

## **Operations Minutes September 8, 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. Veterans Department Presentation – Ken Lebron, Director Veterans Affairs  
Mr. Lebron announced September is recognized as Suicide Prevention Month. Mr. Lebron said veterans show a higher rate for suicide, and there is a national campaign to connect veterans and their supporters to the resources they need. The theme for 2020 is “be there.”
2. Social Security Tax Deferral Option – September 2020 – End of Year – Ron Seaman and Tina Dry, Payroll Manager  
Commissioner Leinbach said this is a discussion on the recent federal government implementation of a tax deferral policy for social security taxes. Ms. Dry reported this is a voluntary program that allows a temporary turn-off of the collection of the Social Security tax from September 2020 through December 31, 2020. Ms. Dry noted that beginning January 1, 2021, employees will have to pay back the deferred taxes before interest or other penalties are accrued. After discussion, it was unanimous that the County has no interest and does not wish to participate in this program.
3. CARES Act Allocation Proposals – Kevin Barnhardt  
Commissioner Barnhardt presented for consideration of the Board the final CARES Act funding schedule for the \$38 million allocated to Berks County in mid-July. (A copy is attached)  
Commissioner Barnhardt suggested the County’s cap be tentatively set at \$10 million. \$6 million has been allocated to the Small Business New Start grant beginning September 10, 2020, and \$3 million has been allocated to Helping Harvest. Commissioner Leinbach agrees we need a structure or budget for spending the \$38 million CARES Act money, and we need the structure to begin the process of approving the various requests, and would entertain a motion using that structure so the County can move forward and help as many organizations and individuals through those organizations in our community as possible. Commissioner Barnhardt so motioned and further motioned to cap the County’s allocation at \$10 million. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. The motion carried. Next step getting information to various entities, and

building the programs through applications and engage experts in those areas for review and award in order to remove any appearance of politics in the process.

4. Commissioner Leinbach was contacted about different possible economic development projects, and suggested any calls or inquiries now be directed to Pam Shupp Menet, the County's new Economic Development Director for Berks County. All Commissioners agreed to this procedure.
5. Commissioner Barnhardt learned in a conversation with the District Attorney that Opportunity House will no longer be operating the Children's Alliance Center on the 15<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Services Center, and advised the Budget Department and the Solicitor's Office that we will no longer be receiving a \$42,000 rental payment. Commissioner Barnhardt noted however that the District Attorney's Office and from time to time Children and Youth Services, find the location perfect in their investigation and interview of child abuse cases. Commissioner Barnhardt and the District Attorney are working with Penn State Health St. Joseph's and Tower Health to provide medical interviews and screenings as well as any grant funding that may be available for these services.
6. Commissioner Barnhardt reported that beginning next year the State is requiring all mass transit agencies to increase their local match 5% a year. This includes South Central Transit Authority (SCTA) and BARTA.
7. Commissioner Barnhardt read in a recent newspaper article that Reading DID was recommended by its consultant to ask the County for an increase in funding from \$20,000 to \$100,000. To date, the County has not been approached for this request.
8. Commissioner Barnhardt mentioned a few months ago the Municipal Finance Assistance Program was established through the Community Development Office and the Center that if he colleagues hear of any local communities having difficulties announced the Municipal Finance Assistance Program through the Community Development Office and the Center for Excellence in Local Government to held distressed communities, townships and boroughs.

Comments

None.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:15 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk

# CARES Act

**\$38 million allocated to Berks County mid-July 2020**

<b>"Program"</b>	<b>Target Amount</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>County COVID Expenses</b>	\$10 million	December 1
<b>Food Insecurity (Helping Harvest)</b>	\$3 million	\$600,000/month Aug-Dec.
<b>Small Business New Start Grant</b>	\$6 million	Launch Sept. 10th - CFF
<b>Not for Profit/Social Services</b>	\$5 million	September/October
<b>Public Health Services</b>	\$5 million	September/October
<b>Municipal/Authorities</b>	\$4 million	October/November
<b>Educational Services</b>	\$5 million	October/November
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>\$38 million</i></b>	

**Approved at Budget/Ops 9/8/20**