

Berks County Operations Minutes November 1, 2022

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, November 1, 2022, at 9:30 a.m. in the Commissioners' Boardroom, 13th floor of the Berks County Services Center, and via Microsoft Teams Live pursuant to due notice to Board members and the public.

Commissioner Chair Christian Y. Leinbach called the meeting to order, with Commissioners Kevin S. Barnhardt and Michael S. Rivera in attendance. Also present were Christine M. Sadler, County Solicitor, Ronald R. Seaman, Chief Operations Officer, and Carmen Torres, Chief Clerk.

Approval of Minutes

The meeting minutes of October 4, 2022, were approved as presented.

9:30am – 10:00am

2023 Capital Requests - Laura Jones, Deputy Director of Budget and Finance & Bob Patrizio, CFO

Bob Patrizio, CFO, presented the capital requests for projects in 2023 needing the Commissioners' approval. He turned it over to Laura Jones, Deputy Director of Budget. She gave a detailed listing of the new requests for capital projects from Facilities seeking (2) solar power sign trailers, window replacement with some opening windows at the BCRC management offices and lighting upgrades, the addition of two EV stations for Parks and Recreation and the repair and restructuring of the Gring's Mill bridge.

Commissioners asked Rex Levengood, Facilities Director, to explain in detail why he is requesting his capital projects.

Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to approve the solar panel trailers for Facilities. Commissioner Rivera seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, the motion carried.

Commissioner asked Mr. Levengood for additional information regarding the window replacement at the BCRC Administration wing with opening windows. Once they receive the information requested, they will bring it to a vote.

Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to approve the lighting upgrades and EV stations for Parks and Recreation, except for Stonecliffe, which will be deferred until 2025. Commissioner Rivera seconded the motion. After further discussion, Commissioner Barnhardt restated his motion to approve the lighting upgrades and postpone the approval of the EV stations, pending additional information. Commissioner Rivera seconded the restated motion. There being no further discussion, the motion carried.

Brendan Lederer, Assistant Director of Parks and Receptions, explained the recommended repairs for the Gring's Mill bridge and presented the Commissioners with three options.

Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to approve the updates to the Gring's Mill bridge and accept option (3) for a full superstructure replacement. Commissioner Rivera seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, the motion carried.

10:00am – 10:15am

Berks 1st... A Berks County Government Magazine - Tracy Hoffmann, CEO

Commissioner Leinbach explained that there is a need for County departments to get information out to the public. We received two quotes, and the Commissioners individually reviewed them, and they selected the Hoffman Publishing Group because they only charge for postage. He introduced Tracy Hoffman, CEO of Hoffman Publishing Group.

Mr. Hoffman gave a general introduction to the magazine, including general information and events throughout the County. The magazine's name will be Berks 1st, published three times a year, in winter/spring, summer, and fall issues. He gave a breakdown of circulation/distribution and postage costs. The magazine will also be available online.

Commissioner Leinbach clarified that this magazine is to get County department key information out to the county residents and promote upcoming county events.

Commissioner Rivera indicated that it is essential to have some of the printed magazine articles in Spanish but to have all the articles online available in Spanish.

Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to move forward with one publication and see how the advertising goes.

Commissioner Rivera indicated that he supports it but prefers three publications to determine if it will be successful.

Commissioner Barnhardt modified his motion to move forward with three publications pursuant to Commissioner Rivera's recommendation. Commissioner Rivera seconded the motion. After further discussion, Commissioner Rivera reiterated that he would like all the articles online in Spanish. There being no further discussion, the motion carried.

10:15am – 10:30am

The Impact of Warehouse Development in PA/Partnership Agreement– David Hunter, Executive Director, BCPC, Professor Moira Conway, Kutztown University & Professor Allison Conway, CUNY

David Hunter, Executive Director of Planning, introduced Professor Moira Conway and Allison Conway to discuss the study of Warehouse Development in PA.

Professor Moira Conway and Allison Conway presented their scope of study in warehouse and transportation development which has now expanded to include 2-3 additional case studies. They gave a breakdown of the key findings they have discovered thus far. They will investigate the impact on the community, such as the environment, utility demands, and economic impacts. The Professors are requesting that the County submit an updated partnership agreement.

Commissioners expressed some of their concerns and indicated they wanted the study to be unbiased, open, and honest.

Professor Allison Conway explained that the study is not to prevent warehouse development but rather to assist the community in determining the negative impacts of warehouse development.

Pamela Shupp Menet supports the study and the data it will provide to assist in making Economic Development decisions. Mr. Hunter also echoed that he supports the study and that the data gathered will help with the land use impact.

Commissioner Rivera motioned to approve a letter to be sent to Dr. Moira Conway indicating the County of Berks' intent to collaborate and/or commit resources should the study be selected for funding. Commissioner Barnhardt seconded the motion. Commissioner Leinbach indicated that he supports the study but asked the Professors to do their best to be even-handed, understanding that this is an emotionally charged issue. There being no further discussion, the motion carried.

10:30am – 10:45am

Ag Center Renovation Discussion for the Coroner – John Fielding, Coroner

Mr. Fielding, Coroner, discussed the renovations and the need for a morgue and autopsy suite. Mr. Fielding turned it over to Mr. George Holmes, Deputy Coroner. Mr. Holmes presented a slide presentation and gave a background of the Coroner's office and all the space issues they are currently experiencing. Mr. Holmes indicated that drug overdoses are the main issue that presses upon the morgue. Mr. Holmes gave a breakdown of the renovations they are recommending.

Commissioner Barnhardt indicated that he could not support the morgue/autopsy suite and rather work with the Berks Heim and Tower Health.

Mr. Fielding indicated that he is open to suggestions that equal gaining more space.

John Adams, District Attorney, was present and commented on the need for morgue space and indicated he is concerned with the need for a Pathologist soon.

Commissioner Leinbach asked Mr. Fielding and Mr. Adams to get together and come up with a strategy that addresses the needs of the District Attorney and Coroner's office. He asked that they speak to the hospitals about autopsy needs and Berks Heim about morgue space needs.

Commissioner Barnhardt suggested exploring the possibilities and inquiring into using the Community Hospital/ St. Joe's/Hershey for morgue space.

Mr. Fielding agrees with office space in the Ag. Center, and they will explore working with the hospitals for autopsies and Berks Heim for morgue space.

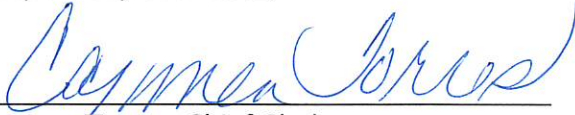
Commissioner Barnhardt motioned to direct Scott Graham from Muhlenberg Green Architects to finalize the Coroner's office space to move ahead in 2023 with the renovations of the Ag. Center. Commissioner Rivera seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, the motion carried.

Public Comments

No comments.

There being no further business, Commissioner Leinbach adjourned the meeting at 11:33 a.m

Respectfully submitted,



Carmen Torres, Chief Clerk