

Operations Minutes October 13, 2020

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, October 13, 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. An analysis and recommendations of the following 2021 Employee Benefits plans was presented by Christie Bennett-Zellers, Berks County Human Resources (“HR”) Benefits Manager, and Peter Kareha, Employee Benefits Consultant and Denise Cabrera, National Pharmacy Practice Lead from McGriff Insurance Services Representatives, the County’s benefits consultant.
 - A. Life and Disability coverage – three (3) renewal was renegotiated with Lincoln Financial realizing a \$37,000 savings. HR and McGriff recommended the three (3) renewal. A motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt to stay with Lincoln for an additional three (3) year period. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. The motion carried.
 - B. Increase Management/Detectives/Elected Official basic life amount. This is a follow-up discussion from last year. The proposal was presented to department heads at a Department Head meeting with no negative feedback. Commissioner Leinbach believes it is a good thing for management/confidential at a minimal cost. HR and the CAD recommend the increase. A motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt to increase the term life for Management/Detectives/Elected Official from \$50,000 to \$100,000. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. The motion carried.
 - C. Vision Benefits – a market analysis was done by McGriff who negotiated \$11,000 decrease in the current rates. HR is recommending renewing with Vision Benefits a new four (4) year agreement. A motion was made by Commissioner Rivera to renew the Vision Benefits Agreement for a four (4) year term.
 - D. A healthcare summary was presented regarding the healthcare management budget and premium equivalents based on projections through August 2020 with and without the high cost drug. The premium equivalent suggests either a 7.8% or 2.1% increase based on that factor. HR’s recommendation is to proceed with the current plan, which excludes the high cost drug. It was pointed out by HR and McGriff that if the County excludes the high cost drug, the member employee would be able to obtain the drug directly from the manufacturer, possibly at no cost to the member employee. After discussion the Board accepted the recommendation by HR, with the condition that HR communicate broadly to employees that if a drug is not covered by the County’s plan, HR would provide contact information for the drug manufacturer for the employee to reach out to for assistance. At this time Commissioner Leinbach asked if there was a motion.

Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to exclude the drug class from coverage, and in additional HR will reach out to any impacted employee who is denied coverage for any medication, and communicate the alternative processes to all employees. Ms. Bennett-Zellers will also include information in the Open Enrollment packet. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. The motion carried.

2. CARES Act requests –

A. PA Americana Region - Let's Go Local proposal – Commissioner Barnhardt and Pamela Shupp Menet.

Commissioner Barnhardt reported PA Americana is a 501 (c)(6) and does not fit into the non-profit criteria, and has been working to promote local tourism in Berks County to reinvigorate the local economy, and is requesting \$185,117. Tourism is the number one category hit hard by COVID-19. Commissioner Barnhardt said if approved those dollars would come from the balance of what is left in the Rebuild Berks grant program.

Commissioner Leinbach believes this is an appropriate proposal for some of the CARES Act funds and Commissioner Rivera believes it is important to keep as much tourism in Berks County as possible.

Commissioner Barnhardt asked if there was a motion to support a not to exceed amount of \$185,117 to the Let's Go Local campaign for PA Americana to utilize CARES Act dollars for promoting local tourism. Said motion was made by Commissioner Rivera and seconded by Commissioner Leinbach. The motion carried.

B. Downtown Revitalization Organizations (County) – Commissioner Barnhardt and Pamela Shupp Menet

As 501 (c)(3) organizations, Downtown Revitalization Organizations do fall into the non-profit category, but some of their expenses are not eligible under the CARES Act.

Commissioner Barnhardt said through discussions with Witt O'Brien's it was found to be appropriate to find other ways to work CARES Act funds in different ways.

Ms. Shupp Menet recommended the County work with GRCA on a new program called Total Berks, engaging with and supporting downtown revitalization efforts in Berks County. These organizations must be viable in 2021.

Ms. Shupp Menet suggested funding five organizations in the amount up to \$50,000 each through the County General Fund for a total of up to \$250,000. The County General Fund would then access this amount through CARES Act funds for eligible costs that have been incurred by the County. The Commissioners agree downtown revitalization organizations are important to local municipalities, and the need is there to assist and support these local organizations.

A motion was made by Commissioner Leinbach to approve the Total Berks program. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. The motion carried.

3. Berks Heim 2021 Budget – Bob Patrizio, CFO, Terry Brennan, Berks Heim Administrator and Christie Kennedy, Assistant Berks Heim Administrator, Todd Wagner and Diane Gattorno - Complete Healthcare Resources (CHR) Representatives

Due to the effects of COVID-19, there has been a steady decline in the number of residents at the Berks Heim ("Facility"), and there is a need to make adjustments in the budget for

calendar year 2021. The Administration is working to grow the resident population is looking into opening an alternative admission wing to allow for continued growth. The Facility has also seen a reduction of employees through attrition and staff retirements. The proposed 2021 budget would revise the staffing compliment to align with the current resident population and implement a step up plan to increase staffing as the resident population increases. The proposal would also reflect a reduction in budget funded positions effective January 1, 2021.

Mr. Patrizio commented that prior to COVID-19 the Berks Heim averaged 400 to 500 beds a month. We dropped to a low 296, and are currently averaging 300 beds a month. CHR looked at these numbers and determined it was reasonable to stage admissions in two different units. Mr. Patrizio is confident CHR could build that number to 360 beds by the end of next year.

Mr. Patrizio said if we don't accept the recommended changes by CHR for next year, the County's expected loss would be about \$2.7 million. If we do accept their recommendations, that loss would diminish to \$615,000, and believes it is something the County should seriously consider.

After further discussion, and acknowledging the community wanted the Berks Heim to remain in County hands and to be managed properly, Commissioner Leinbach asked if there was a motion to support the recommendations discussed herein, and not just for 2021, but agreeing any of these actions can happen now if appropriate. Commissioner Rivera made said motion. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Barnhardt.

The motion carried.

4. Commissioner Leinbach received a request from John Weidenhammer asking the County to send a letter of support of reauthorization of the Reading Downtown Improvement District ("DID") to City Council for their October 20, 2020 City Council Meeting where the status of DID will be on the Agenda. None of the Commissioners have received any feedback from the City what their alternative solution to DID was.

Commissioner Rivera will reach out to City Managing Director Pedro Cortez and the Mayor, and Commissioner Barnhardt will reach out to Councilman Jeffrey Waltman and Councilwoman Lucine Sihelnik on their position regarding DID and report back to the Board before Council's October 20th Meeting.

Comments - None.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:58 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk