

Operations Minutes September 29, 2020

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, September 29, 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. Capital Plan Requests for 2021-2025 – Bob Patrizio, CFO, Ron Seaman, CAO and Laura Jones, Deputy Director of Budget and Finance

Mr. Patrizio said his report today is a summary of capital requests. The grand total of \$29,575,808 does not include items listed on the Open Items list or awaiting Commissioner approval, and some 2020 capital projects were deferred due to COVID-19.

Mr. Patrizio said two items not approved by CAO Ron Seaman were the Skid load at the Ag Center and scrubber/sweeper for the Services Center parking garage, because of the cost didn't justify the need at this time. Both requests will be revisited in the future depending on need or events.

Two requests for Commissioner consideration was the request for \$25,000 to recondition the backhoe used at the Jail and \$60,000 for paving of the parking lot and driveway at the Jail.

Dorn Reppert said the Jail has already invested a considerable amount of money in tires and repairs, but believes it is still worthwhile putting some money into repair of the backhoe. Mr. Reppert does not anticipate spending the entire \$25,000. The Commissioners asked Jail staff and Ron to take a look and compare pricing for either repair or trade-in of a used backhoe instead of renting one.

Mr. Reppert and Warden Quigley said there is a great need to repave the parking lot and driveway.

After further discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt to pursue recondition of the backhoe at an estimated not to exceed cost of \$25,000, and approve \$72,300 for parking lot and driveway repair at the Berks County Jail. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. Said motion carried.

2021-2025 New Capital Requests Approved by Ron Seaman – There were two new capital requests denied on this list by Mr. Seaman; a \$250,000 request for the 4H roof replacement and \$250,000 Ag Center Parking lot paving. The Commissioners agreed these repairs are not necessary at this time.

Commissioner Barnhardt believes 4H should be taken off the County new capital request list. It is not our facility. Mr. Seaman asked legal to look at the agreement between the 4H and the County to see if there is language requiring the County to do repairs. Mr. Patrizio will put the 4H roof repair on the Open Item List for future discussion.

Angora Fruit Farm - \$44,770. Cathy Wegener said this amount is to retain Watkins Architects to complete the design, drawings and schematic plans for the facility.

Commissioner Leinbach suggested this item be placed on a future Operations Meeting for further discussion to see what the priorities are for the Farm and what work we want Watkins to perform.

Commissioner Barnhardt agrees a more comprehensive overview of the Park System is warranted and see where this project fits in.

Tully House – Mr. Seaman said there not need for immediate action to be done until the offer has been resolved.

Ag Center Plant Operation - \$300,000 to repair and replace refrigeration system on the roof of the Ag Center. Preventative maintenance was not being performed.

Pallet racking - \$35,000. This expenditure is to install racking in the new addition at the Heim.

Open Items List – Commissioner Barnhardt commented the description for the RACC Bridge should be a modification or rehabilitation not a demolition. The ultimate goal is for someone else to own the bridge besides the County.

Wiley’s Bridge-Commissioner Barnhardt reported the County is still attempting to get additional funding from PennDOT discretionary money to restore historic bridges. County do ultimately turn the bridge back to the local municipal after the County rehabilitates the bridge. Mr. Patrizio will amend the Open Item List to remove ‘demo’.

2. Results of the Railroad Investment Study requested by the Commissioners in February 2020 – Ken Pick, BC Redevelopment Authority and Nathaniel Guest, Colebrookdale Railroad presented the study.

Mr. Guest said the study evaluated the freight potential, the infrastructure needs and the economic impact. Mr. Guest said there have been some significant changes before the study was complete. There are two existing freight customers and one pending customer. Mr. Guest the Railroad would then be running at capacity. The three pertinent parts of the study are as follows:

1. If the railroad is upgraded to handle modern freight car weights and its infrastructure expanded, the investment is likely to be paid back by freight revenues.
2. The investment brings significant long-term and short-term economic growth to Berks County and protect nearly \$20 million of investment already made.
3. The study says now is the time to invest in the Railroad, rather than wait until the economy is in its upswing.

Mr. Pick said obtaining Federal Railroad Administration funding would substantially increase the likelihood of obtaining project funding from both the Commonwealth and Montgomery County. The Railroad cannot continue to accept new freight customers or accommodate the growth of its current customers with an investment.

Mr. Pick said the study concludes that the Railroad is a sound investment for Berks County. The Authority would like to seek Federal funding to make necessary improvements.

The Commissioners asked Ken Pick to sit down with Bob Patrizio and look at the best way to do this and come back to the Commissioners, and to reschedule a follow-up at an Operations Meeting.

3. iConstituent Service Presentation – Commissioner Michael Rivera and Michael Cohen, VP - Sales and Product Strategy.
iConstituent is a D.C. based company and mainly works with federal, state and local governments.

Mr. Cohen said some of the benefits include immediate text notifications to a large portion of county constituents, and 93% read rate and is more cost conscious than direct mailing, and creates a personal connection with constituents.

Justin Loose, Information Systems Director, addressed privacy concerns with the service. The Commissioners expressed interest in the concept, but do see some negative effects of texting to constituents.

After discussion, the Board directed Stephanie Weaver, Justin Loose and Brian Gottschall to review the proposal and report back to the Board with their recommendations.

- 4. CARES Act Proposed Allocations and Review Committee Recommendations – Kevin Barnhardt, Pam Shupp Menet and Ron Seaman
Commissioner Barnhardt presented for approval the Berks County CARES Act Grant Program Timeline and the Review Committees as follows:

Program Timeline –

September 30	Applications available at 9 a.m.
October 16	Applications due by 5 p.m.
October 20-26	Applications are reviewed
October 27	Recommendations to Commissioners
October 29	Announcement of Awards by Commissioners
October 30-November 6	Complete Contracts/Grantee Meetings
December 1	Final Reports and Invoices are due

Review Committees:

- Municipalities and Authorities meet Wednesday, October 7 from 9-10am

Ken Pick	Berks Co. Redevelopment Authority Executive Director
Peter Battaglia	Berks Co. Redevelopment Authority Deputy Director
Paul Janssen	Center for Excellence in Local Government (CELG) Director
David Hunter	Berks Co. Planning Commission Executive Director
John Kramer	Former Director CELG (retired)
	Former Senior VP of Government & Community Relations GRCA
Gail Landis?	(retired)VACATION

- Nonprofits (501 C3 or 501 C19) meet Wednesday, October 7 from 10-11am

Amy Resh	Berks Co. Library System Administrator
Mike Reese	Retired from City of Reading and COCA contracts with him as needed
Jessica Jones	Berks Co. Area Agency on Aging Acting Executive Director
	Berks Co. Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Acting Administrator
Pam Seaman	
Kim Talbot	City of Reading Human Relations Commission Executive Director

- Public Health Services meet Thursday, October 8 from 1-2pm

Brian Gottschall	Berks Co. Department of Emergency Services Director
Dave Janiszewski	Former Reading Fire Marshal
John Kloss	Eastern PA EMS Council Executive Director Past Chair of Berks Co. Medical Society & Past Chair Tower Health
Dr. Michael Baxter	Family Community Medicine
TJ Huckelberry	Medical Society Executive Director
Jonathan Encarnacion	UPMC Health Plan Director of Strategic Partnership Development

- Educational Institutions and Services meet Friday, October 9 from 1-2pm

Heidi Williamson	Berks Co. Community Foundation Vice President for Programs and Initiatives
Dr. Anna Weitz	Former President of RACC Associate State Director of Programs and Policy/Small Business Development Center KU of PA
Sonya Smith	Development Center KU of PA
Dr. Solomon Lausch	Berks Business Education Coalition Executive Director
Dan Fogarty	Workforce Development Board Chief Operating Officer
Paul Escada	Retired from Penn State

Commissioner Barnhardt reported all of these individuals have agreed to serve and must file a conflict of interest form.

Both Commissioner Leinbach and Commissioner Rivera supported the Program Timeline and Committee Review members.

Seeing no further questions, Commissioner Rivera motioned to approve the Program Timeline and Committee Review members as presented by Commissioner Barnhardt. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Barnhardt. The motion carried.

5. Commissioner Barnhardt reported he was informed the State is mailing out 82,235 postcards to unregistered people asking them to vote. Debbie Olivieri made a request to hire an additional 7 more temporary staff and use the Commissioners' Boardroom to set up the additional staff to process only those applications.
Both Commissioner Leinbach and Commissioner Rivera concur.
A motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt to hire 7 temporary staff for Election Services and set them up in the Commissioners' Boardroom, pending clearance from Information Systems review for computer access. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. The motion carried.
6. Juror Parking Rate – Commissioner Barnhardt reported the Reading Parking Authority agreed to a “step increase” in daily juror parking rates for the County of \$9 for 2021 and \$12 for 2022. The County is currently paying \$5. After discussion the Commissioners agree to accept the \$9 rate for 2021, and review the 2022 rate next year.

A motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt to accept the \$9 daily parking rate at Reed and Court Street Parking garage and a 2021 review of alternative rates for 2022. Motion carried.

7. Children's Alliance Update – Commissioner Barnhardt reported the District Attorney had discussions with Tower Health regarding Children's Alliance Center, and they are not willing at this time to assume a role in managing the facility. The District Attorney's Office doesn't have and cannot pay to outfit the CAC and run the facility. Will work on the possibility of grants to support the operation of the Center, but there will probably be some additional costs for the County going forward.
8. Commissioner Leinbach announced he is again running for 2nd Vice President at NACo. Commissioner Barnhardt and Commissioner Rivera said they will support his candidacy.
9. Commissioner Leinbach commented on the appeal request before the Reading Zoning Hearing Board by the Holy Trinity Church of God for a variance from one or more sections of the City of Reading Zoning Ordinance and a special exception for the type of use for a church. The Commissioners asked for either a denial, or in the alternative, requested certain conditions be met before the Zoning Hearing Board approve the request. Commissioner Leinbach took another look at the request, and after discussions with the Solicitor's Office and Pastor Brookins, is supportive of the plan as long as the Church uses Green Lane for emergency access. Commissioner Leinbach believes that has been confirmed. The plans also call for a plant buffer zone. Commissioner Leinbach asked that the County confirms his understanding of these conditions, and asked if his colleagues are okay to withdraw the County's opposition. This would be a multi-million dollar improvement to the area. Commissioner Barnhardt is not opposed to withdrawing our opposition, but making sure the County's considerations are noted and followed through on the buffer and dialogue on the Black Smith Shop. Commissioner Rivera is not opposed as long as the County's conditions are met. Ron Seaman was directed to reach out to Chad Schnee to get a status report and get back to each individual Commissioner before a final decision is made.

Comments - None.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:43 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk