

**Berks County Operations Agenda
December 7, 2021
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

Approve the minutes of the November 30, 2021 Operations Meeting.

9:30am – 10:00am

HB 1800 Election Reform Legislation- Christian Leinbach, Commissioner.

10:00am – 10:30am

Berks County Recovery Survey and marketing budget - Kevin Barnhardt, Commissioner.
Decision is requested.

10:30am – 10:45am

Introduction of S.E.T Initiative: The importance of learning what each County department does internally, how departments may intersect, and how to use this information to create internal and external efficiencies. Michael Rivera, Commissioner.
Information only

Adjournment.

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the November 9, 2021 Operations Meeting were approved as presented.

9:30am – 10:00am

1. Update on the Tri-County Passenger Railroad – Christian Leinbach, Commissioner. Information only.

Commissioner Leinbach explained that this current committee is forming an authority which will comprise of nine members, three from each county: Berks, Chester, and Montgomery, of which, one member will be selected as chair. Three meetings were held to provide updates to all three counties which encompassed legislation delegates, state representatives and senators. As the bipartisan infrastructure bill has passed, there's significance in the restoration of the railroad connecting Reading to Philadelphia because money is being delegated to Amtrak specifically to under or un-served areas of Passenger Rail, to which Reading meets the criteria and qualifies for. Necessary resolutions and documentation will be forthcoming in the upcoming weeks to enable forward movement, which if occurs, is estimated to cost \$250,000.00 for the first year.

10:00am – 10:15am

2. Discussion on the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) – Michael Rivera, Commissioner, Ken Pick Executive Director of the Berks County Redevelopment Authority and Jack Williams, Executive Director of the Berks Coalition to End Homelessness. Information Only.

Jointly, Ken Pick along with Jack Williams provided background and a detailed description of the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) to both clarify and better inform about this big-volume program. ERAP was implemented on March 1, 2021 and allocated 52 million dollars, dispersed in four separate pots. Every month since the implementation of ERAP there has been some sort of update or

clarification released by the state, which in many instances, delineated changes that were immense in nature and required modifications to be made along the way. There are currently 3,988 cases receiving assistance from the program, as well as 1,400 in various stages of review and processing. The acceptance rate into the program is 91%. Many have received assistance which enabled them to avoid eviction. Many clients also require four payments, per month, comprised of utility bills plus rent. It is projected that due to the amount of remaining impending applicants, the monetary need will exceed the 52 million dollars of funding received. For this reason, the application end date of October 4, 2021 was decided as a precautionary measure to avoid obligating any funds that are not yet available. This hopefully brief shutdown has enabled us time to request additional federal and state funding, which would come from money to be allocated that has not been utilized and therefore goes back into the pot to be procured by those who can and will use it. The goal is for the application shutdown to be temporary, and to secure more funding for the continuation and success of ERAP.

Comments

Commissioner Barnhardt noted that there is a presentation planned for the December 7, 2021 Operations Meeting, RE: recovery funding survey.

No public comments.

There being no further business, Commissioner Leinbach adjourned the meeting at 10:02 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carmen Torres, Chief Clerk