

## **Operations Minutes September 22, 2020**

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, September 22, 2020 at 9:30 a.m. via Microsoft Teams Live pursuant to due notice to Board members and the public.

The following matters were discussed:

1. Participation in Countywide Action Plan Development (CAP) – Ashley Showers, Assistant Director, Berks County Planning Commission and Dean Druckenmiller, District Executive, Berks County Conservation District  
Ms. Showers reported that in 2010 the EPA established the Chesapeake Bay TMDL (total maximum daily load) setting pollution limits and reduction goals for each of the six Bay states and the District of Columbia with a deadline of 2025. There are seven townships, Bethel, Brecknock, Caernarvon, Marion, South Heidelberg, Spring and Tulpehocken, and one borough, New Morgan, in Berks County that have been named as local municipalities by the DEP and instructed to develop a Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP). Pennsylvania counties have been asked to assist in the development of the WIP by creating a County Action Plan (CAP). The CAP can include water quality improvements, nutrient and sediment reduction goals and economic development among a few. Ms. Showers stated participation by the County would show a good faith effort to work on water quality, it protects Conservation District funding, supports the County's Comprehensive Plan goals and supports the work of the County Agriculture Department.  
Ms. Showers said the deadline for the County to respond is Friday, September 25, 2020 and is asked the Commissioners if the Planning Commission should remain engaged in CAP discussions with DEP, and do the Commissioners wish to actively participate in development of the CAP? If the answer is yes, who will coordinate the project, and it has been suggested, due to limited funding, does the County want to join our neighboring counties, Chester and Schuylkill?  
After discussion, all three Commissioners agreed the County should remain engaged in CAP discussions with DEP and actively participate in development of the CAP.  
A motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt that the County will remain engaged with DEP and participate in development of the County Action Plan. The County should also reach out to Chester and Schuylkill counties if they are interested in collaborating with Berks County. Further, the Planning Commission staff and Dean Druckenmiller should determine personnel to serve on the committee. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. Said motion carried.

1. 2020-2021 Municipal Radio Billing – Brian Gottschall and Bob Patrizio

Mr. Gottschall provided a brief history of the radio billing process and noted due to an inconsistent application of increases by various Boards of Commissioners over the years, the system became not representative of the cost of operating with the County assuming greater shares of the costs. In 2013, in conjunction with the enormous expense of the countywide public safety radio project, there was change to the cost sharing process wherein the commissioners assumed 100% of the responsibility for capital costs with the understanding the municipalities would assume 100% of the operational costs not otherwise covered by 9-1-1 fees paid through the state.

Mr. Gottschall showed a representative example of a budget year where the operating expenses are \$12,150,338 and how those expenses are assigned to revenue stream. He then showed a “next year” example of the same budget with a 3% cost escalator and how, because all other revenue sources are flat, that 3% increase in overall costs could create a 9+% increase to the local governments.. In an effort to put this annual process to rest and generate a path forward that creates reasonable and customary increases for the local governments,

Mr. Gottschall suggested a model wherein the County applies a 0% increase in 2021, freeze local contributions at the 2021 rate with only indexed inflation increases beyond 2021 and where the County begins assuming responsibility for any other cost increase, similar to what is done for other county agencies. Mr. Gottschall also stated the importance of entering into a one-size fits all agreement with the municipalities as 72 individually negotiated agreements is impractical. Mr. Gottschall’s ask today was to implement a 2021 increase of 0%, direct DES to reach out to the local municipalities with the concept presented today and direct legal and DES to begin development of an agreement to memorialize the relationships.

After discussion the Commissioners were supportive of the concept presented by Mr. Gottschall and suggested he work with legal on a clear concise agreement going forward that has language that protects the County if everyone doesn’t sign. It was also suggested to reach out to Paul Janssen at the Center for Excellence in Local Government to begin discussions as soon as possible with the 72 local municipalities on this proposal.

Commissioner Leinbach asked if there was a motion to have Mr. Gottschall move forward. Commissioner Barnhardt supports a motion to move forward with a 0% increase for 2021 and effectively set up the CPI for 2020 and beyond with our municipalities. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. The motion carried.

Comments - None.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:25 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk