

Commissioners' Board Meeting Minutes September 16, 2021

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at the Wyomissing Public Library on Thursday, September 16, 2021, at 7:00 P.M. 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 Commissioner Kevin S. Barnhardt and Commissioner Michael S. Rivera in attendance. Also present were Christine M. Sadler, County Solicitor, Ronald R. Seaman, Chief Administrative Officer and Carmen Torres, Chief Clerk.

Commissioner Leinbach opened the meeting with a moment of silence and Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

MEETING HOST WELCOME FROM WYOMISSING BOROUGH

Councilman John Woodward spoke about Wyomissing's Economic Development. Raised concerns about the Berkshire Mall property and shared some ideas on how they plan to fill some of the vacant storefronts. He spoke about some of the current economic projects in Wyomissing and is looking forward to future projects currently being considered.

Mayor Fred Levering spoke about the history of Wyomissing and some of the upgrades to infrastructures in the area. Shared his concerns with future development and the need to focus on residential development. Indicated they are looking at the traffic congestion and traffic patterns which will require attention and solution. Excited about the plans of the future train station and expressed interest in Wyomissing being one of the stops.

Berks County Covid-19 Data Report

Brian Gottschall reported there is still an upward trend on the number of cases but at a slower rate. Testing positivity rate continues to be high. Hospitals are busy but not overwhelmed. COVID deaths are now reaching double digits. We remain 9th in the state for our population and vaccine rate. Our goal of 70% fully vaccinated is currently 63%. An issue remains of those receiving a first vaccine and not scheduling their second dose.

CO-COUNTY WELLNESS UPDATE – Commissioner Kevin S. Barnhardt

Contract tracing is going well and has improved since the beginning of Covid. We continue to see a high success rate, with numbers of 456 last week and 380 this week. Our contact tracing costs are significantly lower than anticipated.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of September 9, 2021 Commissioners' Board Meeting were approved as presented.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

No comments

Agenda Items

1. A motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt, seconded by Commissioner Rivera and all voted unanimously to approve the items listed below:

309.2021 Adopt a resolution authorizing 2021 Budget Transfers in the amount of \$144,763 and 2021 Appropriations in the negative amount of \$(318,000) per listing dated September 13, 2021.

310.2021 Adopt a resolution authorizing Human Resources Recommendations dated September 16, 2021 as follows:

1. Authorize the transfer of Valerie Burkert from PC012594 Victim Witness Coordinator – District Attorney to PC011170 Judicial Coordinator – Court Administration, effective 9/29/2021. Rate of \$41,561/annually. Salary range Minimum \$31,912; Midpoint \$42,550; Maximum \$53,187. Replacement for Amy Pierce who separated. This request meets the criteria of the Hiring Policy. Budget 10000 – 11600.
2. Authorize \$250 uniform/clothing allowance for Lieutenants and Sergeants – Jail System, per attached listing, effective for the pay of 10/12/2021. Budget 10000 – 12090.

311.2021 Adopt a resolution authorizing the award and the Director of Contracts & Procurement to execute as a result of Invitation to Bid #21-12-GR a contract for the Schubert's Bridge (46F) Abutment Repair Project as identified herein:

DESCCO Design and Construction, Inc.
1 Willow Street Industrial Park
Fleetwood, PA 19522

Total Bid Amount Not to Exceed: \$30,770.00

The Base Bid includes the following:

Item No.	Quantity	Item Description	Unit Price	Bid Price
0608-0001	Lump Sum	Mobilization	\$3,540.00	\$3,540.00
0804-0013	5 Pounds	Seeding and Soil Supplement – Formula D	\$468.00	\$2,340.00
0845-0001	5000 Dollars	Unforeseen Water Pollution Control	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
4849-0010	1 Each	Rock Construction Entrance	\$1,680.00	\$1,680.00
4850-0032	5 Cubic Yards	Rock, Class R-4 (Modified)	\$90.00	\$450.00
0850-0034	20 Cubic Yards	Rock, Class R-6	\$132.00	\$2,640.00
0855-0003	1 Each	Pumped Water Filter Bag	\$900.00	\$900.00
0855-0004	1 Each	Pumped Water Filter Bag Replacement	\$900.00	\$900.00
0867-0012	75 Linear Feet	Composite Filter Sock, 12" Diameter	\$14.40	\$1,080.00
0901-0001	Lump Sum	Maintenance and Protection of Traffic During Construction	\$2,400.00	\$2,400.00
9000-0001	50 Linear Feet	Temporary Cofferdam System	\$142.80	\$7,140.00
9000-0002	1.5 Cubic Yards	Grout Bag Repair	\$1,800.00	\$2,700.00

