

Wednesday, January 18, 2023

The second regular meeting of January, 2023 of the Pike County Commissioners was called to order by Commissioner Schmalzle at 11:00 a.m. at the Pike County Administration Building, followed by the “Pledge of Allegiance” to the flag.

PRESENT: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron; Chief Clerk Gromalski; and Solicitor Farley.

Public Comments/Questions concerning today’s agenda – None

Motion to recess the Commissioners’ Meeting to hold a Retirement Board Meeting. A Retirement Board Meeting was held. Motion to adjourn the Retirement Board Meeting and reconvene the Commissioners’ Meeting.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the January 18, 2023, Agenda.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted ‘aye’. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the January 3, 2023 and the 2023 Reorganization Meeting Minutes.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted ‘aye’. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the January 11, 2023, Commissioners’ Conference Minutes.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted ‘aye’. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve payment from **GENERAL FUNDS (County Bills)**, in the amount of **\$384,511.41**, subject to further review.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted ‘aye’. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve payment from **BRIDGE REPAIR ACCOUNT**, in the amount of **\$28,534.75**, subject to further review.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted ‘aye’. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve payment from **ACT 8**, in the amount of **\$2,124.00**, subject to further review.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted ‘aye’. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to open bids for the purchase of groceries and frozen foods, on behalf of the Pike County Correctional Facility.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted ‘aye’. Motion carried.

Solicitor Farley opened the bids received: Driscoll Foods, total bid \$406,751.96; (a duplicate bid from Driscoll Foods was also opened); Sysco, total bid \$237,249.73; Bernard Foods, total bid \$15,194.20; and Mivila Foods, total bid \$229,851.27. Solicitor Farley asked that the awarding of the bid for the purchase of groceries and frozen foods be tabled for one or two weeks for review.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to table the awarding of the bid for the purchase of groceries and frozen foods to February 1, 2023.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted ‘aye’. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to advertise bids for the Pike County Well #3 Drilling and Development Project.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted ‘aye’. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to reappoint Frank Tarquinio to the Board of Assessment Appeals for a 1-year term ending December 31, 2023.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted ‘aye’. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the following Human Services Payment Voucher, on behalf of the Office of Human Services: Homeless Assistance Program in the amount of \$2,292.83.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted ‘aye’. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to authorize the Vice-Chairman to execute the 2023 Planned Maintenance Agreement for HVAC and DDC Controls Systems between L.J. Bogumil, Inc. and the County of Pike.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted ‘aye’. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to execute the Assessment Services Agreement between Aging Well PA, LLC, and the County of Pike, on behalf of the Area Agency on Aging.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted ‘aye’. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to execute the Fiscal Year 21-22 Plan and Budget Amendment Certification Statement, on behalf of Children & Youth Services.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to authorize the Vice-Chairman to execute the 1-year Service Agreement between Smiths Detection and the County of Pike.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to execute the Statement of Work Agreement for Case Management Services between Corrections Development, Inc., BTM Software Solutions, and the County of Pike, on behalf of the Adult Probation Office.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to adopt resolution No. 23-03 declaring the month of January 2023 as Stalking Awareness Month.

VOTE: Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

Commissioner Waldron read Resolution No. 23-03 aloud.

Commissioner Schmalzle introduced the Executive Director of Victims' Intervention Program (VIP), Michele Minor Wolf.

Michele Minor Wolf began that stalking is defined as a pattern of behavior at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their safety, for the safety of others or cause severe emotional distress. With movies and things like that, people think of stalking as physical danger. While it does lead to fatality and severe emotional distress, sometimes the community and the public doesn't realize that the victim is suffering. That is part of the reason why I am here today. One in three women and one in six men will experience stalking some time in their lifetime. We know that it happens. We just don't have great National statistics on that yet. Many times, the stalker is somebody that the victim knows and most often it is a current or former intimate partner followed by somewhat of an acquaintance. When I say current, the stalking begins before they leave the relationship. That's when the stalker, the current partner or boyfriend, might start gathering information and looking at passwords, hacking into things or just getting into them. What we focus on with the people that we service is that people start saying I have this weird feeling that I'm being watched or I'm starting to see this particular light in my house – we take that very seriously. When you get into the Cyber stalking, you could have a camera as small as the tip of a pen or behind a light switch, where they are being watched all the time. There's a lot to be said about those feelings. Intimate partner stalkers tend to be dangerous and cause a lot of harm because they know so much about the victim: schedule, social networking, employees, co-workers, and friends, etc. Stalking includes a variety of behaviors whether it's technology or the person. Surveillance – typical watching and using GPS or gathering information; life invasion – showing up in the victim's life where he or she may not want them, interference or sabotaging, spreading rumors or sharing secrets that you shared with your partner, and they start telling people about it in an effort to humiliate you; intimidation – where they threaten and/or scare the victim directly or indirectly. Once incident might seem insignificant, but you have to look at all the things - the pattern of the behavior and you can see the intimidation and intensity of what stalking is all about.

I ask today that you spread the word or if you know people in your own life, take the time to listen to people because the world has gotten so busy and so fast paced that we don't listen to people the way we did 10 years ago. Research shows that when your gut is telling you something, they're your intuition and there is usually some truth to that and by following that intuition, we can actually save lives. Michele introduced Chelsea Falotico from VIP.

Chelsea Falotico called attention to VIP's Mission Statement which used to be a very long paragraph, but we have shortened up into three short, but very powerful words: EDUCATE; EMPOWER and ENVISION. We strive to educate the community and clients about the complex victimizations that we work with every day. We empower our clients to make decisions that are well informed and educated and feel right to them. We invite the community to envision a world that is free of violence and fear and abuse and stalking. This last work, stalking, we feel stalking victims have difficulty with that. How can you envision it when your life has been so fully consumed by fear and anxiety because of your stalker. What we might be able to envision, they may not. We're not worried if our stalkers are going to sit next to us or send letters to our employers with false information explaining why we should be fired or showing up at the grocery store again or stepping on the treadmill at the gym next to us again. Our victims are worried about those things every single day. There's a fear that know that you're being stalked and there's also a fear that comes with reporting those incidents. It's not illegal for somebody to be at the grocery store or go to the same church or club that you joined. Those things aren't illegal, but it's the intent behind those actions and behaviors that are very clear and meant to cause fear in the person they're stalking and when you report them to the police you may sound crazy sometimes, but it is not crazy. That is the point of stalking – to make people feel fear and feel nobody is going to believe them or listen and make them feel like they're losing their minds. It creates an environment of fear, anxiety, and anger. VIP would like to thank you for always supporting us and supporting our mission and giving us time to spread awareness – that's huge because you're learning something and will spread it to people that you know. Thank you for letting us do our job and supporting us every step of the way.

Commissioner Schmalzle thanked Michele, Chelsea, and VIP for the complicated and diligent work they've done servicing the people of Pike County.

Commissioner Waldron said that we appreciate the idea that there's a compassion as well as an action being there to help people. Out of curiosity, is this message in some form being floated down to the High Schools? Granted there is a level of stalking and it's awkward being a teenager. Executive Director Wolf replied she didn't know if we have a program right now, but we would love to talk directly to the teens because they are slower to recognize it (stalking) than adults. We're in the school as much as we can be.

MISCELLANEOUS

- PennState Extension Calendar of Events

PRESS & PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS/ADJOURNMENT

Reporter Chris Jones asked about the VIP billboards that were recently put up. On social media there were comments, I'm looking at one right here "I found the billboard by the Jeep dealership deeply offensive, it shows two white males in business, casual dress – stalker could be". This is a little zany, no? Or extreme? What if it showed two Catholic priests and said – predator could be? Or an Eagle Scout Master and said pedophile could be? I'm glad that it was only up for one month before it rotated to a new ad. The idea that we should all walk around assuming the worst in each other is a terrible message. Did you have any feedback? Did you shorten the time it was up? Executive Director Wolf answered no, I didn't even know it was down, our billboards usually run about three months at a time. We have received a lot of feedback on our stalking billboards, and most have been positive. There was one gentleman who was offended by it, but I don't know exactly what his concern was, but the message I got was attacking. The message is that anybody can be a stalker and so often people think of a stalker as a person in a hood walking through a dark alley. The point is to show that a stalker can be anybody. Where is that page (comments). Chris Jones answered on an individual's page. Michele said I would love the opportunity to address it.

Reporter Chris Jones stated that many of the agencies have education programs and meet up at events and distribute literature on various interfaces to get their message across, but this is out there, it's a big billboard, there's one in Honesdale, PA too. Michele responded for a year and a half we've been running billboards, there are two in Pike County, two in Wayne County and we switch locations every three months, and the design switches every three months.

Reporter Chris Jones asked who designed this ad? Michele answered we do with our marketing team. Is the concern that it's men in the billboard? We have billboards that show all genders, all races, and all colors. Chris Jones replied, about stalking, all genders? Michele answered no. Chris Jones continued well that's the concern – some of the people responding (on social media) were not men. Regular people agreed with that, that it might be the wrong message being sent across, one of the people responding to it was a County employee. Michele said she would like for them to call her, and she would talk to them about it and Chris said sure, okay.

Reporter Chris Jones asked, in terms of policy, have you decided not to use that in the approach anymore on the billboard? The person here is saying "I'm glad it was taken down". Michele replied I don't know what that means. Chris Jones said did somebody decide we're not going to do this anymore? Michele said I'm not aware of that. Chris Jones asked who would be responsible for that? Michele answered me. Chris Jones said so you don't know that it's not running? Michele said this is the first I'm hearing that it's been taken down, it should be running through the month. Chris said okay.

Reporter Chris Jones asked what is this one down by the car dealer, I didn't see that one? Chelsea responded by the storage facility, that one is not up either. Michele asked did we answer your questions? Chris Jones said sure, thank you.

Meeting attendee, Charlie Gillinder, announced this is about economics and energy. There is a general frustration with Pike County Light and Power. There was a general uproar everywhere after the bills came out in January. I called the OCA (Office of Consumer Advocate) as it worked with us on the gas/electric rate case and I asked questions of the OCA and the person who answered the phone did not have the answers but promised a return phone call on January 9th. To date, I have not received a response from the OCA; there's a pattern here. On January 13th I wrote a letter to Congressman Matt Cartwright asking him to consider repealing the methane tanks that was put in place on the IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) that were put in place, not just in his District, but all of Pennsylvania. Again, no response from our Congressman. I called Pike County Light and Power on January 11th and asked them questions on gas costs and they called me back the very next day and answered my questions. I did not like the answers but accepted them for what they were and I'm no longer going to follow up on that, I believe Pike County is doing what they can in a bad situation to manage this. My point is and this goes back even further, during the rate case a few years ago I asked Senator Baker and Representative Pfeifer to help me out in responding to this rate case and neither one of them responded. I reached out to them on many cases, and neither one of them responded. My point is, the Commissioners on this side of the table you call our Congressman, you call our Senator, you call our Representative and you get a response, us on this side of the table don't get that response. We're very frustrated. If you can't fight for these things, tell me you can't fight for these things. Give me some guidelines as to what I have to do, tell me where I'm wrong, but just don't not respond. I'm not asking the Commissioners to step up and do my fighting for me, but I believe you need to be aware that you guys reach out and get no problem with these people getting back to you, but the rest of us over here, we're stuck. This frustration is starting to bubble up, I think you saw that with the Matamoras Borough Council last year – every incumbent was defeated. You are doing a good job, I have no problem with that, but you have to understand our frustration – our Representatives are not representing us, they are not responding to us or our needs.

Commissioner Schmalzle responded that he is happy to help in anyway he can. We've had correspondence in the past that was respectful and I will reach out to Senator Baker and Representative Adams and make sure that you get something in return. Thank you for your diligent efforts in doing this. As a business owner, who is a high energy user, I feel the pain. It is a significant impact to our businesses now and every individual, especially in this little area here.

THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING OF THE PIKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS WILL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2023, AT 11:00 A.M. IN THE PIKE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING.