

## **Operations Minutes November 17, 2020**

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, November 17, 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. Jail Discussion on Temporary Trailers – Warden Janine Quigley, Dorn Reppert, Jail Facilities Manager, Deputy Warden of Operations Michael Buono, Matt Salkowski, Berks County Facilities and Operations Director, and Rex Levensgood, Deputy Director of Facilities and Operations.

Warden Quigley commented that because plans to move forward on a new Jail facility and major renovations have been put on hold due to the pandemic and budgetary uncertainty, she is asking the Commissioners for approval to install modular trailers for administrative staff members who have been located on the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Berks County Residential Center since early January to move back at the Jail site. The Warden reported they have received three proposals that have been submitted to the Commissioners for review, and asked if the Board had any questions or comments.

After further discussion and questions regarding the proposals, including the costs and types of units, a motion was made by Commissioner Rivera tasking Matt Salkowski, Dorn Reppert and Michael Buono to obtain a final proposal from Wilmot Modular Structures, Inc., and make a formal recommendation to the Commissioners as soon as feasibly possible. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Barnhardt. The motion carried

2. Downtown Improvement District Strategic Plan – John Weidenhammer, Berks Alliance, and James Cinelli, Chairman of the Downtown Improvement District Board of Directors, presented changes to the preliminary Reading Downtown Improvement District Strategic Plan (“Plan”) since it was originally presented at the October 6, 2020.

Mr. Weidenhammer said Berks Alliance funded the development of the Plan for reauthorization of the Downtown Improvement District (“DID”). The goal continues to be ensuring excellence in “Clean, Safe and Green”.

Mr. Cinelli reported a revised Municipal Services Agreement is being negotiated and a proposed restructuring of DID to create more coordination among downtown-focused organizations. DID is also seeking multi-year funding commitments from all tax-exempt organizations, including the County of Berks.

Mr. Cinelli said DID is asking the County to contribute \$20,000 this year; \$50,000 in 2021, and \$100,000 as a target future contribution. Mr. Cinelli also reported DID will sign an agreement with the Reading Parking Authority for an increase their contributions to \$25,000 in 2021 and \$100,000 in 2022.

City Council will hold a public hearing on the revised Preliminary Plan November 4, 2020 and the final plan will be provided to all property owners in the DID district, with an anticipated City Council public hearing on the Final Plan December 21, 2020.

After discussion, the Commissioners support in principal a portion of the contribution request by DID, but will hold off on any final decision until the City Council and the

Mayor move first on deciding what its contribution will be to DID. The Commissioners also asked Mr. Cinelli to speak with the County Treasurer on his request to include the assessment on the City/County tax bill. No formal action was taken.

3. Savings and Efficiencies Team (SET) Update – Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt, Justin Loose, Tracy Barlet and Berks County Prothonotary J.D. DelCollo  
Commissioner Barnhardt provided a brief overview of the SET Team’s activities, and the progress of identified opportunities and tracking current and future efficiencies. SET has identified 45 priority items, 38 long term opportunities and 10 general efficiencies. SET noted a major priority is new technology in Courtrooms. Commissioner Barnhardt said the ask today is when new opportunities come up within a department, these opportunities be brought to SET to vet through Budget and IT for determination before it comes before the Board of Commissioners.
4. Jail Body Camera System –  
Warden Quigley reported to the Board that as she was preparing her 2021 budget, she asked Budget to put a place holder for \$39,295 for the jail body camera system for use by the 3<sup>rd</sup> shift sergeants. The Warden said SOG is already using body camera’s and purchasing body cameras would add greater transparency and better audio/video coverage in de-escalating certain situations at the jail. Chief Smith mentioned the Jail is also looking into the availability of grants. The Board supports the need for body cameras.  
After discussion, Commissioner Rivera motioned to put a place holder in the Jail’s 2021 budget for \$39,295 for the Jail to obtain the best option for body cams and look what grant opportunities are available to County.  
Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Barnhardt. The motion carried.

From the Floor:

5. Commissioner Barnhardt mentioned in the Spring the County supported the distressed municipality review by Paul Janssen, the Center for Excellence in Local Government and the Community Development Office, and have 3 boroughs in the process of putting together a five year budget plan. Mr. Janssen has come across a regional police department in need of assistance of a five year budget plan and asked the Board if they would agree to expand the distressed municipalities to include distressed regional police departments. The Board agreed.  
After discussion, Commissioner Rivera motion to extend the Municipal Finance Assistance Program to distressed regional police departments at no cost to the County.  
Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Barnhardt. The motion carried.
6. CARES Act funds – Commissioner Barnhardt said CARES Act funds have been provided to 16 out of the 18 school districts, and the Committee has recently received requests from two superintendents asking the County to grant an extension to them. Commissioner Barnhardt asked if the Board would make an exception for these two school districts but assured them he could not promise any.

Commissioner Leinbach acknowledged the deadline, what we agreed to however, however, we must look at school district a little differently and willing to waive the deadline, and believes this is a legitimate reason and would request these two school districts move forward in the process, but must be properly vetted.

After discussion, Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to waive the application deadline for the Kutztown School District and the Daniel Boone School District, accept their applications and properly vet both districts. Said motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivera. The motion carried.

7. Commissioner Rivera has spoken with Matt Salkowski about the possibility of replacing restroom door handles, and would like to have a conversation on using CARES Act funds for this purpose. The Board agreed to look into Commissioner Rivera's request.

Comments - None.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
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Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk