

Commissioners' Board Meeting Minutes April 9, 2020

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Thursday, April 9, 2020, at 10:00 A.M. in the DES Media Room, DirectLink Technology Center, 2561 Bernville Road, Reading, Pennsylvania, 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 and Deputy Chief Clerk Ronald R. Seaman.

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

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of March 19, 2020 Commissioners' Board Meeting and March 19, 2020 Budget/Operations Meeting were approved as presented.

Commissioner Leinbach noted several differences with today's meeting as opposed to the normal Commissioners' Meetings. First, everyone in attendance is masked in accordance with Governor Wolf's directive. Secondly, the Commissioners' Meetings will be held on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month going forward for the time being and will be held at the DirectLink Technology Center, 2561 Bernville Road. Public comment can be made by e-mail at Comments@DES.com. All comments received will be read at the appropriate time with the three (3) minute limit per comment and a total thirty (30) minute comment period being observed.

Commissioner Leinbach then noted that an Executive Session was held on March 18th dealing with Personnel and Real Estate and on March 25th dealing with Real Estate, Personnel and Litigation. He also noted that the County Emergency Leadership Team has been holding daily conference calls at 1:00 PM.

Public Comment on Agenda Items

There was no Public Comment on specific Agenda items.

Agenda Items

1. A motion was made by Commissioner Barnhardt, seconded by Commissioner Rivera and all voted unanimously to approve the items listed below except for Resolution No. 122.2020 in which Commissioner Barnhardt voted, "No.":

113.2020 Adopt a resolution ratifying, confirming and approving, Brandy Neider, as Acting Administrator for Berks County Children & Youth Services, and is hereby authorized to execute any and all approvals for certifications for subsidized adoptions and subsidized permanent legal custodianships beginning Friday, March 20, 2020.

114.2020 Adopt a resolution ratifying, confirming and approving 2019 Budget Transfers in the amount of \$2,459,563; 2019 Appropriations in the amount of \$657,209; 2020 Budget Transfers in the amount of \$44,803 and 2020 Appropriations in the negative amount of \$(389,082) per listing dated March 23, 2020; and 2019 Appropriations in the amount of \$101,633; 2020 Budget Transfers in the amount of \$150,080 and 2020 Appropriations in the amount of \$3,628,500 per listing dated March 30, 2020; and authorize 2019 Appropriations in the amount of \$565; 2020 Budget Transfers in the amount of \$812,500 and 2020 Appropriations in the amount of \$7,343 per listing dated April 6, 2020.

115.2020 Adopt a resolution ratifying, confirming and approving Human Resources Recommendations per listing dated April 9, 2020 as follows:

1. Authorize the appointment of Brandy Neider to Interim Children and Youth Services Director – Children and Youth Services, effective 03/20/2020. Rate of \$80,365/annually. The working out of class increase will be discontinued when the Interim Director status is terminated. Salary range Minimum \$57,802; Midpoint \$77,070; Maximum \$96,337. Budget 22000 – 23200.
2. Authorize the appointment of John Moser to Interim Director of Workforce Development – Workforce Development Board, effective 04/01/2020. Rate of \$82,601/annually. This working out of classification increase will terminate upon the return of Dan Fogarty to the position of Workforce Development/CareerLink Director. Salary range Minimum \$54,548; Midpoint \$72,730; Maximum \$90,913. Budget 25000 – 26660.

3. Authorize the promotion of Matthew Eshenaur from PC012988 Telecommunicator to PC012339 Special Operations and Project Officer – Department of Emergency Services, effective 03/25/2020. Rate of \$53,000/annually. Salary range Minimum \$45,953; Midpoint \$61,271; Maximum \$76,589. Replacement for Ben Ross who separated. This request meets the criteria of the Hiring Policy. Budget 10000 – 16020.
 4. Authorize the promotion of Jennifer Epler from PC010278 Clerk Typist III to PC010062 Administrative Officer I – Children and Youth Services, effective 04/01/2020. Rate of \$45,500/annually. Salary range Minimum \$39,044; Midpoint \$52,059; Maximum \$65,074. Replacement for Corinne Cappella who was promoted. This request meets the criteria of the Hiring Policy. Budget 22000 – 23200.
 5. Authorize the Hourly Part-time Rate Adjustments as outlined on the attached listing, effective 3/18/2020.
- 116.2020 Adopt a resolution authorizing and approving the Avoidance of Infectious Respiratory Disease Policy & Procedure, Section 9.9 effective April 7, 2020.
- 117.2020 Adopt a resolution authorizing the award and Director of Contracts and Procurement to execute one contract as a result of the Request for Proposal #20-01-CN for Greater Reading Advanced Manufacturing Skills Gap Study for the Berks County Workforce Development Board as follows:
Economic Development Company of Lancaster County
115 East King Street
Lancaster, PA 17602
Total Not to Exceed: \$95,621.00
- 118.2020 Adopt a resolution of the Berks County Board of Commissioners hereby declaring an emergency to exist due to rapid deterioration of a portion of certain fields located at the Berks County Youth and Recreation Facility, thereby requiring immediate stabilization in order to preclude further deterioration and to protect public health and safety; and further authorizing Kelly Laubach, Director of Contracts and Procurement, to execute the purchase order to Hummer Turfgrass Systems Inc., Manheim, Pennsylvania, to perform said emergency services.

- 119.2020 Adopt a resolution ratifying, confirming and approving execution by Christian Y. Leinbach, Chair, of the Signatory Authorization Form for the Berks County Workforce Development Board substituting signatory authority from Daniel Fogarty, Executive Director of the Berks County Workforce Development Board, to John W. Moser, Acting Director of Berks County Workforce Development Board effective March 20, 2020.
- 120.2020 Adopt a resolution ratifying, confirming and approving execution by Christian Y. Leinbach, Chair, of the Partnership Agreement between the County of Berks Chief Elected Official and Berks County Workforce Development Board effective April 1, 2020 through March 31, 2024. The agreement defines the roles and responsibilities of the County and WDB as they relate to the local governance structure defined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, and all subsequent implementing regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Labor and Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry.
- 121.2020 Adopt a resolution ensuring the continuity of governmental operations through succession planning in the event any member or members of the Berks County Board of Commissioners becomes incapacitated due to illness or death.
- 122.2020 Adopt a resolution of the Berks County Board of Commissioners, that in order to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19 on County taxpayers, it is hereby authorized that for taxable year 2020 only, all tax payments for County taxes received by September 30, 2020, shall be assessed a penalty of zero percent (0%) of the taxpayer's tax liability. All late 2020 tax payments for County taxes received after September 30, 2020, shall be assessed a penalty of ten percent (10%) of the taxpayer's tax liability.

Under discussion, Commissioner Leinbach noted that with respect to resolution No, 122.2020, this was in correlation with the federal and state government deferring the filing dates for income taxes and in anticipation of authorizing legislation already passed by the PA Senate and expected to be passed by the PA House when they return to session. This legislation makes the delay of imposing a penalty on real estate taxes optional based on the needs of individual municipalities. Commissioner Rivera noted that the penalty amount was not being increased and that current bills also included municipal taxes which are not being addressed in this Resolution. Commissioner Barnhardt asked that this be tabled until April 30th to avoid confusion among taxpayers, and allow the Board to engage in a dialog with municipalities and school districts prior to taking action

on the Resolution. He then placed tabling action on Resolution 122.2020, but the motion died for lack of a second.

All Commissioners agreed that relief was needed. Commissioner Rivera emphasized that additional changes could be made if the legislation finally passed requiring any modification of the Resolution or if necessitated by actions taken or not taken by municipalities.

2. Motion authorizing execution of Contract Agreements/Amendments as furnished by the Contract Coordinator per listings dated March 30, 2020, and April 6, 2020.
3. Motion authorizing payments set forth on Controller's Office vouchers payable listings dated March 24, 2020 for week ending March 25, 2020; and for the listing dated March 31, 2020; and for the listing dated April 7, 2020 for the week ending April 8, 2020, and the payment of electronic transfers and employee payroll.

Reports

1. County Treasurer A. Dennis Adams, CPA was absent, and his report was presented by Commissioner Leinbach.
2. In the absence of the County Controller, Sandy Graffius, Commissioner Leinbach also presented her report.

There being no Budget/Ops Meeting today, there was no report of the CFO, Robert Patrizio.

REPORT OF CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Ronald R. Seaman asked everyone to continue practicing social distancing and be safe as families gather to celebrate Passover and Easter and wishes the best to all during the observances of these special events.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Barnhardt

Commissioner Barnhardt began his comments by thanking the public for their cooperation, and County employees for their willingness to continue providing necessary services to the Community.

He next spoke about the three-phased process the County was engaged in to deal with the COVID-19 Pandemic. Phase I was a preparation and information gathering mode. Phase II, which has now begun, will involve a furloughing of two hundred ninety-nine (299) employees effective April 15, 2020. As time progresses, this number could increase. In Phase III, we will be looking at the County's recovery. In preparation to not face a tax

increase for the next several years, the County has already looked at shifting \$5 Million dollars in capital costs budgeted for 2020 to 2021. More on Phase III will be forthcoming.

Census 2020 is still actively continuing. If you have not already completed the form, please do so today. He stated that contrary to some information being put forth, there is no connection to completion of the form in order to be eligible to receive a stimulus check and census information may not be shared with Immigration and Customs.

Election Services continues to prepare for a June 2, 2020 Primary Election and continues to urge voters to utilize a mail-in ballot. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find Poll Workers willing to serve in the respective precincts throughout the County and several polling locations have indicated they would not be available for this Primary, especially churches and school buildings. Also, privacy curtains are being installed on the voting machine carts and will be available for this Primary if there will be an on-site election.

Lastly, BARTA has placed security in the Downtown Transportation Center to avoid "joyriders" on busses since fares have been suspended in an effort to promote safe social distancing for individuals that must rely on public transportation to obtain vital necessities or have transportation to jobs. This is a combined effort by the Reading Police Department and the County Deputy Sheriffs.

Commissioner Rivera

Commissioner Rivera began his remarks by also commending the County employees for the work they are doing under these trying circumstances as well as our First Responders and Medical Workers for their work on the front lines of the pandemic.

He then stated that Regular Commissioner Meetings will be held on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month beginning with today's Meeting, and on the 1st, 3rd and if there is a 5th Thursday, at 10:00 Commissioner Leinbach will be providing a COVID-19 Update from the studio of BCTV followed by himself delivering the same message in Spanish.

He stated that the County Call Center that has been established is open daily from 8:00 AM until 7:00 PM and to date, they have received a total of 1,249 calls and 462 e-mails.

Commissioner Rivera also noted that effective immediately, all employees and any visitors must be masked when entering a County building.

It was noted that now more, than ever, volunteers are needed to continue providing needed services such as the delivery of Meals-On-Wheels and other programming. He recommended checking the United Way website for more information or contact his Administrative Assistant Barbara Lopez for information on volunteer opportunities and your willingness to assist.

Lastly, Commissioner Rivera cautioned everyone to be on the lookout for scammers. They seem to be trying many different ways to con people during this crisis.

Commissioner Leinbach

Commissioner Leinbach opened up his remarks by reporting on the increased volume of calls and e-mails received at the County COVID Help Center over the last three (3) days. Many calls were inquiring about where to purchase masks or how they should be worn. Others were asking which County Departments were open and what services were being provided. Also, there were calls requesting information on who should be contacted to report businesses that should not be operational but are. Following this, he presented three (3) types of masks and how they are worn.

Commissioner Leinbach then addressed the five (5) public comments that had been received.

Brian Doughtry- Commented that the arrangement of the United States Flag along with the remaining two (2) on the speaker's platform were not arranged according to proper flag etiquette. Research indicated that the United States Flag was properly displayed in the center of the State and Local Flag as long as it appeared higher than the others. The flag poles were shortened to accommodate that and the three (3) flags are now properly being displayed.

The next two (2) questions dealt with Berks County Jail. The first asked what was being done to prevent inmates from contracting COVID-19? Commissioner Leinbach first articulated the precautionary measures that had been put in place prior to any employees being tested and then stated what steps were being taken since the positive test results on the employees were received. In all instances, proper procedures per the CDC and PA Department of Health were being followed. He also noted that the current jail population had been significantly reduced during the prior few months from its former level.

The second question relative to the jail asked about sanitation protocols that were being followed at the jail and why inmates were not given masks for their protection? This question was being forwarded to the Warden for a response.

The next question was submitted by Jane Morganster who expressed her concern about the lack of public adherence to enforcement of social distancing. The County will shortly be issuing a Press Release that addresses this very issue along with other recommended practices to help avoid the spread of the virus.

Kerry Seifert asked why all citizens were not given a mask by the federal government? Commissioner Leinbach noted that people can make their own masks out of ordinary household materials and that N95 masks need to be reserved for first responders and health care workers. Commissioner Rivera noted that masks are worn by the general public to prevent others, not the wearer of the mask themselves, from spreading the virus.

Commissioner Leinbach closed his remarks by saying that no one person has all the answers, nor does anyone know how long the current situation will last. He further noted that during the time this meeting has been in session, Governor Wolf has ordered that all schools in PA are to fully close for the duration of this school year. He also requested that all individuals extend a helping hand to an elderly neighbor in seeing that they had proper essentials and medications available to them without having to leave the safety of their homes to secure them, if at all possible.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ronald R. Seaman, Deputy Chief Clerk