

COMMISSIONERS GENERAL SESSION
December 28, 2020

Present at the meeting were
Commissioners:

Brian S. Allen - Chairman
Gary R. Eby – Vice-Chairman
Brenda L. Watson – Secretary
Shannon Hines – Chief Clerk
William R. Bunt – Solicitor

Present from the Press: Jim Ryan

Present from the Public via Phone: Karen Anderson, Alane Balchunas, Frank Campbell, Jason Finnerty, Rich Pluta, John Shultz, Marty Smith, Wes Smith, Melanie Wertz and Greg Wirth

Commissioner Allen opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. on December 28, 2020 with the Pledge to the Flag and a moment of silence. The meeting was conducted via telephone conference. The meeting was recorded by the County and Melanie Wertz.

Public Comments: Melanie Wertz expressed her concerns regarding the fiscal situation of the County. She stated that the Commissioners were going to raise taxes during the worst possible time for citizens and pass a budget with a deficit and items that are not essential. Ms. Wertz commented that Commissioner Watson sits on a board of an organization in which the County provided funding and it is a conflict of interest. She read the November 15, 2017 advice of counsel provided from the PA Ethics Commission. Ms. Wertz said that in her opinion, Commissioner Watson is doing the same thing that former Commissioner Rudy did. She asked that the issue be corrected and requested that Commissioner Watson resign from the board or recuse herself and not vote on the budget.

Karen Anderson asked if the Commissioners had considered the direct impacts of COVID on the County, such as loss of jobs and pay cuts. She also asked if the Commissioners had considered cutting their own pay to help with the budget deficit. Ms. Anderson questioned what cuts were made in the 2021 budget. She asked if they had projected into the upcoming years where the deficit is headed, as it has grown over the last several years. Ms. Anderson stated that there were major health care expenses this year by two of the Commissioners and stated that health care costs would go up. She asked where the money was coming from to cover the deficit.

Approval of Minutes: Commissioner Watson made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 21, 2020 meeting. Commissioner Eby seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Meeting Business: Commissioner Watson made a motion to approve the proposed 2021 County budget without any changes, with estimated expenses of \$21,916,829 and estimated revenue of \$19,134,501. Commissioner Eby seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Commissioner Eby made a motion to adopt Resolution 2020-16 which increases the 2021 millage rate on taxable real estate from 3.3125 mills to 4.5625 mills. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. Commissioner Allen opposed. Motion carried.

Commissioner Allen read a statement regarding his decision to oppose the millage increase.

Commissioner Eby made a motion to approve the appointment of Andrew Hostetter to the Drug and Alcohol Commission Community Advisory Board for a three-year term. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Commissioner Eby made a motion, based on the contract provisions, to approve the 2021 SAVIN Maintenance and Service Agreement. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Commissioner Watson made a motion to approve the grant agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and Aging regarding the medical assistance program. Commissioner Eby seconded the motion with reservations. All agreed. Motion carried.

Employee Status: Commissioner Eby, with regrets, made a motion to accept the resignation of Matthew Killheffer, Part Time Dispatcher in the 911 Center, effective December 29, 2020. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Commissioner Watson made a motion to accept the resignation of Nina Pellman, Full Time Clerk in the Court Administration Department, effective December 31, 2020. Commissioner Eby seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Commissioner Watson made a motion that all employees, not covered under a collective bargaining agreement, contribute an increase from 8% to 9% for premium share on health insurance effective January 1, 2021. Commissioner Eby seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Solicitor's Report: None

Public Comments: Wes Smith provided information he had recently received regarding COVID vaccines. He stated that the Perry Physicians have received vaccines which are allocated to the local EMS staff. He said that EMS units will need to get their rosters to Perry Physicians for those individuals that would like to be vaccinated. Mr. Smith also said that the vaccines will be provided free of charge. Commissioner Eby encouraged EMS units to get their rosters in as soon as possible.

Karen Anderson stated that Brian should not be blaming the Governor for the financial situation in the County. She asked what tax is being raised. Ms. Anderson asked if the Commissioners had gotten permission from the Republican committee regarding raising taxes on Republicans.

Melanie Wertz said that Commissioner Watson had voted unethically to give funding to a non-essential organization that she likes. She stated that she cannot trust Commissioner Watson since she said during her campaign that she would recuse herself in these types of situation, but did not. She stated that this would be followed up on.

Alane Balchunas stated that campaign pledges should be considered with great care and made with greater caution. She said that pledges made will result in less options once in office and these options could be for the betterment of all constituents.

Commissioner Eby responded to some of the questions raised by Ms. Anderson and Ms. Wertz.

Melanie Wertz said that she understands the reasons for the EDA, but is still waiting to see success from the organization. She stated that if the EDA must be part of the budget each year, the ethical conflict should be resolved.

Comments from Press: None

Commissioner Eby made a motion to adjourn at 10:34 a.m. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Shannon Hines, Chief Clerk

Brenda L. Watson, Secretary