

Wednesday, June 21, 2017

The second regular meeting of June 2017 of the Pike County Commissioners was called to order by Commissioner Osterberg at 9:00 a.m. at the Pike County Administration Building, followed by the "Pledge of Allegiance" to the flag.

PRESENT: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini; Chief Clerk Orben; Solicitor Farley.

NOT PRESENT: Commissioner Caridi.

Public Comments/Questions concerning today's agenda.

Motion: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to recess the Commissioners' Meeting to hold a Retirement Board Meeting.

Vote: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

A RETIREMENT BOARD MEETING WAS HELD.

Motion: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to reconvene the Commissioners' Meeting.

Vote: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to approve the June 21, 2017 Agenda.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to approve the June 7, 2017 Commissioners' Meeting Minutes.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to approve the June 6, 7 and 15, 2017 Commissioners' Conference Minutes.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to approve payment from **GENERAL FUND (County Bills)**, in the amount of \$341,262.89, subject to further review.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

PERSONNEL:

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to hire **WILLIAM GAA**, as a temporary full-time Supervisor for the Summer Youth Employment and Training Program for a 37.5 hour work week, effective June 16, 2017 through September 1, 2017, with no benefits.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

Motion: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to recess the Commissioners' Meeting to hold a Salary Board Meeting.

Vote: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

A SALARY BOARD MEETING WAS HELD.

Motion: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to reconvene the Commissioners' Meeting.

Vote: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to table bids received for the CDBG Matamoras Borough Firehouse Re-siding Project until July 5, 2017.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to award the bids for the purchase of groceries and frozen foods for the Correctional Facility as follows: Benjamin Foods - \$51,227.12; Karetas Foods - \$38,248.39; Mivila Foods - \$31,930.98; Keyco Distributors - \$14,837.99; Sysco Central, PA - \$7,802.28; and Bernard Foods - \$12,072.20.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to appoint Barbara Leary to the Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council to fill an unexpired term ending December 2018.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to advertise for bids for the purchase of fortified flavored beverage bases for the Correctional Facility.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to authorize the Chairman to execute the Service Agreement Renewal between PenTeleData and the County of Pike, for all fiber connections and service to County buildings/offices.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to execute the Radio System Maintenance Contract between Capital Area Communications and the County of Pike, on behalf of the Communications Office.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to execute the Shared Housing Counselors Agreements between Ryan Lohman and Larisa Yusko and the County of Pike, on behalf of the Area Agency On Aging.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to execute the Agreement for Janitorial Services between Roy Neidkowski and the County of Pike, on behalf of the Area Agency on Aging for the Blooming Grove Center.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to execute the Transportation Agreement between Pocono Cab Company and the County of Pike, on behalf of the Transportation Office.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to execute the 2017 State Food Purchase Program Contract Option Participation Statement, on behalf of the Human Development Office.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to authorize the Chairman to execute Pike County Rental Assistant Contracts #31 and #32, on behalf of the Human Development Office.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to execute the Act 148 Third Quarter Invoice FY 16/17 Certification Statement on behalf of Children & Youth Services.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to execute Purchase of Service Agreements between the County of Pike, on behalf of Children & Youth Services, and the following vendors: Children's Home of Easton, Pentz Run and Glenn Mills Schools.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Osterberg, to execute the SRCP Service Agreement 2017-01 between the Delaware Highlands Conservancy and the County of Pike, as recommended by the Scenic Rural Character Preservation Board.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Commissioner Osterberg introduced Penn State Extension's new 4-H Director, Angela Smith, and Regional Coordinator, Stephen Alessi. Mr. Alessi thanked the Commissioners for their support and highlighted some of the events being held during June 21-July 6, 2017. Ms. Smith introduced herself as the new Extension Educator for Pike County 4-H and went over some of the activities planned. There will be musicians performing with the 4-H group at the Milford Music Festival. Clubs have been invited to do presentations and events as well as the "Science of Sound" exhibit. Events to be held this summer will include a cooking camp, science activities, a Stream Team project, recruitment events for community clubs, Strengthening Families Program, etc. Commissioner Osterberg noted that the list of Penn State Extension events are presented at the meetings because the Commissioners feel that these are very important programs. There is an ability for the school districts and the County, through 4-H and Penn State Cooperative Extension to work to strengthen families when it comes to risky behaviors in our schools, all attributable back to the drug addiction issue, plus everything else that families face with bullying, alcohol and tobacco. The Strengthening Families Program is extremely important, and the State also supports this completely. The Commissioners are a big advocate for this and will support Angela in whatever she needs to do to bring this to Delaware Valley and Wallenpaupack where they both have instituted this program. They will see that they expand and make it bigger and better and will reach out to the Stroudsburg School District also.

Commissioner Osterberg announced an Open House of the Ecumenical Food Pantry at the Good Shepherd Episcopal Church on June 22, 2017 from 1 to 3 p.m. He also mentioned the partnerships that the Counties have developed in the Western end of the County to create a food pantry in Dreher Township but with the cooperation of Pike County since it services both Counties. There was an LSA grant awarded to build this facility and Pike County will be assisting as there was a shortage in funds so the County is looking for ways to cover that gap. It is a great program that will cover both Counties. Commissioner Guccini said that he received a call in January of last year from a local long time resident of that area, Art Frye, asking for assistance in developing this food pantry in the Newfoundland/Greentown area. They have been operating out of the basement of the Moravian Church in Newfoundland which is actually in Wayne County. The physical space is inadequate, but appreciative that they are allowed to use the Church basement. They have been working on trying to find a new location and it was a difficult endeavor. They were working with two counties, several townships, the only one in Pike County being Greene, the others in Wayne. Through a series of meetings and help from many people, mostly volunteers, Dreher Township agreed to have an addition put on to their building to be used as a food pantry, and Wayne County applied for an LSA grant which they have attained that. The amount of the grant was substantial but a little short in terms of what the building will cost so they are trying to raise funds for that. It was a very good cooperative effort, took longer than they hoped, but the result is really very good. The number of families that come every week is astounding. Commissioner Guccini thanked everyone who was involved.

On another topic, Commissioner Osterberg said that at the last meeting there were some individuals claiming that somehow the County was suppressing voter turnout, there were not enough polling places or machines. There is no way that the Commissioners' Office or the Board of Elections is ever looking to suppress anyone's vote or making it so that people don't have the opportunity to get out and vote. Commissioner Osterberg spoke about the machines. It is true that there does need to be one machine for every 600 voters. He presented a spreadsheet that shows registered primary voters, registered voters.

Remember during a primary the only people in Pennsylvania that can vote are people registered D and R. It excludes everyone else as per Pennsylvania law. When you look at the registered Primary Voters you will see that there is never a deficiency of machines to voters. You look across and you will see that it has the number of machines x 600 and you will see that in the cases with 100% turnout, in red, what the deficiency is. There are 6 deficient districts with one of them by 31 votes. Again, this is assuming that 100% turnout is going to come to the polling place. The next line is during Presidential elections in 5 Districts, Blooming Grove, Dingman 1, Lehman 1 and 2 and Shohola, we add an extra machine. You will see that the deficiency runs down to only 3 Districts, one by only 19 votes in Lehman. Again, that is with 100% voter turnout. The reality is the actual people that vote. Commissioner Osterberg added Primary and General Elections for a number of years. He included two Presidential and a Municipal Election. There are never a deficiency of machines to voters. That is not voter suppression; that is voter apathy. People don't go out and vote; it has nothing to do with the number of machines that we are providing. We are providing more than enough machines. Commissioner Osterberg thinks it is fair that this information is shared because he does not think it fair that someone comes to a meeting and gives facts that are not accurate. The number on the spreadsheet are the accurate numbers. If there was 100% voter turnout then they are absolutely correct, but not by an enormous amount, and even then it is figuring no absentee ballots. He stated that he submitted this spreadsheet to show there is no effort in the Commissioners' Office to suppress votes. You will see that machines have been added and, in fact, in 2020 a fifth machine will be added in Greentown, which if you look at the numbers, there is no deficiency in machines, but it is because the Township requested it, and the Township requested it. If the township makes a request and the Commissioners are able to do it, they are more than open to do it. The last comment is the only complaint in November's 2016, the Presidential Election, was traffic issues in Dingman #1 and #2. He does not know what can be done about traffic issues. They both have very large parking areas. 2001 and Log Tavern are very busy roads. The State Police did go out and direct traffic at one point. There is not a traffic problem all day long, but only during the height of voter turnout, as rush hour.

Commissioner Guccini addressed the other issue of having a polling place per 1200 voters. As he read in the statutes, the 1200 only applies to those voting precincts which have been divided. So, in the case of Blooming Grove as an example, because they do have a substantial number of registered voters and only one polling district, the 1200 number does not apply to those single polling district precincts which are in Pennsylvania Townships or Boroughs. If a polling place is divided so that there are two or more, the 1200 number is accurate, and does apply. However, the statute says it can be more than 1200 "for good cause shown". That leads Commissioner Guccini to believe that since these things have to be done and approved by a Court, the Court did in fact approve the districts with more than 1200. The Commissioners' Office did acquire the petitions that were filed in 1996 for Lehman and Dingman and in 2006 for Delaware. In fact, two districts were asked for and not three. Each of those districts did contain more than 1200, but that was what was proposed and that was what was approved by the Court. On a larger sense and from a personal standpoint, Commissioner Guccini stated that the way Pennsylvania conducts its Presidential is awful. People can vote on Tuesday and no other day. There have been proposals for early voting, paper ballots, etc. These are things that more than 1/2 of the other states do. He understands the concern of people waiting in line, but does not know how to fix that at a local level, in fact, it can't be done. He suggested that those that are upset about that contact Michael Peifer and Rosemary Brown and Lisa Baker. This is at that level, and is the only way this can be rectified. After the meeting last week, the Commissioners received a letter from Reggie. Commissioner Guccini will respond to that letter with essentially the same information they have presented today. He has concerns about voting in general, but there is nothing that occurs here that he has ever seen that would in any way diminishes people's right to vote.

Solicitor Farley added that he agrees wholeheartedly with Commissioner Guccini with respect to the statute. That is exactly what the statute states and exactly how it is interpreted, and exactly how the previous Solicitor interpreted it. It had the Townships divided in half and approved by the Election Board, the Court and the Township. The only other point is a gentleman raised issue about handing out paper ballots while standing in line. You cannot do that. The Election Code specifically states once you use machines, electronic machines, that's all you can use. If the electronic machines break or fail during an election, the Election Code states that it must be immediately repaired. This County has a person in the Election Board all day to be a rover who is immediately sent out if there are any issues with the Election machines. There are also spare machines kept in the County building so that if one breaks down it can be replaced. That is also required by statute. The only time you can use a paper ballot is if the rover cannot fix the machine, there are no spares and there is no other alternative. The County is more than well prepared to have several machines held in abeyance in case there is an issue and also has the rover. That has never become an issue and the County has not had to use paper ballots and are encouraged by the Election Code to not use paper ballots, once electronic voting has been selected.

PRESS AND PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

Kevin Holian stated, with regard to voter apathy, that he has been tracking some of the polls of Pike County and local Milford for over two years. He noticed that at times it takes theatric tactics to engage the public in certain topics. The recent election was one of those topics. He fully agrees and supports with the comments of the Commissioners on that issue. Mr. Holian had two questions. The first question relates to Emergency Management at the County level. He noted that he read and re-read the County's Hazardous Mitigation Plan. In his 40 years of Federal and military service and being a retired public service, he commends the County on how well the job was done. His question was who in the Commissioners' Office has a copy of the County Admin Buildings Incident Management Plan, or is there an Incident Management Plan? Solicitor Farley answered by saying that it is not for public knowledge for safety purposes. It is not something that Mr. Holian is entitled to under the Right to Know, but assured him that the County does have a plan in effect. Mr. Holian thanked Solicitor Farley and accepted the explanation. His second question relates to the current economic situation and possible future economic situation of Pike County. He recently attended the Chamber of Commerce accreditation by the Economic Development Authority of Pike County, which he said was an excellent data sharing and statistical information sharing by Michael Sullivan, the Executive Director of the EDA. His question is who in the County's Finance Department maintains data on second home owners so that they can forecast effectively and efficiently

annual budgets based on second home owner tax revenue. Solicitor Farley explained that there is no such thing as tax to a second home owner. Every home in this County and State is treated the same. The tax is based on the building and the land, so there is no issue of a second home as an impact on the budget. It is just basically tax base. The taxes are generated for County, Township and school and then each entity creates their own budget based on that, so there is no impact on whether it is a first home, second home, third home. Mr. Holian said he miscommunicated the question, so he rephrased the question. Pike County is primarily a tourist attraction County. That being said, he has always heard that we are doing our best whether it be with festivals, events, marketing, Discover Pike, to bring in people to Pike County. He knows statistically getting back to what he mentioned with respect to the Economic Development Authority meeting, that we are losing our young at a rapid rate and the migration into Pike County is from other counties, e.g. Counties from New York and/or New Jersey. He is fully aware that, getting back to the school districts, that Delaware Valley kids are well schooled and then they leave us. He is also fully aware that Pike County, unlike the rest of the country, has a negative birth rate. The County lives and survives on tax revenue. The second homeowner tax revenue is equal to and possibly greater than primary homeowners' taxes, not on a per capita basis, but on a quantity of second home owners versus the quantity of primary homeowners. What can we do to ensure that second homeowners remain in Pike County? Solicitor Farley said you can't to some degree, but the way it works for tax bases, whether it is a second home or primary home, the determination of budgets is just based on the taxes from those homes. To take it a step further, Solicitor Farley continued, we have suffered a large foreclosure process and the Sheriff will tell you at least 35 a month for at least 6 or 7 years, many of which are second homes. The banks are then taking responsibility and they have been changed over to full time residents or other secondary homes. He believes that where Mr. Holian is confused is that all the activity that he suggests does not really impact the secondary home market per se. It may impact people that stay in the area as a second home, such as at Lake Wallenpaupack or Masthope, associations, etc. Those amenities have people come in to second homes, but there is nothing where you ask that question on how the County Commissioners change their basis for budget based on whether it is a first or second home. Commissioner Guccini said that he does not know that the Finance Department keeps a record of primary homes versus second homes. That information, not just for Pike County but for all or most Counties across the Country is a matter of public record in various data locations. He knows this because the Commissioners receive emails all the time from Mike Sullivan at the EDA on a lot of these statistics. He believes this is a matter of public record, but he does not think that the Commissioners keep a separate list of second homes versus primary homes. He does not even know how they would now other than looking in locations where anyone else can look. Mr. Holian said you would look at certain IRS migration statistics, statistics of income, and so forth, which he has already done. Commissioner Osterberg suggested that the Planning Office would have that information, but he does not know what basis this has to do with the taxes in Pike County. Commissioner Osterberg explained that whether taxes are being collected from a primary home or secondary home, the Commissioners do not say during the budget process, we are getting x amount of dollars from secondary homes and we are getting x amount of dollars from primary homes. Maybe the school would be concerned knowing those numbers because obviously people with second homes don't send children to school, so that may be a piece of information for them to use. The Finance Department is an arm of the Commissioners' Office. Those employees are basically the Commissioners' employees and they help the Commissioners write the budget every year, they pay the bills, do benefits, do all of the perfunctory services for the benefit of the taxpayers and the Commissioners' Office. They are not going to know that number. The Assessor may know that number, as a factual number. He does not assess it that way, but he not aware of what benefit it would be for the Assessor to know that number. Treasurer John Gilpin commented that the Assessment Office has the Homestead Rebate and that primary residents get the Homestead Rebate, so they would have that information. Mr. Holian said he is aware of that also, and that \$27,000 is the average tax assessment in DV. He is fully aware of that. He apologized for confusing the dais. He said he has been tracking statistically a lot of foreclosures, as referenced by Solicitor Farley, in Pike County. As a person who has come to Pike County since 1977, Mr. Holian said he has a concern about the ability to sustain from a tax revenue standpoint, because we do receive taxes from both second homeowners and primary homeowners. That being said, from the forecasting standpoint, is there something that the average person in this room can do to continue marketing Pike County as (a) a place to come to and (b) a place that you want to either have a primary or secondary home. What can we do to continue to promote Pike County? Commissioner Osterberg thinks that job is already being done by the Economic Development. He guessed that what each person can do is tell their friends, he does not know the answer to that questions, but Mike Sullivan is doing this continually to promote the County, and regardless of whether it is a secondary or primary home, if you sell your secondary home to someone who is going to live here permanently, the taxes collected are still the same. Again, it may affect the schools. Foreclosures is a whole other discussion of what happened in 2008, and that is turning around, the houses are being bought and moved into. That was just a down side of the economy in general, not just in Pike County, but nationwide. Solicitor Farley added that the Pocono Mountain Vacation Bureau that works with the County in bringing in tourists and promoting the area, and hopefully as tourists come to the area they find a place as a second home, Lake Wallenpaupack, Woodloch Springs, etc. Commissioner Osterberg again stated that the County does not track the data. Commissioner Guccini stated that he grew up in the resort business and in the business of what was going on in the 1950s and 1960s and 1970s is different than the business now. If you ask people then, and there are statistical studies that show this, what they thought of the name Poconos, you get heart-shaped bathtubs. People don't think that anymore. We see that from analysis we get from the Visitor's Bureau and the EDA, they think other good things, outdoor recreation, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, biking, etc. He concluded by saying individually if you know people who want to vacation somewhere, tout the area and you will see more and more people in their 30s and 40s who want to come here for those things and don't necessarily have the funds all the time to travel to Colorado. That's what we have to do and what we are trying to do.

ADJOURNMENT: THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING OF THE PIKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS WILL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 5, 2017, AT 9:00 A.M., AT THE PIKE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING.