

Operations Minutes August 31, 2021

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, August 31, 2021 at 9:30 a.m. via Microsoft Teams Live pursuant to due notice to Board members and the public.

The following matters were discussed:

Approval of the Minutes

A correction to the minutes was made to item #2 from the floor to reflect the correct name of the program which is *Emergency Rental Assistance Program*. Commissioner Rivera motioned to approve the minutes as corrected. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Barnhardt. There being no further discussion, motion was carried, and the minutes were approved as amended.

1. IMAGINE Berks Kick-off – Rich Overmoyer and Victoria Phipps, Fourth Economy, Pam Shupp Menet and Derek Harris
Pam Shupp Menet, Director of Economic Development discussed the search for a Economic Development Consultant and introduced Rich Overmoyer, Fourth Economy Consulting who was the successful candidate to our request for proposal process. Fourth Economy Consulting rose to the surface due to their approach for inclusiveness and diversity of opinion in our community.

Rich Overmoyer presented a slideshow and gave an overview of the scope and timeline of the IMAGINE Berks Economic and Development Action Plan. Will be working with the County and their partners to identify the action points where we need to move forward. Indicated there is an advisory committee and they will be the sounding board throughout the process. Engage and fully understand what is happening in the community and have an actionable plan based on reality. Produce analysis to action, aspirations, identify opportunities, risks, and next steps in the planning process. Mr. Overmoyer indicated the IMAGINE Berks website is up and running at www.imagineberks.org, and is a place to share information and engage the community.

Commissioner Barnhardt indicated he wants to make sure we hear from the contrarians and ask what the best method is to get to them. Mr. Overmoyer indicated the website will be the best method and they can give their thoughts and ask open ended questions.

Commissioner Leinbach indicated they are looking for a path forward and to look at the challenges the county faces. We want a clear understanding on what the people that live here think, and what people coming from the outside think about Reading and Berks County.

Mr. Overmoyer indicated that Economic Development is both the impression that you get when you first come to the community and the support system in place. As a resident or as a business you want to invest in the community, and we want to know both sides in order to bring our objective eyes to the table.

Commissioner Rivera asked if online information and surveys will be available in Spanish. Mr. Overmoyer indicated yes; they are working on translation services.

Mrs. Shupp Menet closed by stating that this is our attempt to put something actionable and meaningful together for Berks County and she looks forward to the next few months.

Commissioner Barnhardt asked Mrs. Shupp Menet if the timeline presented is too aggressive. Mrs. Shupp Menet indicated that the timeline is aggressive but also believes that it is very important to align this plan with the financial opportunities that exist for Berks County. If a timeline must be extended it can be extended and she would keep the Board updated.

2. Municipal Radio Billing – Ron Seaman and Brian Gottschall

Brian Gottschall gave a brief history on the consolidated dispatch services in Berks County, component of the billing system and a breakdown of the different models that support the process the County has had in place for many years. The County implemented a change to the model where the County undertook all the Capital costs but netted out all the operational costs by casting any costs to the jurisdiction to which we provide the services. A restructuring is being proposed in preparation for 2022. The County is moving away from the previous process and passing on CPI increases to the local government. The process has been started and the jurisdictions were sent an updated contract starting in 2022 reflecting the new operation. Not all jurisdictions have agreed to the new proposed contract and we must continue with the old approach in parallel. If not all jurisdictions agree and sign the proposed contract, we need to be prepared to advise them of the cost increase for 2022.

Mr. Gottschall is recommending the Board implement a 6.5% increase for municipalities that elect to maintain the old billing model. The 6.5% increase gives us a flat financial model for the next three years with no significant changes in expenses or revenues and will allow us to maintain no growth and no loss of any existing reserves.

Commissioner Barnhardt inquired about the fund balance that was indicated on the slide show that Mr. Gottschall presented. Mr. Gottschall indicated the pie chart is a representation of any given year's budget.

Commissioner Barnhardt inquired about the number of municipalities that have not yet executed the agreement. Mr. Gottschall indicated that he did not have a number but wanted to make the Board aware that the Municipalities still have time to sign and submit their agreements through the end of the year.

Commissioner Barnhardt inquired about the 6.5% increase and which years it is to be applied. Mr. Gottschall clarified that he is only making a recommendation for the increase to be approved for 2022 at this time.

Commissioner Barnhardt indicated for clarification reasons that as he understands it, Mr. Gottschall is asking the Board to support a 2022 6.5% increase for municipalities who have not signed the new billing program agreement by the end of the year. Mr. Gottschall agreed and indicated that for whatever reason the municipalities do not sign onto the new program, they will be accessed a 6.5% increase.

Commissioner Leinbach indicated this has been consistent with where we have been heading for several years. We are asking the municipalities to hold the base funding that is currently in place and any future increases outside of inflation, which the County will be responsible to handle. Based on this, Commissioner Leinbach supports the recommendation for the 6.5% increase for those municipalities that for whatever reason choose not to sign the new agreement.

Commissioner Rivera motioned to move forward with 6.5% increase for the municipalities that elect to maintain the current contract and not sign the new contract. Those who signed the new contract have a zero percent increase in 2022. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Barnhardt. There being no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was made by Commissioner Rivera, to adjourn. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Barnhardt, and the meeting adjourned at 10:28 a.m.

Comments - None

Respectfully Submitted,

Carmen Torres, Chief Clerk