

Berks County Operations Minutes
February 1, 2022
9:30 am

Christian Y. Leinbach, Commissioner, Chair
Kevin S. Barnhardt, Commissioner, Vice Chair
Michael S. Rivera, Commissioner
Ronald Seaman, Chief Administrative Officer
Christine M. Sadler, Esq., County Solicitor

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The January 25, 2022, meeting minutes were approved as presented.

9:30am – 9:45am

Berks County Correctional Facility (BCCF) Steering Committee – Kevin Barnhardt, Commissioner, Jeffrey Smith, Warden, Ron Seaman, Chief Administrative Officer, and Stephanie Weaver, Public Relations Officer. Approval of the Board of Commissioners for BCCF Steering Committee members.

Commissioner Barnhardt indicated they want to formalize the BCCF Steering Committee. Want to keep the Steering Committee small and recommended himself as the Commissioner Chair of the Board, Jeffrey Smith, Warden, Ron Seaman, CAO, Stephanie Weaver, Public Relations Officer, and Robert Williams, Retired as Adult Probation/Juvenile Probation representative. Commissioner Barnhardt wants to move forward with a Steering Comm that is flexible in its mission.

Comm. Barnhardt asked for approval of the initial Steering Committee and the first meeting scheduled for February 23, 2022.

Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to formalize the Berks County Correctional Facility (BCCF) Steering Committee compiled of himself, Jeffrey Smith, Ron Seaman, Stephanie Weaver, and Robert Williams. Commissioner Rivera seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Barnhardt noted that we would be going through this same process when asking other departments to join the BCCF Steering Committee.

9:45am – 10:15am

ARP application rollout, communications, and survey – Pamela Shupp Menet, Deputy CAO/Director of Economic Development and Karra Mayo, Grants Coordinator.

Karra Mayo, Grants Coordinator, updated the Board on ARP application process. Ms. Mayo informed the Board that the general application is available in English/Spanish, and a scoring matrix will be used to rank applications by priority. The ARP survey is also available in English/Spanish and is accessible on our website. Ms. Mayo gave a quick tutorial on navigating through the ARP website.

Commissioner Leinbach asked Ms. Mayo to show the public where on the website they can see who is receiving funding once expended.

Commissioner Barnhardt asked Ms. Mayo to emphasize what the most frequently asked questions are and how she will be providing guidance to make sure that the applicants seek all other funding from State or Federal available to them before using ARP dollars.

Pam Shupp-Menet, Deputy CAO/Director of Economic Development, informed the Board of the participation in a town hall meeting with Rep. Madeleine Dean and Montgomery County. Mrs. Shupp-Menet presented the Board with two items she is looking to have an open discussion and seek guidance on moving forward. Mrs. Shupp-Menet is seeking the Board's guidance on how much of the funds will be deployed into the Community and how much we will reserve for unforeseen or unidentified needs. The second item is determining the maximum amount of funds an organization can apply for. Of the \$81 million received by the County, approximately \$37 million has been committed or expended to date.

Mrs. Shupp-Menet made the following recommendations to the Board for consideration on the amount of funds that can be deployed into the community. Mrs. Shupp-Menet submitted two staff recommendations for consideration. The recommendations are designed to leverage other community dollars, and the County funds not being the sole source of the funding for a project.

Commissioner Barnhardt supports the 25% up to \$1M option presented. He wants to make sure we are not partially funding too many projects that nothing gets done instead of adequately funding projects. Commissioner Barnhardt supports the \$15 Million for 2022 and \$15 Million for 2023. He wanted to note that we have to be flexible, and we may have to adjust along the way.

Commissioner Rivera asked if there is a way to be flexible and set guidelines to allow the increase of the 25% for a needed project.

Mrs. Shupp-Menet stated that we recognize there may be needs not identified. The process designed up to this point is designed to allow projects to be considered in the most objective way that we can by meeting our primary goal of having a legacy and lasting impact on our County and residents.

Commissioner Leinbach supports the 25% percent and a maximum of \$1M. Commissioner Leinbach indicated that we may have exceptions along the way, and we already had two of them (the Arena and Stadium). We want to make sure the projects we are funding also have other funding. We want to make sure ARP dollars push projects to get fully completed.

Commissioner Rivera wanted to add that we should not fund projects until they have met all the necessary processes in place, such as permits.

Mrs. Shupp-Menet indicated that Project Readiness is would also be part of the scoring process.

Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to support the application model of the maximum amount that an applicant can apply for the lesser of \$1M or 25% of the total project cost. Understanding this is the last dollar in, and project readiness must be in place before the money is expended, and if dollars are not spent by a specific deadline, they are to be returned to the County. Commissioner Rivera seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Leinbach pointed out that we want the review committees to determine the best projects to fund.

Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to allocate up to \$15M funding to the community for 2022 and \$15M funding in 2023. Commissioner Rivera seconded for the matter of discussion.

Commissioner Rivera indicated he is not in favor of using \$15M/\$15M and leaving \$14M for 2024. He recommended allocating \$17M or \$18M for 2022 and revisiting the allocation of dollars for 2023 & 2024 later this year.

Commissioner Leinbach offered as a suggestion to let the value of the applications drive the amounts for this year and next year. Commissioner Leinbach suggested committing to a certain number of dollars and not to exceed a certain amount. Commissioner Barnhardt is not in support of the flexibility of the funds. Commissioner Rivera is not in favor of limiting the community outreach to \$30M (\$15M for 2022/\$15M for 2023).

Commissioner Leinbach offered another recommendation of \$18M funding for 2022 and \$12M funding for 2023. Commissioner Rivera inquired into how we will address the balance. Commissioner Leinbach stated we should come back and revisit the balance on a future date.

After discussion, Commissioner Barnhardt amended his motion to allocate \$18 million funding for the application process in 2022 and \$12 million funding for the application process in 2023. The balance remains undesignated until some future point where the Commissioners decide how to direct those dollars. Commissioner Rivera seconded the motion. After no further discussion, the motion was carried unanimously.

Public Comments

See Q&A attached

Mrs. Shupp-Menet gave a brief response.

There being no further business, Commissioner Leinbach adjourned the meeting at 10:34 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Carmen Torres, Chief Clerk