

Budget/Operations Meeting Minutes February 13, 2020

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Thursday, February 13, 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 .

The following items were listed for discussion:

1. Vistacom-BCTV Commissioners' Boardroom Proposal – Justin Loose, Berks County Chief Information Officer; Heather Adams, Executive Director of BCTV; John Furdyna, Program Director at BCTV; and Andrew Quinn, Vistacom. Mr. Loose stated the proposal offered by Vistacom will add the ability for audio/video capability for the all public meetings held in the Commissioners' Boardroom in addition to the weekly Commissioners' meetings. Mr. Loose reported the proposal calls for a \$56,000 fee that includes a camera, wiring, mics and equipment required for installation. Mr. Loose mentioned a listening assistant feature is also included, and it is the same system installed in the Courtrooms. Mr. Loose said he will also have the Solicitor's Office do a legal review and ask Procurement to review the process. A more detailed discussion was held on technical issues. The Commissioners directed Mr. Loose to move forward with the recommendation.
2. Formation of Jail Construction Steering Committee – Christian Y. Leinbach Because the Board is not in the position to move forward with construction of a new jail, a Steering Committee was not formed.
3. Formation of SET Task Force – Christian Y. Leinbach, Chair Commissioner Leinbach presented his proposal to form a Savings and Efficiency Task Force (S.E.T.) to identify, prioritize and recommend savings and efficiency opportunities and strategies in Berks County government to the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Leinbach stated he will send out draft objectives to the S.E.T. committee and would like individuals appointed to the task force by the Commissioners with no more than 12 individuals being appointed. The ideas should be global and with a goal of six months to come up with ideas. All Commissioners approved the formation of the task force.

4. 10 Year Capital financial timeline forecast – Commissioner Kevin S. Barnhardt
Commissioner Barnhardt presented his 10-year capital timeline which addressed many of the massive multi-dollar projects and the financial impact these projects will have on the County over the next ten years. Commissioner Barnhardt is concerned about the tax increase implications on Berks County residents in building a new jail now and wishes to soften the tax increase.
Commissioner Barnhardt suggested holding off on building a new jail until 2028/2030 when the County’s debt service will be lower, and will allow the County to address other major capital projects and lessen a tax increase on County residents.
Commissioner Barnhardt also suggested taking a scientific poll of the community to determine what are the priorities of the community.
Commissioner Leinbach is fine with putting any ideas on the table and it makes sense to look beyond a five-year period. But Commissioner Leinbach isn’t sure he is comfortable waiting more than five years to build a new jail.
Commissioner Leinbach would like to see the data if we can don’t build a jail within the next five years, and stay away from a tax increase until 2024/2025.
Mr. Patrizio thinks it is challenging, and the timing needs to be considered.
Ken Pick, Executive Director of the Berks County Redevelopment Authority, attended the meeting and was asked how the Authority feels about owning the Jail? Mr. Pick discussed the possibility with Dan Becker and they are intrigued by the possibility and are willing to do whatever the County needs help with.
Before the Board makes any further decisions, they decided on getting more feedback from CGL.
The Commissioners asked Solicitor Sadler to contact CGL and explain the County’s position at this time, and ask CGL to come up with a new proposal.
5. Solicitor Sadler provided an YRF update. Ms. Sadler reported yesterday Bob Patrizio and herself had a lengthy telephone conversation with YSC concerning their proposal and operation of the YRF. Ms. Sadler noted YSC is concerned with safety issues concerning the Green monster, lack of lighting and shelter from weather.
Ms. Sadler reported there is also interest from Baseballtown Charities to possibly share the fields with YSC. The Commissioners discussed this option and were receptive to the idea, and asked Ms. Sadler to speak with both parties about the possibility of sharing the fields.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:45 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maryjo Gibson, Chief Clerk