- 312.2021 Adopt a resolution authorizing execution of the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Program Management Agreement for The Emergency Food Assistance Program and Plan of Operation Agreement with Helping Harvest for participation in the Emergency Food Assistance Program for a five (5) year period ending September 30, 2026.
- 313.2021 Adopt a resolution authorizing Christian Y. Leinbach, Chair to execute the Memorandum of Understanding between Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Game Commission and County of Berks, Pennsylvania through Department of Emergency Services for access to radios owned and operated by the Commission for the express purpose of cooperation and coordination between federal and local public safety agencies.
- 314.2021 Adopt a resolution authorizing execution of Amendment # 2 to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) requesting a modification to subgrant 2018-CO-01-31029 to extend timeline to September 30, 2022 due to COVID-19 related delays.
- 315.2021 Adopt a resolution authorizing Robert Patrizio, Chief Financial Officer, to execute the 2021-2022 Application for the Volunteer Accident renewal policy with CCAP ("County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania").
- 316.2021 Adopt a resolution ratifying, confirming, and approving Christian Y. Leinbach, Chair to execute a letter of support to Angela Watson, Acting Director of the Bureau of Rail Freight, Ports and Waterways, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation on behalf of the Redevelopment Authority of County of Berks for a grant application to the Rail Transportation Assistance Program ("RTAP") for the multi-phased critical capacity improvements needed on the Eastern Berks Gateway Railroad.
- 317.2021 Adopt a resolution authorizing execution of a letter of support to County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) on behalf of the County of Berks and the DoubleTree Hotel & Conference Center, for a proposal to host the August 2026 CCAP Annual Conference.
2. Motion authorizing execution of Contract Agreements/Amendments as furnished by the Contract Coordinator per listing dated September 14, 2021.
3. Motion to authorize execution of the payments and electronic transfers as set forth on Controller's Office vouchers listing dated September 16, 2021.

Reports

1. County Treasurer A. Dennis Adams, CPA submitted a prepared weekly Treasurer's report.
2. The Controller's weekly report was presented by Sandy Graffius, Controller.

REPORT OF CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Ronald R. Seaman gave overview on upcoming Parks and Recreation events the remainder of September and the month of October.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTSCommissioner Rivera

Congratulated Brian Gottschall on his award. Spoke of upcoming events throughout the County. Together with Berks County Library System, the Reading Public Museum cut the ribbon for "Story Walk". A one mile walk around the park with stops at different stations to read children's books along the river.

The Berks History Center has a self-guided driving tour on October 9, 2021, that costs \$35.00 per car for members and \$45.00 per car for non-members.

It is Spanish Heritage Month, with remaining festivities planned to include a concert, parade, and salsa festival on September 26 and 28-30, 2021. Other happenings are the 74th annual Oley Valley High School Fair, to which Commissioner Leinbach provided that the winning pumpkin weighed 1,200 pounds! Boyertown's Oktoberfest is also in full swing.

Commissioner Barnhardt

Gave a scope of BCERT and the work they do. Berks County Emergency Response Team (BCERT) assists local law enforcement agencies in managing and resolving special threats and high-risk incidents. Complimented Wyomissing Borough, the Wyomissing Library on their accomplishments and proficient work they do. He expressed his excitement for future "On The Road" meetings scheduled quarterly and will strive to continue them indefinitely.

Commissioner Leinbach

Paid tribute to the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Announced two programs that are actively being done in Pennsylvania.

Bells Across Pennsylvania which is a fiberglass life size replica of the Liberty Bell. Both exterior and interior bell to be created by a qualified artist of our choosing to decorate upon raising \$10,000.00 to receive a bell, which requires 10+ orders statewide to obtain the contract to proceed with the project. There is a limit to two sponsors per bell. Anyone interested can contact the Commissioners' office.

The *Liberty Tree Project*, an American Poplar tree will be planted when it reaches 4-6' tall. We have been informed Berks County is next on the list and the Heritage Center is possible location for planting the American Poplar tree.

Reminder that healthcare is our leading industry, manufacturing being a close second. Expressed there were concerns with Tower Health and the possibility of them being sold.

If sold, we would likely lose the headquarter status of a major regional healthcare provider. Thanks to the successful recovery efforts of Dr. Sue Perrotty who was able to pull together a critical alliance with Penn Medicine. This is a very good story for Berks County and the local community. Gave praise to both Wyomissing Borough as well as West Reading Borough for working so well and closely with each other – it's great to see and creates a good foundation for the future.

Q&A Questions were read (See attached)

ELECTED OFFICIALS' COMMENTS

Sandy Graffius

A continued reminder to all volunteers and helpers who received a debit card as payment, time is expiring, please make sure to utilize the debit cards before you begin to get charged \$3.99 per month. If you need assistance with this process, call the Controller's Office.

COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR

Adrian Jadc, Borough of Wyomissing

Expressed concerns with the number of drop boxes for mail ballots. Request an extension to the weekend drop box hours, especially the week before an election. Asked the Board to assist in promoting the use of masks in meetings.

Jess Royer, Spring Township

The divide and unwillingness among the community regarding beliefs surrounding the pandemic would benefit from a continued and joint effort among the county and local medical experts to provide accurate and accessible information. An effort including the medical community to promote facts and current research in some regard is strongly suggested and needed. For voter drop boxes, they assist with assuaging low voter turnout, it's not party prejudice, so we should encourage it and create accessible ballot return locations.

Commissioner Leinbach

Reiterated that we need legislature and Governor to get together and address the rules around Election. There are no rules or guidance in place on the subject which is a source of frustration and has been for some time. The County Commissioners' Association and Board of Commissioners' have asked for two reforms 1. a pre-canvas, and 2. moving back deadline for absentee ballots.

The constable audit, as alluded to prior, remains on hold, partially due to pandemic but also because data is extremely hard to come by and collect and troubleshooting needs to be done in that regard.

The passenger rail is slowly developing because a big decision is pending and needs to be made as to whether it will be an inter-city rail or a commuter rail, differences being distances traveled, stops in between and a longer run time, all of which are important considerations.

Commissioner Barnhardt

Stated that locations are a primary necessity to enable the effectiveness of drop boxes, and although libraries have offered and are good locations for drop boxes, it cannot be limited to libraries, and not many other options are available. Using the mail-in ballot option can alleviate the need for additional drop boxes. Be sure to follow through with your original voting method decision.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:39 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,



Carmen Torres, Chief Clerk

Source	Type	Identity	Timestamp	Conversation Id	Content
Moderator	Announcement	Berger, Heather (HBerger@countyofberks.com)	9/10/2021 19:27	2659c5ca-62f5-4648-906b-e44076aa516b	Public comment will be accepted in person and through the Q&A function. Please include your first name, last name and municipality for all comments. Any comments without name and municipality will not be considered. Each citizen can submit one comment. Comment length is dictated by limitations of the platform being used (Teams Q&A, Facebook, YouTube). In person comments will be accepted first, followed by comments submitted virtually. The meeting comment period is limited to a total of 30 minutes including both in person and virtual comments. This time period may be extended at the discretion of the Board. Please be concise. Comments that are germane to County business will be read during the meeting and should not be considered to be interactive dialog with the Commissioners. The County Solicitor shall be the final arbiter of whether a comment is germane and should be read. Any Commissioner response to public comment will be done at the discretion of the Commissioners.
Attendee	Question	Crystal Kowalski - Wyomissing (Unverified)	9/16/2021 22:53	be08453c-9078-4aa9-aac8-2347d9a77dc6	Good Evening Commissioners, Welcome to Wyomissing. I would like to follow up on my comment from last week on a unified forensic audit of the Berks County Constable System. Thank you for addressing my comment at the end of last meeting. What I understand from your response is that the difficulty of retrieving and compiling data from many different agencies would make it very difficult, if not impossible to get meaningful results from an audit. As I recall, this difficulty in tracking data about the expenses and revenues involved in the constable system was the reason county leaders agreed an audit was needed. Given that the data cannot be effectively retrieved, could we as a county in conjunction with the other agencies involved in maintaining and tracking information pertaining to the constable system move forward without an audit and commit ourselves to creating a new system where the money and activity could be tracked? Do any of your colleagues in the county commissioners' association employ a system that they feel works well for their county? This constable issue has been raised publicly for a considerable number of years. Some of Dan Kelly's articles on the subject reference back to 2004, quoting one Berks County constable's yearly salary at \$216,000 when the highest paid constable in Lehigh County was making \$75,000. There are years of evidence to support changing the system. Please work with the other county leaders to establish a new system that has the ability to be monitored. Thank you, Crystal Kowalski - Wyomissing
Moderator	Announcement	Berger, Heather (HBerger@countyofberks.com)	9/16/2021 23:42	fcc35baf-6f34-40fb-99bd-a1837a79951e	To learn more about vaccines and updates please go to https://www.doyourpartberks.com/
Moderator	Announcement	Berger, Heather (HBerger@countyofberks.com)	9/16/2021 23:50	ff7b7b15-9147-4305-a24a-020df2ccad09	Learn more about Berks County Parks and Recreation activities at https://www.co.berks.pa.us/Dept/Parks/Pages/default.aspx
Moderator	Announcement	Berger, Heather (HBerger@countyofberks.com)	9/16/2021 23:52	b57e69d7-4421-4dd7-85bc-bdd6a8c2e686	Learn more about Berks County Parks and Recreation activities on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/berkscountyparks Fall '21 Road Ramble October 9th, 2021 Tickets are now on sale. \$35/ car for BHC members, \$45/ car non-members For more information call 610-375-4375 or visit www.berkshistory.org
Moderator	Announcement	Lopez, Barbara (BLopez@countyofberks.com)	9/16/2021 23:55	f71fe57c-ad57-434d-b588-9f6fb6699598	

Source	Type	Identity	Timestamp	Conversation Id	Content
Moderator	Announcement (Archived)	Berger, Heather (HBerger@countyofberks.com)	9/16/2021 23:56	d5b28bec-0d13-481b-b663-ed7bf98a4e1c	Learn more about the Road Ramble and Berks history at https://www.berkshistory.org/
Moderator	Announcement	Lopez, Barbara (BLopez@countyofberks.com)	9/16/2021 23:56	4955cd8e-34aa-4f5a-8c80-6039c04bb1d8	The 74th Oley Valley Community Fair September 16th, 17th, and 18th Location: 26 Jefferson St, Oley, PA 19547 For more information visit http://www.oleyfair.org/
Moderator	Announcement	Lopez, Barbara (BLopez@countyofberks.com)	9/16/2021 23:57	376c2d68-8977-4c03-939e-869983d9b4dd	14th Annual Boyertown 2021 Oktoberfest Friday, 9/17 from 5pm- 9pm and Saturday, 9/18 11am – 9pm (Rain date: Sept 19th) Location: Town Center Parking Lot, Boyertown Oktoberfest is free to attend and welcomes families of all ages. Beer tent wristbands can be purchased for \$5.00. For more information visit http://www.buildingabetterboyertown.org/
Attendee	Question	Jon James, Bernville (Unverified)	9/17/2021 0:10	1ecb8600-5b06-432e-9ecc-d350f200bcb0	Good job commissioners on the remote meetings, a great way to bring the representatives to the people. Thanks for the suggestion Commissioner Barnhardt. Regarding the rail proposal, do we have an ideal where the stations are being considered, which communities? Thank you, and keep up the good work.
Moderator	Announcement	Berger, Heather (HBerger@countyofberks.com)	9/17/2021 0:25	a8c1a262-a94c-47cd-a513-2b265458f5f0	Thank you for your questions and comments. This Q&A is closed as the public comments have been addressed.