

## **Budget/Operations Meeting Minutes February 6, 2020**

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Thursday, February 6, 2020, at 2:00 P.M. in the Commissioners' Boardroom, 13th floor of the Berks County Services Center, pursuant to due notice to Board members and the public.

Commissioner Chair Christian Y. Leinbach called the meeting to order with Commissioner Kevin S. Barnhardt and Commissioner Michael S. Rivera in attendance. Also present were County Solicitor Christine M. Sadler, Chief Administrative Officer Ronald R. Seaman, Chief Financial Officer Robert Patrizio, Chief Clerk Maryjo Gibson and .

Commissioner Leinbach made the following announcements and comments prior to discussion of Agenda items:

1. Commissioner Leinbach is unable to attend the Maxatawny Township Supervisors Meeting May 13, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. to discuss how voting went at Kutztown University for the Primary. Commissioner Barnhardt and CAO Seaman offered to attend in his place.
2. Commissioner Leinbach asked to clarify with his colleagues the procedure going forward for issuing proclamations. Commissioner Leinbach suggested a majority of the Board must approve any request for a proclamation, and proclamations are not presented at Commissioners' Meetings unless it relates to a function of County government. Mary Buerer will prepare the proclamation. The Commissioners agreed to the clarifications as proposed.
3. Commissioner Leinbach stated that because Commissioner Barnhardt's 8 to 10-year forecast is not complete, he is not ready to make a decision on CGL and asked if the rest of the Board is willing to wait until it is ready. Commissioner Barnhardt stated the report will be ready by next Thursday, February 13, 2020. The Board agreed to wait and directed Solicitor Sadler to notify CGL. Ms. Sadler said she will notify CGL there will not be any meetings during the month of February.

The following items were listed for discussion:

1. Public Defender UCM Management System ("UCM") – Glenn Welsh/Justin Loose  
Public Defender Glenn Welsh reported that for almost four years his office has been struggling with the UCM System. It is a CCAP supported program that has not lived up to the County's expectations. Mr. Welsh said it is challenging and a difficult program for the attorneys and office support staff to deal with on a daily basis. The attorneys must manually enter all victim/witness names to pull up case records, documents do not always populate, and most reports do not work.  
Mr. Welsh would like to go back to Legal Edge, a program his office used before UCM, it is a much more user friendly and reliable system.

When asked about the price, Mr. Welsh said roughly in the range of \$53,000 plus \$10,000 for the juvenile program. Mr. Welsh pointed out the fee could be reduced if more Public Defender's Offices would join the program.

Commissioner Barnhardt suggested the money for this program should come from the Records Improvement funds and asked to have this matter listed for the next Records Improvement Meeting.

Justin Loose, Information System, reported the infrastructure and hosting fees are not included in the Legal Edge program, and would be on the County, and described the technical aspects of the program.

Mr. Loose also suggested there should be a confidentiality agreement and a legal review by the Solicitor's Office.

The Board supported moving the Public Defender's Office from the UCM Management System to Legal Edge.

2. Colebrookdale Railroad ("Railroad") – Ken Pick, Executive Director of the Berks County Redevelopment Authority; Nathaniel Guest, Esq., Board of Directors, Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust, and Robert A. Wade, President of the Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust.

Nathaniel Guest reported to the Commissioners they are here today to request a one to three-year financial investment from the County to help defray the costs of necessary and urgent infrastructure improvements that are needed for the Railroad. Mr. Guest stated the Railroad is the highest rated Railroad in Pennsylvania and needs the required capital investment to qualify for funding through grants.

Mr. Guest provided a detailed report of the improvements and repairs that are needed to make the Railroad safe and an estimated cost of the repairs and improvements.

Mr. Pick noted most of the track is original and is in desperate need of repair.

Mr. Guest commented the Railroad would like to get into the business of moving freight, but because of the condition of the tracks, the Railroad has already had to turn away two potential customers. Mr. Guest noted the Railroad has demonstrated its success, is doing good things for the community, and if something isn't done the deterioration will get worse. Mr. Wade mentioned they have also met with Montgomery County Officials, who have invested some money in the Pottstown Station, but they are asking for a greater commitment.

Commissioner Barnhardt said the County consciously moved the Railroad to the Redevelopment Authority so the County would not be faced with this issue. This is not an entity of the County anymore and sees no rate of return to the County. While Commissioner Barnhardt supports the Railroad, he is holding off on any decision until he sees the numbers.

Chief Financial Officer Robert Patrizio is concerned about the County's bond rating and would like input from the County's bond counsel before any decision is made. Mr. Patrizio also noted since the Railroad is not owned by the County, the County cannot borrow the money. The Redevelopment Authority must borrow,

and the County could guarantee the loan. Mr. Patrizio asked to see the Railroad's Business and Marketing Plan.

All requested information will be submitted to Ken Pick to disseminate. No decision by Board was made until the Commissioners has more information.

3. New CEO Manufactures Resource Center – Terri Lampe Melcher, Business Development Manager, and Richard C. Hobbs, President & CEO of the Manufacturers Resource Center (“MRC”).

Ms. Lampe Melcher introduced Mr. Hobbs, the new President and CEO since July 2019. Ms. Lampe provided a brief update of the activities of the MRC in the last six months, noting MRC has moved to a new facility off I78 in Lehigh County. MRC is a non-profit organization partially fund by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the State's Department of Community and Economic Development encompassing Berks, Carbon, Lehigh, Northampton and Schuylkill counties, and their core business is supporting the creation of jobs and economic opportunities.

Commissioner Barnhardt asked if MRC would like to attend an upcoming Commissioners' Meeting to talk about the 2020 *What's So Cool About Manufacturing* event. Ms. Lampe Melcher agreed to attend and talk about the event. A date will be scheduled.

4. YRF Proposal – Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt and Kelly Laubach, Director of Contracts and Procurement.

A discussion was held on the status of the RFI issued for use of the Youth Recreational Fields (“YRF”) in Bern Township.

Mr. Laubach has reviewed the Request For Information (“RFI”) and said the next step would be to have further discussions with the interested vendors.

Commissioner Barnhardt is of the opinion to go with YSC Sports.

To do due diligence, Mr. Patrizio would like to see performance balance sheets for YSC Sports. Mr. Patrizio also has questions and would like to meet with the YSC's Chief Financial Officer and see their business plan.

Solicitor Sadler stated Ultimate Sports indicated that because this is for lease, they are unwilling to invest capital funds in improving the facility. Ms. Sadler commented when we look at the responses overall, YSC is providing more to making improvements to the facility.

Commissioner Rivera asked for information on joint funding. Ms. Sadler replied if we turf one field, YSC will turf the other field. Ms. Sadler also mentioned the Park Staff agrees the Green Monster should come down because of safety concerns as it is falling apart.

Mr. Patrizio commented the County should not put any money in until we get money out.

The Board directed further negotiations with YSC to clarify and define their proposal, answer questions and provide their business plan to Mr. Patrizio.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:05 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

---

Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk