

Operations Minutes October 6, 2020

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, October 6, 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. Reading Downtown Improvement District Strategic Plan –
Pam Shupp Menet, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and Berks County Economic Development Director, presented an Executive Summary of the Reading Downtown Improvement District Strategic Plan (“Plan”). Ms. Shupp Menet said every five (5) years it is necessary to reauthorize the Reading Downtown Improvement District (“DID”), and this year Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.) was hired to look at DID, what it does, how it operates, the programs it provides and the support it provides to City residents. The results have been presented to the DID Board and the Plan recommends a three-phase approach for changing operation of DID. The Plan recommends DID continues to deliver its core services of consistent, high quality clean, safe and green services, and also expand and diversify its scope of services. The Plan encourages DID to leverage funding beyond assessment dollars, by seeking grants, sponsorships and multi-year commitments. Ms. Shupp Menet said the Municipal Services Agreement entered into when DID was founded in 1995 has never been updated and the Plan recommends DID and the City work to redefine the Agreement. Important to the County is building a collective vision for Downtown Reading and encourages the City to pursue the Downtown Plus Strategic Master Plan, which would incorporate DID as a partner. Phase I will happen this year. There is a public hearing scheduled October 20 to discuss reauthorization of DID, engage tax exempt properties and revise the Municipal Services Agreement. Phase 2 is expected to be implemented in 2021 and Phase 3 in 2021-2022. Ms. Shupp Menet said the Board of Commissioners are not expected to take any action today, but it is important to look at and be aware what is being proposed and to be as supportive as possible as DID moves forward to implement the recommendations in the Plan.

2. YRF Safety Improvements – Kevin Barnhardt, Charlie Dodds, Founder and President of Rocket Sports, Tyson Cain, Vice President of Sporting Valley Turf Farms, Inc. and Hummer Turfgrass Systems, Inc., (“Hummer”) County Solicitor Christine Sadler and Brendan Lederer, Assistant Director of Parks & Recreation. Ms. Sadler said the purpose of the discussion was to go over a proposal submitted by Hummer Turfgrass Systems, Inc. for field and facility renovations at the Youth Recreation Facility. The County did an assessment of the fields and discovered several safety issues the County needs to address before engaging in youth activities. Brendan Lederer, reported the fields were over utilized and maintenance was neglected under the previous tenant, and Hummer had been retained to bring some of the soccer fields to more safe playing conditions, and now that there is interest for use of the

baseball fields, proposals were sought to repair all the fields. Hummer's proposal is broken out by field locations showing what work needs to be performed on each field. Mr. Dodds addressed his plans for field renovations as part of his agreement with the County, and said he plans to work together with Hummer. After discussion by the parties on the individual proposals for each field, Park leadership was asked for their recommendation. Mr. Lederer said Park leadership recommends the County begin work on the fields to make it safe and playable before it turns the fields over to the new tenant, Charlie Dodds,

Commissioner Barnhardt agreed with proposals 3A, 3B, 4, 5, 6, but wants to have further discussions on the infield renovations and irrigation work in Proposals 1 & 2.

Commissioner Rivera is good with Proposals 3A – 6, and understands there would be adjustments to proposals 1 and 2 based on changes to scope of work.

At this time, Commissioner Leinbach asked if there was a motion to finalize and approve the Hummer Proposal, setting aside the irrigation portions of the Proposal, and after final review and approval by the County Solicitor.

Commissioner Rivera so moved. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Leinbach. The Motion carried.

A discussion was held on whether to repair or replace the irrigation system on the Wagner Field. The proposal for repair is a not to exceed cost of \$6,000. Mr. Lederer believes that is a reasonable cost. After discussion, the Board concluded that if we accept the proposal to repair the irrigation system at Wagner Field, and if during the early phase of repair it is determined the irrigation system should be replaced, the Commissioners would like Parks to have the authority to replace the irrigation system at Wagner Field. Commissioner Rivera so motioned to accept the proposal from Hummer to proceed with the \$6,000 repair of the irrigation field at Wagner Field, and if they determine early on that the system needs to be replaced, the Parks Department has the authority to replace the irrigation field upon legal review. Commissioner Leinbach seconded the motion. Said motion carried.

3. CARES Act/Small Business New Start Program –

Pam Shupp Menet, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and Berks County Economic Development Director, advised the Commissioners she has been made aware by Community First Funds (“CFF”) that the software company that processes the applications has been advised that as part of the fraud prevention and due diligence of the application in many instances in taking four (4) to five (5) weeks to be reviewed by the IRS. Neither CFF or the County had anticipated this issue and is detrimental to the approval process and moving the applications along. Ms. Shupp Menet did say there is self-certification section that applicants must sign. The request of the Board today is a policy decision the County must make to wait for the IRS or accept the self-certifications. Commissioner Rivera said some counties, i.e. York County, is not waiting for IRS confirmation, and approving based on self-certification. Commissioner Rivera supports accepting the self-certification.

Commissioner Leinbach supports accepting the self-certifications because there is no risk to the County; all the responsibility will be on the applicant.

Commissioner Barnhardt supports the self-certification because of the time frame. We have to get the money out.

Commissioner Rivera motioned that the County supports accepting the business self-certification and make sure the applicants know that they are directly responsible to the IRS. The County takes no responsibility. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Leinbach. The motion carried.

4. Community First Fund list of grantees -

Commissioner Rivera asked for action as to whether the County wants to make the list of successful grantees public. The Commissioners agreed, but we should do this for all awards, to be as transparent as possible because they are taxpayer dollars.

Commissioner Rivera motioned to publish a list of all awards in all programs. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Leinbach. Said motion carried.

5. Drop Boxes –

Commissioner Leinbach mentioned yesterday he received an email asking whether he would support locating a drop box at the Agriculture Center (“Ag Center”) the week prior to the Election. Commissioner Leinbach looked at the drop box currently in place on the first floor lobby of the County Services Center, and said the drop box being placed at the Ag Center is significantly larger and different in design. Commissioner Leinbach will support the placement of a drop box at the Ag Center contingent on the following conditions:

- 1) both boxes must be secured, locked and bolted to the floor, wall or both
- 2) the mail slot must be locked at 5:00 p.m. and reopened at 8:00 a.m.
- 3) any ballots in the box must be emptied by security or Election Services employees and secured.
- 4) Security must be provided by Sheriff Deputies or SGI from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at both locations.

Stephanie Weaver will send out a press release notifying the public.

Comments - None.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:00 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk