



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES

Tuesday, April 14, 2020, 10:00 A.M.

Willowbank Office Building
420 Holmes Street, Room 146
Bellefonte, PA 16823

I. CALL TO ORDER

The public meeting of the Centre County Board of Commissioners was convened at 10:00 AM by Chair of the Board Michael Pipe.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

In attendance were Commissioner Michael Pipe, Commissioner Mark Higgins, Commissioner Steven Dershem, and Administrator Margaret Gray.

Representatives from the news media included Gary Sinderson.

CNET staff were present.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments received from the public.

IV. MEETING MINUTES

Minutes from the Tuesday, April 7, 2020 Board of Commissioners' meeting.

Action: On a motion by Commissioner Higgins, seconded by Commissioner Dershem, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the April 7, 2020 Board of Commissioners' meeting.

V. COVID-19 PLANNING AND RESPONSE

A. Agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Health

Administrator Margaret Gray reported that the Board of Commissioners received correspondence from the Pennsylvania Department of Health's Secretary Dr. Rachel Lavine. Dr. Lavine announced that the Department of Health will be sharing with the County information for individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19. The Board is to provide a single point of contact to receive the information, which will be uploaded in the 911 system for first responders. The Board has identified the point of contact and a non-disclosure agreement is being reviewed by the Solicitor. The information that will be provided is confidential and the County may want to consider having a nondisclosure agreement with 911 employees and first responders.

Commissioner Higgins agreed that nondisclosure statement for employees and first responders is important. There was consensus of the Board to approve the agreement with a protected way of communicating information, a nondisclosure with 911 employees and first responders. On a motion by Commissioner Higgins,

seconded by Commissioner Dershem, the Board voted unanimously to approve the agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Health contingent upon a nondisclosure agreement with 911 employees and dispatchers, first responder organizations and a protected way of communication with approval by the Solicitor – Dept. 111.

- B. Administrator Margaret Gray introduced two contracts for the storage of remains of individuals suspected of having COVID-19; one with Wetzler Funeral Home in Milesburg and the other with Wetzler Funeral Home in Bellefonte. The Coroner is not permitted to take deceased bodies with any suspect of exposure to the Mount Nittany Medical Center morgue while testing is being done. The contract rate is \$100 per day of storage. On a motion by Commissioner Higgins, seconded by Commissioner Dershem, the Board voted unanimously to approve the contracts with Wetzler Funeral Home in Milesburg and Bellefonte – Dept. 212.

C. Budget/Financial Impacts

Commissioner Pipe reflected on the work done by Centre County during the past month and what the weeks ahead look like. In early March, the County formed a COVID-19 planning team that continues to meet. On March 14, the Board of Commissioners signed a Declaration of Disaster Emergency to address the pandemic. Then on March 18, President Judge Ruest issued a Declaration of Judicial Emergency. Governor Tom Wolf and Secretary of the Department of Health Dr. Lavine issued a stay at home order for Centre County on March 28, 2020. Since then, the County has greatly reduced the number of employees working in County facilities.

Out of fairness to tax payers, Commissioner Pipe reported that the Board has had conversations with department heads about level of staffing and their suggestions for furlough and reduction of hours for staff in their offices. The proposal constitutes 100 positions over 31 departments with 63 furloughed employees, 23 with reduction of hours and 17 vacant positions to be left unfilled effective April 17, 2020. This does not include the Coroner, Central Booking, Corrections Officers, Drug & DUI Court, Elections, dispatchers in Emergency Communications, Emergency Management, Financial Management, Risk Management, and Human Service Departments (Adult Services, Aging, Children and Youth, Drug and Alcohol, Mental Health/ Intellectual Disability/ Early Intervention and Veteran's Affairs). In consultation with the President Judge, the furloughs and partial reduction in hours for Court and Court related employees will last until Friday, May 1. For non-Court related offices the furloughs and partial reduction in hours will last until Friday, May 15. The County will continue to cover healthcare benefits as currently enrolled, with employees required to pay their portion of the premium. Commissioner Pipe encouraged furloughed employees to apply for unemployment compensation where they would receive an additional \$600 per week in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation. All employees will be rehired without going through the application process.

The Board will reassess essential functions on a department by department basis. Weighing factors regarding when to end furloughs that include:

- i. The number of and rate of increases of positive cases in Centre County.
- ii. The number of and rate of deaths due to COVID-19 in Centre County.
- iii. The rescinding of Governor Tom Wolf and Secretary Rachel Lavine's stay at home order.
- iv. The extension of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and President Judge Ruest's order to close courts.
- v. Changes in Federal, State, and Local revenue.
- vi. Increased need in staffing and service provisions for County offices and departments.

Yesterday, President Donald Trump announced the Opening Our Country Council with plans to reopen the economy by early May. A multi-state counsel including Pennsylvania also announced plans to develop a framework to gradually lift the stay at home order.

Commissioner Pipe reported a need to prepare for revenue reductions from the State. Centre County joins Armstrong, Berks, Blair, Butler, Carbon, Clinton, Crawford, Dauphin, Franklin, Huntingdon, Lawrence, Northumberland, Perry, Union, Washington, Westmoreland, and York who have each approved similar measures with furloughs and partial reduction of hours.

Commissioner Dershem feels that the Board is pre-mature in this discussion. The Courts have shut down until the end of the month and he would have liked to wait until the beginning of May to coincide with what others in the community are doing. He suggested having a global conversation on what are considered County Government expenses, including funded programs such as SpringBoard. He also expressed concern that this discussion happened over the Easter weekend without a more thorough conversation. The Human Services departments will be least impacted by Commissioner Pipe's proposal, yet they are also the departments that will be affected the most next year in the Governor's budget. Commissioner Dershem suggested being more mindful time wise and having the discussion in May, allowing employees more time to prepare for the layoff process.

Commissioner Higgins noted that the Commissioners have a fiduciary responsibility to the citizens of Centre County. He reported that he is aware of 17 other County's that have announced reduction of hours or layoffs. Of the 100 positions in Centre County, 17 are currently vacant. The County will continue to pay its portion of the employee's health insurance benefits. Commissioner Higgins also stated that the County needs to take the lead in assisting local small businesses and he will be pushing for additional funding to assist the local businesses.

Commissioner Dershem proposed giving up his salary for the month of May, suggesting the Board look at leadership. How to lead from the front and be thoughtful of what employees are asked to do. Commissioner Pipe reported that in conversations with many elected officials, in terms of their offices they would rather see their pay decreased than to see employees cut. Commissioner Pipe is also willing

to make a contribution from his salary back to the general fund. Commissioner Higgins was willing to do the same. He recommend that the money be used to create a program to assist small businesses in the County while Commissioner Dershem prefers that the money be used for the County to function and do what the County is tasked to do by providing services to the community.

Commissioner Pipe reported that this proposal will save the County roughly \$85,000 per week with the unallocated unreserved fund currently at \$9.3 million. The County is uncertain of forthcoming Federal and State funding.

On a motion by Commissioner Higgins, seconded by Commissioner Pipe, the Board voted 2-1, with Commissioner Dershem opposed, to implement the proposed furloughs and reduction of hours for County staff effective April 17.

VI. CONTRACTS

VII. GRANTS

Correctional Facility– Submission of a grant application to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) for expansion of the current Body Worn Camera Program. This will allow for the addition of up to 10 body cameras. The estimated expense in year one is \$14,400 and year two is \$4,032 for an estimated project total of \$18,432. If awarded, the grant will provide up to fifty-percent reimbursement for the period of July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2022 – Dept. 333.

Action: On a motion by Commissioner Higgins, seconded by Commissioner Dershem, the Board voted unanimously to approve submission of the grant application to PCCD.

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA

On a motion by Commissioner Higgins, seconded by Commissioner Dershem, the Board voted unanimously to approve this week's Consent Agenda.

- A. Planning - Proposal from Herbert, Rowland & Grubic (HRG) to perform professional services as Coordinator for the Phase III Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan. The contract total is \$95,000 for year one, which is State funded for the period of April 15, 2020 through December 31, 2020 – Dept. 151.
- B. Human Services
 - i. Adult Services – Grant agreement with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the Fiscal Year 2019 competition to continue funding the Centre County Rapid Re-Housing Program. The project total is \$213,208 for the period of October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021 – Dept. 501.

IX. LETTER OF SUPPORT

XI. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Resolution 2 of 2020 - Designation of Signatory of Contracts - First Quarter Report

Administrator Margaret Gray reported that 19 contracts were approved in accordance with the Resolution from January 1 - March 30, 2020.

XII. LIQUID FUELS

XIII. FEE FOR LOCAL USE

XIV. PRESENTATION

XV. DISCUSSION ITEMS

XVI. PERSONNEL ITEMS

XVII. REPORT ON JUDICIAL PERSONNEL ITEMS

Probation – President Judge Pamela Ruest has approved the personnel requisition for full-time Department Clerk 2 (80), Probation, (p.c. #15, non-exempt, replacing D. Voigt), at SG-N06, effective March 25, 2020, pay period 7 – Dept. 301.

XVIII. REPORT ON ROW OFFICE PERSONNEL ITEMS

Sheriff

i. Sheriff Bryan Sampsel has approved the change in status for Gramoz Fazliu, from full-time Security Officer, Sheriff, (p.c. #39, non-exempt) to on-call/occasional Security Officer, Sheriff, (p.c. #29, non-exempt, replacing P. Winkelblech), effective April 19, 2020, pay period 9. (No change in pay rate) Salary budget savings for 2020 \$1,763, annualized salary impact for 2021 \$113 - Dept. 211.

ii. Sheriff Bryan Sampsel has approved the personnel requisition for full-time Security Officer, Sheriff, (p.c. #39, non-exempt, replacing G. Fazliu), at SG-N08, effective April 11, 2020, pay period 8 – Dept. 211.

XIX. CHECK RUN

Check run in the amount of \$1,040,767.50 dated April 9, 2020.

Action: On a motion by Commissioner Higgins, seconded by Commissioner Dershem, the Board voted unanimously to approve the check run dated April 9, 2020.

XX. PERSONNEL ITEM

XXI. C-NET REQUESTS

XXII. RECOGNITION

XXIII. REPORTS - ANNOUNCEMENTS

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B. Voter Registration Report

Commissioner Dershem reminded everyone that the Primary Election was moved to June 2.

C. Announcements

XXIV. EXECUTIVE SESSION REPORT

Administrator Margaret Gray reported that the Board met in executive session:

Tuesday April 2 from 10:52 AM to 11:04 AM regarding a legal contract issue and then from 11:45 AM to 12:45 PM for a personnel matter.

Friday, April 10 from 2:15 PM to 5:40 PM for personnel matters.

Monday, April 13 from 4:10 PM to 6:05 PM for legal and personnel matters.

XXV. PUBLIC MEETING SCHEDULE

Tuesday, April 14, 2020

BOC/Salary Board Meeting- 10:00 AM - 146WB

EBT Meeting - 11:00 AM - 146WB

Tuesday, April 21, 2020

BOC/Salary Board Meeting- 10:00 AM - 146WB

Retirement Board - 11:00 AM - 146WB

XXVI. BID / PROPOSAL SCHEDULE

Tuesday, April 20, 2020

RFP - Mountain Top Activity Center - Contract Award

XXVII. ELECTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

Monday, May 18, 2020

Last day to REGISTER before the primary.

Tuesday, May 26, 2020

Last day to apply for a mail-in or civilian absentee ballot.

Tuesday, June 2, 2020

GENERAL PRIMARY

Last day for County Board of Elections to receive voted mail-in and civilian absentee ballots. Must be received by 8PM.

XXVIII. QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS

A. Gary Sinderson

i. Will there be any posting of the positions impacted by today's action?

ii. Has the Board heard anything from the Department of Corrections about plans to release State inmates?

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iii. Has the Board taken any position on the Election being mail in only?

iv. Does the County have to maintain a minimum reserve fund by law?

Commissioner Dershem announced that the Department of Health has not reported any cases of COVID-19 in Centre County nursing homes. He thanked everyone for their hard work through the pandemic.

XXIX. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Commissioner Higgins, seconded by Commissioner Dershem, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:58 AM.

ATTEST:

Margaret N. Gray
Administrator