site and informed the Commissioners Osman Environmental Solutions was previously hired to respond on behalf of the County. Mr. Osman was again retained to assist the County for review and response to the recent EPA notice. Mr. Osman provided a summary of his review and would recommend to Commissioners that the EPA to do another risk assessment and study of the children living in the Laureldale area, and whether the cleanup was adequate in removing the lead. The Commissioners agreed to send a letter with comments and recommendations to the EPA; to participate along with Mr. Osman in the virtual public hearing, and specifically request the EPA to perform another lead study to compare it with the benchmark done several years ago.
A formal motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt to perform the three actions heretofore mentioned. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. Commissioner Leinbach suggested, and Commissioner Barnhardt and Commissioner Rivera agreed, the letter also be sent to the entire Berks federal and state delegation. The motion carried.
David Hunter will prepare the draft letter for Commissioner review and approval.
2. Overview of the allocation of County CARES Act money –
Commissioner Leinbach disclosed each Commissioner had a conversation with Bob Patrizio, who reported at this juncture there will not be any savings related to the 2020 Budget, but we are looking at significant costs specifically related to the Berks Heim, because the number of residents is down dramatically.
Commissioner Barnhardt stated any savings realized by the furloughs, travel moratorium, etc. have been consumed by other expenses not recoverable by CARES Act funds.
Commissioner Barnhardt also reported the County is providing \$6 million to the New Start Business Loan Program that will be starting September 10, 2020.

Commissioner Barnhardt reported Witt O'Brien's is building a team for the County to assist in reviewing all requests for CARES Act funds to see what qualifies and what doesn't.

Specific requests for CARES Act money –

Commissioner Barnhardt reported similar to the business loan program, the Board is looking to set up and is asking for a food security allocation of \$600,000 per month for Helping Harvest.

Jay Worrall, Helping Harvest, said he has seen a tremendous increase in demand and distribution since March, and the average distribution is up monthly from about \$725,000 worth of food to about \$1.3 million worth of food.

Helping Harvest also needs to hire additional truck drivers and warehouse workers.

After discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt to create a food insecurity allocation through the County's CARES Act funds beginning August through December for \$600,000 to Helping Harvest. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. The motion carried.

Commissioner Leinbach commented from a prioritization standpoint, it is imperative that every request stands on its own merits, and that includes the County.

Response to State House Representation Stanley Saylor, Majority Appropriations Chairman -

As background, Pennsylvania counties have been asked to submit a letter providing information regarding allocation and use of CARES Act dollars.

In addition to submitting the letter to Chairman Saylor, the Commissioners would like to send a copy to the Governor and the entire Berks County delegation.

Commissioner Barnhardt offered, along with Jessica Blausner and Stephanie Weaver, to finalize the letter.

Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to work with Jessica Blausner and Stephanie Weaver in preparing a response. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. Said motion carried.

3. Department Head Updates –

Commissioner Barnhardt reported on feedback his office received to an email survey sent to County department heads about presenting reports or updates at future Operations Meetings.

After discussion, the conclusion was to make this an unstructured, voluntary effort, and if a department head feels they have important, pertinent information the public needs to hear, they will present at an Operations Meeting.

Commissioner Leinbach and Mary Buerer will put something together for the Commissioners review.

4. Youth Recreation Facility:
Commissioner Barnhardt reported Charlie Dodds, YSC, has proposed to the County entering into an agreement with the NARJ, Inc., his family business, to use fields #2 and #3 on a rotating basis and the outfields for soccer practice and games beginning this fall.
After discussion, Commissioner Leinbach and Commissioner Rivera agreed to the proposal.
Commissioner Barnhardt made a motion for the County to enter into an agreement with NARJ, Inc. for the utilization of soccer fields #2 and #3 and the outfield beginning in September, subject to final review and approval by the Solicitor's Office.

5. Hope Rescue Mission request – Commissioners agreed to have Witt O'Brien's review the request from Hope Rescue Mission for qualification of CARES Act money to install a new ventilation system in its Code Blue area, and to list for discussion at a future Operations Meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:51 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk