

## **Operations Minutes September 1, 2020**

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, September 1, 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. Constable Follow-up Discussion – President Judge Parisi, Judge Barrett, Steve Weber, Faith Phillips, Sheriff Eric Weaknecht and County Controller Sandy Graffius.

This issue involves a proposal that has been discussed at a previous Operations Meeting and with CJAB (the Criminal Justice Advisory Board), the Controller and Court Administration to have the Sheriff's Department issue the initial summary warrants out of the Magisterial District Courts instead of constables. Judge Barrett reported his committee has met and will shortly issue recommendations. Judge Barrett noted these recommendations have gone out to the constables and some MDJs, and some of their comments will be incorporated in the recommendations.

Faith Phillips commented some of the concerns from the constables and MDJs regarding the Sheriff's Department handling this work was the ability to handle the additional workload, accountability of service and the priority given to the work. Ms. Phillips said they need more detail from the Sheriff on his proposal, and what impact it would have on the system. Mr. Phillips would like to give the Constables an opportunity to review the proposal and provide comments.

The Sheriff assured his proposal would not require 'boots' on the ground, knocking on doors and taking people into custody. This proposal will serve as a 'filter', taking all the MDJ warrant information electronically, and send a letter to the defendant as a 'final' warning.

The Sheriff has secured preliminary approval from AOPC for accessibility to the AOPC system, and is awaiting finalization.

The Sheriff said this proposal would not be a money generator, but a money savings for the County. The savings to the County would be the money paid to the constables for this first step.

The Sheriff did note his proposal will require purchase of equipment and a request for a position.

County Controller said her staff is in complete agreement with the Sheriff's proposal.

Next step – Give the constables an opportunity to review the proposal and comment. The President Judge will advise the Commissioners when he has received all feedback. Because this is a Court function, and the proposal is accepted, it would require a Court Order.

2. Flu Vaccination Messaging –

Dr. Baxter and Dr. Powell on behalf of the Berks County Government COVID-19 Healthcare Advisory Panel, Christian Leinbach, Brian Gottschall and Stephanie Weaver.

Dr. Baxter said with the fall and winter flu season almost upon us, and with the possibility of an insurgence of COVID-19, there is great value in having a significant influenza campaign to get as many appropriate people vaccinated for the flu as possible.

Dr. Powell said every year the healthcare providers have flu vaccination campaign, but because the flu season will occur with the expected COVID-19 increase, everyone should be on the same page and we must have a plan. Dr. Powell expects there will be ample vaccines, and recommends everyone over the age of six months get a flu vaccine.

After discussion, the Commissioners agreed on the importance of promoting flu vaccinations and thought this would fit well into the County's Do Your Part campaign, and to dedicate a future weekly media event along with healthcare providers to promoting the importance of and encouraging everyone getting the flu vaccine.

COVID-19 Vaccination distribution/strategy discussion -

Brian Gottschall reported as part of their responsibilities, the Department of Emergency Services manages the Strategic National Stockpile Plan, which includes distribution of vaccines, but has not had to deploy SNS on such mass scale. The document has been modified to fit COVID-19. Mr. Gottschall has learned that DOH said counties for the most part will be using primary healthcare providers to administer the vaccine for COVID-19, but we also should focusing on three additional community sectors; essential workers (EMS/healthcare workers, etc.), members of the community at risk to no access to healthcare, and those who fall into other categories.

Mr. Gottschall reported the County is currently looking at two locations to administer the vaccine, and they include both drive-through and large walk-up facility. DOH must visit and approve use of these sites.

Next step – The Commissioners would like this handled as a priority, and directed Stephanie Weaver to put together a statement and plan and bring it back to the COVID-19 Leadership Team for review. The plan will then be shared with the Healthcare Advisory Panel before implementation. Dr. Powell suggested Stephanie reach out and work with both hospitals on the messaging, so all messages are consistent. Dr. Powell also noted there are CDC guidelines for distributing flu vaccinations. Commissioner Rivera will continue to be the County's representative in getting the messaging out with City of Reading and Hispanic community.

3. Discussion regarding next CARES Act allocation proposals – Kevin Barnhardt and Pamela Shupp Menet

New Start Program – Ms. Menet reported the County had discussions with DCED, who oversees the CARES Act funding, and the County became concerned when we learned the grant program fees for professional services by Community First Fund (CFF) would count against the County's portion of the \$38 CARES Act funds. The County strongly disagrees with that interpretation and asked DCED to take another look for consideration that these are truly professional fees not administrative fees, and allow us to move forward with the grant program. Commissioner Barnhardt believes we need to move forward with the \$6 million to CFF, and continue to put pressure on the State legislature and DCED so more of the money is given to small businesses who really need it. Commissioner Rivera and Commissioner Leinbach agree to continue to press DCED and the Governor Harrisburg to make this a priority for Berks County.

Allocation of \$38 million CARES Act funds –

Commissioner Barnhardt reported as a result of the Community Needs Assessment, the County received 153 assessments. With those assessments and the County's needs, that will consume all the money.

The County has already committed \$6 million to the New Start Program and \$3 million to the Food Insecurity Program.

Commissioner Barnhardt is proposing starting a Social Services/Not for Profit Program and an Educational Institution Program in September. These programs will be advertised and handled like the New Start Program and we should expect to receive more than the needs assessment surveys.

For October, Commissioner Barnhardt is proposing starting the Public Health and Municipal Entities programs, so by the end of October, early November we know what we have out and if there is any money left over we would be get back to reallocate.

Commissioner Barnhardt is asking today to move ahead in September for Social Services/Not for Profits and Educational entities and in October move forward with Public Health and Municipal entities.

At this time Mary Buerer read a question from Dena Kershner, Our Town Foundation-Hamburg asking where funding for non-profits stands.

Commissioner Barnhardt responded if her question relates to businesses, that would fall under the New Start Program, and for not for profits, if approved today, applications would be accepted through the end of September.

Commissioner Barnhardt emphasized we can make no guarantees on what qualifies and what does not qualify.

Commissioner Leinbach and Commissioner Rivera support moving forward with Commissioner Barnhardt's plan.

Because this next group of programs is different that the New Start Program, Commissioner Rivera suggested a grading system in evaluating the new programs

and allocating a certain portion of funding to each program. If there is money left over, it could be reallocated to another program that needs additional funds.

Commissioner Barnhardt agreed with Commissioner Rivera's suggestions, and will review them with Witt O'Brien's and the team and respond next Tuesday.

4. SB 10 – Ronald Seaman, Chief Administrative Officer

Mr. Seaman said at last week's Election Board Meeting the Board took action to contact Berks County's legislative delegation relative to action the legislature was to take to not have any money paid to poll workers impact any unemployment benefits they may receive. Mr. Seaman reported yesterday the County's received a CCAP "Call to Action" that the legislature was meeting today and tomorrow regarding a potential vote on SB 10. Mr. Seaman asked the Board if they wanted to include the poll workers pay issue on the County's position on SB 10.

After discussion on the proposed changes to the Election Code through HB 2626 and SB 10, and input from Debbie Olivier, Director of Election Services, the Board agreed to send an email as soon as possible today setting forth the County's position on this legislation.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rivera, seconded by Commissioner Barnhardt, and all voted to send an email today to the Berks County delegation, Kathy Bookvar and the Governor.

5. Commissioner Rivera noticed the County's Do Your Part messaging did not appear on the video screen in the Services lobby and certain other County facility locations throughout the County, and suggested adding the Do Your Part messaging to those locations.

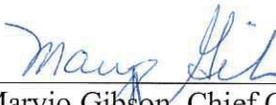
Stephanie Weaver was directed to make sure the Do Your Part campaign message appears on the video screen in the Service Center and all County locations.

Comments

Comments are attached hereto.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:26 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk

Source	Type	Identity	Timestamp	Content
Moderator	Announcement	Malcom Townes (MTownes@countyofberks.com)	9/1/2020 12:44	Public comment will be accepted through the Q&A function. Comments or questions must be germane to the topic being discussed and include your full name and municipality where you reside. If you are from the media, please put your name and who you are with.  Comments will be read during the meeting and should not be considered to be interactive dialog with the Board. Any response to public comment will be done at the discretion of the Chairperson.
Attendee	Question	Jon Miller, Wernersville (Unverified)	9/1/2020 14:12	Are there any considerations being taken to address the hesitation of some communities for vaccines from the legacy of Tuskegee.
Moderator	Response	Christian Leinbach (CLeinbach@countyofberks.com)	9/1/2020 14:13	TY - I will ask now(Jon Miller, Wernersville (Unverified) asked "Are there any considerations being taken to address the hesitation of some communities for vaccines from the legacy of Tuskegee.")
Attendee	Question	Jon Miller, Wernersville (Unverified)	9/1/2020 14:18	Ty. And Thank you Dr. Powell for your awareness of the study and for explaining to to the panel.
Moderator	Response	Christian Leinbach (CLeinbach@countyofberks.com)	9/1/2020 14:19	Jon - This is exactly why we have a COVID-19 Health Advisory Panel for Berks County. Dr. Powell is part of that Panel and Dr. Baxter chairs it(Jon Miller, Wernersville (Unverified) asked "Ty. And Thank you Dr. Powell for your awareness of the study and for explaining to to the panel.")
Attendee	Question	Deena Kershner from Our Town Foundation, Hamburg (Unverified)	9/1/2020 14:50	You may be planning on discussing this, but I am wondering were funding for non-profit through the CARES act stands? We have lost approximately \$100,000 in fundraising dollars this year. In addition, the Hamburg Strand Theater which is owned and operated by Our Town Foundation has been shuttered since March 14 with no reopening in site due to Governor Wolf's restrictions on no more than 25 people allowed in indoor gatherings. The Theater also provides a major source of income to the Foundation assuring our sustainability. Without assistance, we may not survive.

Moderator	Response	Christian Leinbach (CLeinbach@countyofberks.com)	9/1/2020 14:51	<p>Deena - We are there now. I will share your comment(Deena Kershner from Our Town Foundation, Hamburg (Unverified) asked "You may be planning on discussing this, but I am wondering were funding for non-profit through the CARES act stands? We have lost approximately \$100,000 in fundraising dollars this year. In addition, the Hamburg Strand Theater which is owned and operated by Our Town Foundation has been shuttered since March 14 with no reopening in site due to Governor Wolf's restrictions on no more than 25 people allowed in indoor gatherings. The Theater also provides a major source of income to the Foundation assuring our sustainability. Without assistance, we may not survive.")</p>
Moderator	Announcement	Lori Schneider (LSchneider@countyofberks.com)	9/1/2020 15:26	<p>Thank you for our questions and comments. This Q&amp;A is closed as the public comments have been addressed.</p>