

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

The first regular meeting of December, 2023 of the Pike County Commissioners was called to order by Commissioner Osterberg at 11:00 a.m. at the Pike County Administration Building, followed by the "Pledge of Allegiance" to the flag.

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

Commissioner Osterberg welcomed new County Commissioner, Christa Caceres. Before we go on any further, Commissioner Osterberg announced that we will amend the Agenda under 'Old Business'. We need to add a number 4, a motion to adopt Resolution No. 23-45, which is the Tax Levy and Appropriation Resolution.

MOTION: by Commissioner Schmalzle and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to amend today's Agenda to include a motion under New Business to adopt Resolution No. 23-45.

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

Public Comments/Questions concerning today's agenda:

Meeting attendee, Kristina Vego, asked about the Agenda, it is mentioned that there was nothing known about mismanagement, I was wondering for public record's sake, is the email provided on the Pike County Commissioner's website correct? Commissioner Osterberg said he was confused, what's on the Agenda? What are we talking about? Kristina Vego answered we're speaking about public knowledge of your emails and whether when people send you information if that means you will receive that information via email through those emails that are provided on public record? Chief Clerk Gromalski clarified, your email addresses, they are correct on the website? Commissioner Osterberg answered yes, our email addresses are correct. Kristina Vego asked so you all receive the emails that are given to you? Commissioner Osterberg answered we are.

Kristina Vego continued, on the Agenda, last meeting, is that allowed to be mentioned? Chief Clerk Gromalski clarified, your minutes. Commissioner Osterberg said in the minutes from the meeting of the previous meeting? Kristina Vego answered yes, are they allowed to be mentioned? Commissioner Osterberg answered yes. Kristina Vego said it was answered that we know nothing about mismanagement, we haven't received any emails; are you also saying that you haven't received any emails through those emails provided by public knowledge on October 12th and October 17th regarding cases of mismanagement within CYS? Commissioner Osterberg said the question I was asked had to do with a letter that was sent to the press, an anonymous letter. We never received that letter at that point. At the same time, we don't respond to anonymous letters because there's nothing to respond to. Kristina Vego then asked would you respond to emails that you have send back email addresses, like vegokristina7@gmail.com on October 12th and October 17th? Commissioner Osterberg replied if people send us emails that have to do with Children and Youth Services. We direct them to our Solicitor and to Children and Youth because a lot of that is confidential information that we don't feel is appropriate for us to be talking in the public about. If you have a concern with what's going on in Children and Youth, I suggest that you ask to meet with our Solicitor or whoever it is however your case is being dealt with. Really sensitive issues that go on up there. Yes, we do get the emails, but we don't always respond because it is private information and we don't have the information. We're not privy to all of the stuff upstairs, we're not privy to see it. Kristina Vego said but you're about to pay for it? Commissioner Osterberg answered absolutely, we have to pay for it. Children and Youth Services are paid for by the State, but the confidential information upstairs is just that, confidential. Not for us as County Commissioners to go upstairs and rifle through the files to see what's going on. Kristina Vego said understood.

Kristina Vego asked, a personal question from myself then, who would I reach out for the accountability of how the funds are being spent in CYS and also whether they are funding crimes or not? Commissioner Osterberg asked if there's crimes? Kristina Vego answered yes. Commissioner Osterberg answered you should go to the DA (District Attorney). Kristina Vego said thank you very much.

Meeting attendee, Terry O'Brien, for the record it's about the CYS and the current funding that's about to be approved. As far as my experience and understanding of people in this County and my own personal experience, there's a great deal of mismanagement. There is a great deal of fraud. There is a big problem. There is a person, Keanu Reeves, quite famous, asked to help provide some type of funding to create a system to deal with the black web pornography and child trafficking issue and one of the comments he made towards the thirty minute mark on his Congressional testimony was that 88% of girls that are found in child trafficking in the State of California had timed out of foster care. He said we need to do better. This system is ripping apart families and taking children with malice. It's for money and the money that you're approving is going to hurt families, it's not helping families. It rips apart good families from what I've seen, some of the best. If there Christian, they believe in God, they'll say stuff like well spare the rod, spoil the child, they must be beating their kids. When in doubt, get them out. They have a system that they teach social workers that a point where they can't keep social workers in that position or doing that job because after they're in it for a year or two they see the corruption and they turn around. Solicitor Farley interrupted at this point and asked Commissioner Osterberg if he could respond to this. Commissioner Osterberg said you'll have to let the Solicitor respond to this.

Solicitor Farley said with all due respect, each State represents their individual Counties. Our State has something called Northeast Regional Office, their job is to supervise this County and other Counties. Pike County has been doing very, very well since they brought in SAM (Service Access Management). There's been no complaints and any issues have been addressed. No one in this County is trying to take anyone's children, just the opposite. The goal of Children and Youth is to try to keep them in the family. We have many efforts to do so, you can't compare us to other States or other situations. Terry O'Brien said I am telling you I've have personal issues. Solicitor Farley interrupted I understand that, but in regard to that, if you have a complaint you contact the person you're dealing with in our County, you can go make a complaint with NERO, but in fairness to everyone, it is not to be discussed at a public meeting. We're very sensitive to people's cases and that should not be discussed in an open forum.

Terry O'Brien, said there is a cloak of confidentiality to protect the social workers. Solicitor Farley repeated, if you have an issue, you deal with the person you're working with, you can go to their supervisor, you can go to the individual that runs for SAM. Terry O'Brien, said they don't even answer your calls. Solicitor Farley said in my experience, I disagree with you, but okay. Again, I am giving you the remedies and, if you're still not happy with the County, I'm telling you to contact NERO. You can make a complaint to them and they're the ones that control the County. Terry O'Brien said you can make a complaint in a circle, but your name is never on the docket. It's your children's names on the docket, they're not even names, they're numbers. Solicitor Farley said the way it works in the system in Pike County and every County in the State is the case caption is initials because it relates to the children. You as the parent, if that's the situation, you're notified of the hearings and Pike County and this State now allows you to have counsel, paid by us. Terry O'Brien, replied yes, by the same company that pays the SAM employees. Solicitor Farley said no not the same company – it's paid by the Court. Terry O'Brien said you pit children against the parents. Solicitor Farley said no, everybody gets the right to be represented, the children have a representative – they have a guardian; this is not regard to the public, it's in regard to the Agenda. I understand you may not like the system, but by your comments, you seem that you have representation, the children have representation, the children even have a Guardian, if you're not happy with the results you can discuss it later with Children and Youth. Thank you very much.

Meeting attendee, Terry O'Brien, asked to read a statement from the late Senator Nancy Schaefer of Georgia. Solicitor Farley said you're not discussing our State, you're not in Georgia. It's a different State and procedures. Solicitor Farley continued in response to another meeting attendee's interruption - please do me a favor, you're not on the Agenda, you didn't raise your hand, stop trying to – not on that topic. Commissioner Osterberg called for a time-out. Commissioner Osterberg asked for the address for NERO. Chief Clerk Gromalski responded she would get that. Commissioner Osterberg announced, here is what you need to do – you need to file a complaint with Northeast Regional Office, whereas Tom (Solicitor Farley) is saying they're the ones that oversee our CYS. All of the topics that you're bringing up, file a complaint with them, they will bring it to us, and we can do it. We're not going to discuss cases of children that are being helped. These are Court decisions by the way also, lawyers do that. They determine how these children are placed and I'm sure it's done through evidence. You have to take it to NERO okay? They will bring it to us. People complain to NERO at different times, and we get the letters and then they want answers to those complaints. That's how the system works. For us to just answer these questions, I know you have an opinion about the way the system is working, maybe you're right, I don't know. Meeting attendee, Terry O'Brien, said the only way to cut off the feet of this beast that's eating good families is to cut their funding – stop giving them the money to steal people's children.

Meeting attendee, Kristina Vego, said I would like to add that I always believed, as a parent, just as you said it's a hard job for these Children and Youth workers, it's a hard job for parents. To always have some type of eye watching us and picking apart every move we make, even stalking and harassing. My thing is, shouldn't these meetings be proactive rather than waiting until someone higher comes? You have all these meetings to hear what we the people have to say, wouldn't we want to find a solution here rather than telling them and passing the buck and telling them to go elsewhere to a higher thing so they can bring it back to you; all in the same breathe while telling the reporters in front of the people that you are not receiving your letters? Commissioner Osterberg answered, as far as complaints are concerned with certain cases we are not going to sit here and discuss those. You have a complaint about a system that is handling this, I don't know whether it's your case or whoever's case it is, I don't really want to know who it is, but if that's the case, that's the personal stuff that we don't really get into. Setting the protocol up of how the system is run, that is set by the State. We're just here to operate the State system. If you have a complaint about the way a child is treated or how a family is treated in the system, there are procedures and it's through NERO. I'm sorry but that's the way this works. You can bring me the complaint; we're going to send it to them anyway. Kristina Vego said I completely understand that. I just wanted to let you know that you guys are motioning and you're allowing and denying funds to go to where they are. The word of the day should be considered laundering – putting funds in something that's not being used for that, but in another thing. That's why I'm here - for whistleblowing. I understand you guys cannot move or cannot control how agents run within their business, but as far as you putting the money in their pockets to make those moves, that's where I came to you guys. I acknowledge your positions in the office and in the branch of our government and that's why we come to you because we're hoping that maybe checking those funds and saying listen, I'm giving you this for this and we want to make sure you guys are spending these funds appropriately. I've seen some numbers here and I know for me a penalization, especially if our Constitution is being punished for something that we're exercising which is allowed within our Constitution. If I was looked at or deemed as odd for reading scripture to my children during a lunch period, they then Court ordered me a psychological evaluation which is a penalization of my freedom to exercise and that costs you guys \$6,500. The reason I accepted help from CYS was because I was asking for help as a single mother for repairs to my home. Solicitor Farley interrupted and said we cannot get into particular facts of your case. Kristina Vego continued a penalization of the American citizen's freedom, and that's where there is a chance you guys can come in. Commissioner Osterberg asked so should we stop all the funding to CYS until your case is settled? Kristina Vego answered no. For myself, I personally believe that we look and clean our hands of any blood and wrongfulness that is being done against our Constitution as parents.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the December 6, 2023, Agenda.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the November 15, 2023, Commissioners' Meeting Minutes.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the November 22 and 29, 2023, Commissioners' Conference Minutes.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, 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 **\$218,782.97**, subject to further review.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve payment from **BRIDGE REPAIR**, in the amount of **\$30,854.29**, subject to further review.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve payment from **DEBT SERVICE**, in the amount of **\$1,500.00**, subject to further review.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve exonerations as presented by Gina Rios, Tax Claim Bureau Director, for a property Control Number: 04-0-013872.

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

Commissioner Osterberg announced we are going to jump a little bit so we can get people moving, I know Penn State have a luncheon to prepare. We're going to move to 'New Business' and a motion to adopt Resolution No. 23-44.

NEW BUSINESS

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to adopt Resolution No. 23-44, 100 Years of Extension in Pike County.

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

Commissioner Osterberg read Resolution No. 23-44 aloud.

Commissioner Osterberg said I will be honest and tell you I forgot to put on my Penn State tie today. Being a Penn State alumnus, I am very proud of what Penn State Extension does. Just to name a few things, for the longest while I think the Extension has always been the best kept secret in Pike County and I know the staff and everyone involved has gotten to be a lot better about getting out there into the public, the gardens in front of the Courthouse – that is all the Master Gardeners; the beautiful memorial up at the Blooming Grove Trooper Barracks, that's all of the Penn State Master Gardeners; and look at what 4-H has done and their involvement in Public Safety with recruitment and retention for people to become EMT's. Water resources - Peter (Wulfhorst) is a wealth of knowledge on that. When we look at the schools, we look at Strengthening Families which is a program brought in through 4-H and Penn State Cooperative. They need to be commended for what they do and thank you very much – you make me proud.

Stephen Alessi, Penn State Extension Client Relations Manager, thanked the Commissioners here and also past, present and future as well. I'm going to steal a line from Wendell Kay, former Commissioner in Wayne County, he said something to me when we were celebrating our 100th Anniversary of Extension in Wayne County about four years ago, in 2019. He said for any organization to last a hundred years they have to be doing something right or doing something well. I think about that and talk about celebrating the 100th anniversary and even looking at who do we invite to celebrate this and bringing up past employees, commissioners, volunteers and people who over those years have lent their support and continuation of Penn State Extension in Pike County, it's amazing when you see that list and the people who have been impacted by the work Penn State Extension does – it's very important. Thank you to the Commissioners here, they've been very supportive over these years and in my six years out of the hundred with Penn State Extension. It's been great to work with this group and, like Matt said, the best kept secret. We don't want to be the best kept secret anymore. We want to be the worst kept secret. We want people to know who we are and what we do within the County. It's a testament to some members in the room I'd like to recognize them as well. We have our Master Gardeners here, thank you to Sue and her group. We also have current and past staff as well – thank you for your contributions to Penn State Extension. A thank you to our advisor councilmembers and thank you to our past councilmembers too – they advise us and give us the input and ideas from residents of Pike County that allow us to think of new programs and ideas and outreach where we can either reach more members of the community. Thank you to everybody involved, thank you again Commissioners for this opportunity today, we appreciate it and look forward to the next 100 years with the Extension in Pike County as well.

PERSONNEL

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to hire **RACHEL PAVLOVSKY** as Clerk I to Magisterial District Court 60-3-03, for a 40-hour work week, effective January 2, 2024, pending drug test results. This is a replacement position.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to promote **SUSAN DALE** to Tax Sale Associate in the Tax Claim Bureau, effective December 18, 2023. This is a replacement position.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to change the status of **MIRIAM RIVERA** from part-time clerk to full-time Clerk in the Tax Claim Bureau, effective January 1, 2024. This is a replacement position.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to rescind the transfer of **CHRISTINE IRWIN** from Children and Youth Services to the position of Justice Opioid Coordinator in the District Attorney's Office, effective December 11, 2023.

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

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

OLD BUSINESS

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to authorize the Chairman to execute the contract documents for the Bennett Avenue Building 1 Interior Renovations Project.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to open bids for Fresh Bread and Baked Goods for the period of January 1, 2024, until December 31, 2024, on behalf of the Correctional Facility.

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

Solicitor Farley announced there is only one bid and opened it. The total bid is from Bimbo Bakeries in the \$111,482.00.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to table awarding of the bid for Fresh Bread and Baked Goods for the period of January 1, 2024, until December 31, 2024 on behalf of the Correctional Facility to December 20, 2023, for review by the Pike County Correctional Facility.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the 2024 Pike County Budget.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to adopt Resolution No. 23-45, Tax Levy and Appropriation Resolution.

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

NEW BUSINESS

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the following Human Services Payment Vouchers on behalf of the Office of Human Services: Emergency Rental Assistance Program 2.0 in the amount of \$3,600.00 and PHARE in the amount of \$2,800.00.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the Affordable Housing Payment Voucher payable to GateHouse Media in the amount of \$48.74, on behalf of the Office of Human Services.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the Affordable Housing Payment Voucher payable to Delaware Run Associates in the amount of \$2,204.00, on behalf of the Office of Human Services.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the Affordable Housing Payment Voucher payable to Delaware Run Associates in the amount of \$2,923.00, on behalf of the Office of Human Services.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to execute the County Children and Youth Social Service Programs Certification Statement for Act 148, on behalf of Children and Youth Services.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to execute the Family First Transition Act Invoice/Claim, on behalf of Children and Youth Services.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to authorize the Chairman to execute the Medicaid Administrative Invoice/Claim, on behalf of Children and Youth Services.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to authorize the Chairman to execute the Shared Housing and Resource Exchange Program (SHARE) Intergovernmental Agreement between the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, acting through the Department of Aging, and the County of Pike, on behalf of the Area Agency on Aging.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to authorize the Chairman to execute the 2023/2024 CAPP Grant-in-Aid Program Subgrant Award Notification, on behalf of the Adult Probation Department.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to execute Amendment No. 2 to the Electronic Monitoring Service Agreement, on behalf of the Adult Probation Department.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to execute the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 State Homeland Security Grant Program Grant Agreement, on behalf of the Office of Emergency Management.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to authorize the Chairman to execute the Service Agreement between Forensic Pathology Associates and the County of Pike, on behalf of the Coroner's Office.

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

MISCELLANEOUS:

- PennState Extension Calendar of Events
- Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day – Commissioner Osterberg announced that tomorrow at 11:00 AM is Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. We're all going to make a point of making it across the street to remember those who suffered during that horrible day.
- Commissioner Osterberg said one other thing I want to bring up and I've done this at other times, we formed the initiative that gives training to anyone in this County that wants to become an EMT and it's a scholarship program. Anybody who applies to a local fire service or ambulance service will get free training to become an EMT. This has proven to be extremely beneficial to the County. I believe 70 or 80 or maybe even more individuals who now either volunteer in our County or are working in our County or working in other regions, we also offer that service but at a fee for anybody outside the County. The reason I bring this up is because last month we had somebody make a generous donation and we think we should recognize these people because it's not just us funding it, it's the public who is funding it at this point. In this case, there was a donation of \$1K by Charles Petersheim and I think it's important that we recognize these people in our community that make this commitment so that all of us stay safe. We sent him a thank you and recognized his generous donation and we open it up to other donations also. I think the fund right now has about \$60K, it keeps revolving to that number. We always want to keep it somewhere around \$60K to \$100K so it's self-sustaining and it has been for about four years now.
- Presentation by Pennsylvania State Police, Office of Community Engagement, Heritage Affairs Section – Trooper Quinn and Trooper Bennett – Trooper Tristan Bennett said he is with the Pennsylvania State Police Heritage Affairs Section, Office of Community Engagement. Our primary function in Heritage Affairs Section in the PSP is to monitor and respond to bias throughout the State. These are instances motivated by race, religion, national origin, gender. Any of those types of issues that may be triggered or happen in our communities or schools, we'll come out and assist with that investigation or situation, not in a way to overtake the investigation itself, but to add as a resource to the victims, the community members, the police departments, schools or whatever it is, to give insight based on what we've done and the partnerships that we've built with the community leaders around the State. If there's a police sensitive issue, like an officer-involved shooting, the community might be enraged or something like that, we try to go out to those types of incidents just to continue to build our relationship with community members and make sure there's transparency. For example, a synagogue shooting in East Pittsburgh in Pittsburgh, a 17-year-old black male was shot in the back in the course of a police traffic stop which resulted in community outrage. We go out there to the community members and answer their questions all in an effort to mitigate the tension they might have when you have those issues that might arise in our community. We have numerous partnerships with different groups, the NAACP, National Executive of Applied Law Enforcement, we meet several times during the year in our agency task force and we have these meetings every so often. Tackling issues that might be happening in our State, around the country, that might be affecting us here also at home. We try to figure out ways how we can resolve these issues by coming together – members of the Attorney General's Office, Anti-Defamation League, U.S. Attorney's Office, our local DA's Office and the FBI. All these different resources all come together to try to combat these issues and mitigate any type of tension that's happening in our areas. It's a great collaboration that we have that we're constantly meeting with each other, getting different input and ideas that will benefit us and our communities and all the agencies involved in that.

Trooper Quinn asked if anyone can recall last year, McAteer & Will Real Estate had a truck parked in the Key Food parking lot in Milford. Somebody spraypainted the side of it with swastikas. Obviously, that was our coverage area for the State Police, it was Blooming Grove. They responded, but notified our unit of it because of the antisemitic language that was portrayed on the side of the vehicle. Our unit oversaw that while Blooming Grove was actually investigating it. We were assistants to McAteer & Will, them being the victim and obviously any assistance that we could give to troopers at the barracks with any further investigation. Something that kind of hits home a little bit, just to show you the kind of work that we're doing.

Trooper Bennett said another function of our assignment is education. We educate the public starting with our cadets at the academy. A lot of them come from rural parts of the State and when they get there the first time, before they get out on the road, they might not have had any interaction with a minority in their entire life. They're making their first contact with that motorist, going to a car. We educate on various topics of racial profile awareness and culture diversity awareness and we give those to the cadets at our academy. Culture diversity in the beginning and racial profiling awareness at the end. We also educate on de-escalation strategies and talk about history of policing and minority engagement. Trooper Quinn added those are for either local departments, Federal or State departments as well, as well as community members and school facilities, their faculty, just to bring them up to speed with culture diversity and things of cultural competency. Trooper Bennett continued they go into communities, schools and talk to kids about awareness and using cell phone responsibility, stuff like that. We live in an age where the phone gets them all into trouble, educate them on what could happen if you send this type of text message or say this on-line, make them be aware and hold them accountable for what they're posting as well.

Trooper Bennett said we also act as a tension response team. To those acts of civil tension within our communities, if there's a protest going through their town it might cause a stir in the community. We may come out and monitor it. Start a dialogue with the group that may be coming through just to address any concerns that may be happening within the community as well. Trooper Quinn said our main priority is the safety of the

community, the community members, the property within the community and the people that are protesting because it's their right to protest, we just want everything to be safe and sound while doing so. Trooper Bennett continued that overall, it's just us bridging the gap between the community and police and talking about diversity. We have a lot of people – the demographic is always changing. We have a lot of people coming from out of the country, people that may not have that positive view of policing from their native country. We are trying to change that narrative here and let them know that we have a relationship with them, going to community events, helping us be together more. We hope in the long run, we need them to make our community safer and we want them to trust us when they call us and respond to those calls. To continue to build our relationship with the community is our primary focus, addressing the community concerns and keep on playing that active role.

Commissioner Waldron said it seems that some of the hate speech that people become aware of if they bother to look is on the internet, Facebook and other virtual platforms, I was under the impression that, to some extent, the State Police can kind of monitor that or possibly see if there is a problem with the whole thing that might turn violent, is that something that your group does or is involved in? Trooper Quinn answered that is not our group, our unity per se. We do have intel, unfortunately we can't give out that information, then everyone would know all the secrets, but it is being monitored. We do have intel that is their sole purpose – to monitor what's being put out there and they're constantly updating the departments in that area of the information that they're discovery. Commissioner Waldron asked that's being decimated to the local police or the barracks in Blooming Grove, for example? Trooper Quinn answered yes. Commissioner Osterberg said I guess on that topic, it's important that if people feel threatened by being verbally attacked, they should report that. Trooper Quinn answered absolutely and there is hate speech and hate crime, sometimes there's a gray area with that and obviously, if you're still offended, and you're unsure, report it. The worst thing that could happen is your told that it's not a crime, but at least it could still be documented and shown that some incident like that happened so that if maybe something progresses and gets worse, it's shown that there's a trend. Commissioner Osterberg said when people feel threatened and people are acting inappropriately toward you, you should notify law enforcement whether it's the State Police or the local Police Department just so it goes on record. Delaying that does not help.

Trooper Bennett said statistically, hate crimes are underreported because people are afraid to talk about it or say something about it or retaliation. Trooper Quinn said they can be too embarrassed to talk about it or the retaliation or recourse after reporting it. Commissioner Osterberg said we see today on the news what's going on in the world with everything in the Middle East and what's transposed into this country. We need to report this, we need to tell somebody. Trooper Quinn said if you know somebody as a friend they tell you that something happened, you can report things on behalf of somebody else. You can report it and the department can reach out to that person and if the person after speaking to authorities says okay I still don't feel comfortable, then that's fine. You can start the legwork for a friend or family member if you've heard that something has happened.

Meeting attendee, John Hellman, Vice President of Advocacy for Triversity Pride Center, thanked both of the Troopers for coming and thank you to the Commissioner for making this happen. It's been six months journey of fun for all of us. We're really excited that we get to have this conversation. I have two initial questions. One, currently in Pennsylvania State law sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity are not protected under hate crime legislation. Does that pose any kind of theory to the role that you play when you are investigating these kinds of things?

Trooper Quinn answered it does create a barrier, but federally it is covered, sexual orientation. What we can always do is we can always reach out to the FBI and refer them to the incident that has transpired. Many times, like hot potato, sometimes the State kicks it over to the FBI or the FBI has something and it's more appropriate we handle it, and they kick it to us. It all depends, but just because it's not covered by the State, doesn't mean it can't be charged. There are ways we still manage to do so. Trooper Bennett added those crimes are never going to be ignored just because they're not covered by our State's statutes. Trooper Quinn said on a good note, it is on the table to be passed from the State that sexual orientation will be covered, it's a waiting game.

John Hellman, said his second question is what are the signs that you look for when you're looking at particular communities, if they're at greater risk for some kind of incident that targets specific groups of people? I ask that because over the last year, there have been a lot of different incidents that have been documented by the press and by various community groups of targeting not only the LGBT community, but targeting our Jewish friends, people with disabilities, targeting a whole host of groups. I think one of the pinnacle parts of that was on Mother's Day. There was a banner hung up on the mountain facing the Delaware Valley School, that said 'Proud Boys We Are Everywhere'. There is a growing, a very, very small faction, of right wing organizers that are embracing things like Moms For Liberty; The Proud Boys, The Oath Keepers, that all have very stated anti-LGBT, anti-immigrant, anti-Jew, anti-basically every sort of minority population, they're very active here and some of them are in this room – what sign do you look for that raises red flags for violence is about to happen or some kind of escalation can happen and what do we do about that?

Trooper Bennett said he thinks it starts by officers just paying attention to communities we serve. Watching out for signs of graffiti, hate messages and stuff like that being spray painted, those messages being put out there. When it comes to the contacts that we make with community members, when stuff that they give us is good information we can give to our intel. Write down that information for our intelligence officers disseminating that Federally they can look into that marginal situation. Continuing the effort to be able to have that communication between the community members what's going on so we can be aware of it, we can maybe track who might be involved. Overall, our intelligence plays a big role in as far as us trying to know what's going on and making local agencies know about what's going on as well. That's always constant, keep on talking about it whatever it is. Somehow, we try to pay attention to that and keep track of it. Trooper Quinn added if there's any sort of threat to any group, community, anything of that nature, when our intel finds that out, we disperse that information

immediately. That's not something that we just hold on to to make our own snowball out of it and then do something about it. We immediately let the know appropriate community or people know of an incident that we believe is going to happen and then we act on it. Obviously, letting people know if our main priority.

John Hellman, asked for the Troopers' contact information. Personally, I'm also a drag queen and I get called a pedophile every single day even though that is what straight relatives of child victims are responsible for, not drag queens. Thank you.

Meeting attendee, Jean Seltzer, President of the Jewish Fellowship in Hemlock Farms, thanked the Troopers for being here today and thanked the Commissioners as well for bringing up this very important topic. I'm sure all of you can understand why the Jewish community is very, very concerned with antisemitism and, not just antisemitism, but hate in general. How can we, as a County, be even more proactive in taking steps to create a dialogue between those that we know are espousing hateful language, antisemitic, antigay, anti-other nationalities, to come to an understanding to try to understand each other's position better? How can we work positively and live positively together and not have to live under threats? The Jewish Fellowship, especially when we have larger services, we have to hire the services of our Public Safety in Hemlock Farms. I'm sure the Commissioners and the State Police know, matters that the State Police have been in touch with me and I'm very grateful for that relationship, but still there's a need for us to be able to form a more constructive dialogue and we know that there are forces in this area that espoused violence. We're spending money, we don't have a lot of money, but we are forced to spend increasing money for protection, for police protection, security guard protection, just to be able to conduct a service, which is something that is a Constitutional right. I would just say that, again, I thank you for bringing this topic up, but I hope that out of this can come some concrete steps to work toward peaceful solutions. Thank you.

Meeting attendee, Kevin Houlihan, Dingman Township resident, said when you talk about hate, I'm probably the most hated person, or one of the most hated persons in Pike County, if people follow social media. I've had death threats, my home has been burglarized, I have over a thousand screen shots of people sodomizing my wife, killing my dog over the past six or seven years. Over the past six, seven years, I've studied hate pretty deeply. If you talk about microaggression, hate crimes and actual physical crime, hate speech and cyberbullying, more so as human beings we need to study our own bodies and brains. Love/hate brain surging that starts with the inferior frontal cortex when you have the emotion of anger, contempt, frustration and distrust starts boiling inside you and a chemical called oxytocin, not OxyContin, the opioid, starts engaging and you escalate to hate. It's not a sin, it's a human reaction. As humans as part of society, we need to be able to impulse control that escalation. I believe in Pike County, as well as other rural settings across the country, the social economic part of which the community engagement group within the PSP looks at isn't an initial catalyst for some of our current LGBTQ issues, some of our bias issues against certain religions or certain races. You can talk about Mount Haven/Har Haven, LGBTQ and the concern of we're turning Milford into the gay Riviera or currently with a certain Quasi conservative individual buying up a lot of land, we're turning this into the home of the Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers. If we look at the reality that social economics is part of our lives, especially in rural counties like Pike, we're not the richest county by far, but the average income is \$64K-\$65K. That's not considered overly rich in today's America. We see ourselves sometimes where people want to come in and be included within Pike County and they have different ideas due to a different social economic number that there at. We have to control that so when it comes to our two Troopers that, I believe, are very courageous and brave, because being in a job like that is not a career grabber, it's very challenging. These two individuals need to be applauded for taking on a job like this. Lastly, think of why you're jumping from being angry at somebody or frustrated at somebody or contemptuous at somebody or you just misunderstand, take a time-out and just learn about the other group and that includes also our current water versus warehouse or to work with CYS and just look deeper first before jumping to a judgment and a wall of hate. Thank you, Commissioners and Troopers.

Meeting attendee, Matthew Contreras thanked Troopers Bennett and Quinn for coming and for service. When was your section started, what year? Trooper Quinn answered it started twenty years ago. Matthew Contreras said his other question is specific to Pike County, what incidents of LGBTQ hate have risen to the level of the McAteer Will incident in this County last year, a number do you have statistics? Trooper Quinn answered I do not, no. Matthew Contreras asked to be given a ballpark. Trooper Quinn said maybe since that incident we've had five. Matthew Contreras asked that specifically deal with LGBTQ? Trooper Quinn answered the McAteer Will was antisemitic. Matthew Contreras said I know. I'm saying that rose to that level of LGBTQ incidents in Pike County? Let me posit something, you're struggling to find the answer, so I'm assuming it's not a lot. Trooper Bennett answered I wouldn't say that it's not a lot. I just don't have the number. Matthew Contreras said you don't have a number, you don't have a ballpark number? Troopers Bennett and Quinn both responded no, they do not.

Matthew Contreras asked how many incidents of violence that meet the McAteer Will standard involved Christian conservative groups or Christian churches; do you have a ballpark number? Trooper Quinn responded I do not. Matthew Contreras asked if they could have those numbers for our Commissioners at some point? Trooper Quinn answered she could ask her department to disseminate that information. It would only be for the year prior because every year stats are done; they're not done quarterly. I will be able to get last year's stats, but not this year's until January. Matthew Contreras said that's fine, I think that's sufficient. I think the Commissioners and the public would be interested to know that and I would ask that you bring back to the barracks that maybe it would be in the Pennsylvania State Trooper's interest to also have a community outreach organization that involves the citizens of the Commonwealth who are feeling not only their police departments, but their governments, has led them astray. Thank you for your time.

Meeting attendee, Pierre Tardy, said a few months ago President Biden came to Philadelphia and called millions of us extremists, terrorists to democracy, and this language is going on from the top of the government to all the agencies and now many people don't trust the FBI, don't trust the Department of Justice. They see people are being put in jail, part of them are committing suicide. And then you have people we call western gulag and we see the FBI investigating the Catholic traditionalists or the school board meeting, so now even in Pike County if somebody just have an opinion, like there are two genders and men and women are for marriage, you are called extremists, which mean you have completely off. You are called far right, totalitarian or you are some kind of Fascist or bigot, which means you are racist and basically, I think the number one being now targeted are conservative Christians or MAGA republicans. Because people don't take on it themselves, they don't really complain, this is a really major issue. One, you have a government agency making hate speech and hate crimes, how can you do your job? Because who is your example? It's not the State. Anyway, that was my point.

Trooper Bennett stated I can't speak on behalf of the President, but the Pennsylvania State Police serve everyone without consideration of political ideations, class, color or whatever it is. We're here to serve everyone, I didn't sign up for this job to serve any one specific group. There's no bias in the work that we do, we serve everyone equally. I can assure you that's what we're here to do.

Meeting attendee, Sophia Petsas, said I love this County. I'm from New York originally. I grew up in New York City in a melting pot and I've been involved with politics since I was a child. I was mostly a democrat my entire life. I march with democrats and republicans and against apartheid and for women's rights growing up. This was me growing up. My concern these days in this community and all over the country is that a lot of people are fostering opinions about each other that I have never seen before and maybe based on some truths, or some exaggerations and I'd like to point to one of them about religion. I've seen in our local newspapers people labelling each other of a certain church. My experience is that when you talk to twenty Christians, they'll come from twenty churches, and I still see those here. I'm concerned people are being mislabeled here simply for caring for their children and what's going on in the schools. I'm speaking as someone who has a gay child. I don't mean to bring that up because I don't like to talk about these things publicly, but I feel I have to. When you talk to people that are on both sides, we're missing something here. We're missing the fact that people are trying to protect children from early on sexualization, not particular sex, just sexuality and they're being labeled for gathering to try to not allow certain things to happen in elementary school discussions. That's wrong because parents try to do their best no matter where they come from, no matter what background they're from. I personally grew up as a grandchild from genocide myself. We had to deal with labels for being Christian, millions were killed in Turkey. My grandparents escaped that. My concern is that the labeling and forced things on young children. People are just trying to raise their children and protect their children at the same time. Creating groups and gossip around groups is wrong too. Every child should be protected, nobody should be thinking about suicide but the labeling and the gossip and the finger pointing has got to stop. I'm hopeful that can happen if people talk to each other more. That's my biggest concern because if we don't start talking to each other more and we don't start respecting each other despite rumors, the rumors are only going to take over and we're not going to get anything done. Growing up in a multicultural society, like most of us in this room have, we know that the labeling and finger pointing doesn't work, it doesn't bring people together, it doesn't bring plans to fruition. I'm hopeful people will start realizing that we are more the same than different and that we focus on that going forward. Thank you.

PRESS & PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS/ADJOURNMENT

Meeting attendee, Matthew Contreras, said let's get a few things clear from the outset. The First Amendment protects speech, and the public has a right to comment to the Commissioners' meeting and speak their mind regardless of what they say unless they are threatening violence to either yourselves or to the community. When this woman is speaking about CYS, she has a right to say whatever she likes, and you don't have a right to compel her speech or to tell her what she's allowed to say or not allowed to say. If she wants to talk about her case specifically in public, that is her decision to make. You do not have to answer her questions, you don't have to speak about the case specifically, but you have to listen to what she has to say. The time and the place is the only thing that you're allowed to determine at this meeting for public comment. You are not allowed to compel people's First Amendment speech. Period. End of Story. She's not here right now, but I'm going to ask the same question she asked because you didn't answer it. For the record, did you receive her email on whatever date she wanted to know about, because that was the question. She wanted to know when did you receive her email. She didn't want you to talk about it or elaborate about it, she simply asked you a question – did you receive her email for the record because I want the public to know, and I want a record of it. That's what she asked. If you don't have the answer right now, publicly, could you please get it to either her or the rest of the public so the public will know that you're receiving emails through those email addresses, which is exactly the point she was trying to make. Do you have that answer now or you're going to get it to us in the future?

Commissioner Schmalzle answered we did receive an email.

Matthew Contreras thanked Commissioner Schmalzle for answering the question, I really appreciate that, thank you very much.

Matthew Contreras said the second thing is this meeting is for the public it's not for you to grandstand or to introduce special pet projects that you want the public to know about. Commissioner Osterberg answered yes, it is. Matthew Contreras argued no, it's not. Actually, it's not, I'm glad you let the public know that. Thank you for letting them know again that this is for you to grandstand. This is public comment, okay? Could you explain public comment to him please? Commissioner Osterberg said I can adjourn it. Matthew Contreras said you can adjourn it, be my guest. Could you please explain public comment? Solicitor Farley answered the two of you have your moments. You're wrong about the lady's comments. In regard to the beginning of the meeting, her questions could only relate to what's on the agenda. She went beyond that. Now, if she wanted to ask that same question, and others if that's her choice, she could ask them what she

wants. As Solicitor for the County, and also part of Children and Youth, if she goes too far because of children's rights, etc. I would probably have stopped her, but she didn't. As far as your comments that this is for the public, no sir, it's for the public to listen, it's for the public to see how the Commissioners act and what they vote upon, but they can also raise issues and address things. For example, ambulance and other events and give out public information. It's not just motion and vote and your comments are wrong. You can, in public comment, make your statements, but they too during the meeting can have on the agenda issues they want to raise and, as you call it, grandstanding, they or any elected official can do that at a meeting. Matthew Contreras said he never suggested otherwise. Solicitor Farley responded you just did. Matthew Contreras said he said that's all they want to discuss. You can disagree, it's your opinion. Do me a favor, during my public comment, unless I ask a question or they ask a question, do us a favor, don't comment or try to compel our speech. You've answered it.

Matthew Contreras, said since they didn't want to read the tax raise, I'll read it for everybody. Matthew Contreras started to read aloud... a per capita tax on persons be and the same is hereby levied on all persons subject to taxation for County purposes for the fiscal year 2024; that a tax be and the same is hereby levied on all personal property within the said County subject to taxation for County purposes for the fiscal year 2024; and that a hotel room rental tax be and the same is hereby levied on all considerations received by every operator of a hotel within the said County from every transaction of renting a room or rooms to accommodate transients for the fiscal year 2024 at the rate of 3% of each consideration; that a tax be and the same is hereby levied on all occupations within the said County subject to taxation for County purposes for the fiscal year 2024, as follows and they give the list. Matthew Contreras continued they want to tell you about the Penn State Extension and how great it is and yes, the Penn State Extension does wonderful work, but they don't want to tell you that they're raising your taxes. At the first meeting they brought it up the very first meeting after their election at the last Commissioners' meeting. They were all too willing to mention everything else except the fact that they are raising your taxes. They don't want to talk about it. They don't want me to talk about it at this meeting because it's embarrassing to them. Commissioner Osterberg said it's not embarrassing. Channel 13 did a report on this didn't they? Reporter Preston Ehrler answered three weeks ago. Matthew Contreras said this is what I'm talking about, when I'm speaking, I'm not asking the question, I'm not asking him to comment on what I'm saying. If you would like to comment after I'm done speaking, by all means. Solicitor Farley asked what's your next question? Matthew Contreras answered I'm not asking questions, I'm making a public comment. Solicitor Farley said okay just continue. Matthew Contreras said for my friends in the LGBTQ community, and my democrat friends in these Jewish leagues, I would look to your own party because tens of thousands of democrats are marching against Jewish causes in the streets of our country. Commissioner Osterberg said you're embarrassing yourself. Matthew Contreras replied that's fine, I'm perfectly happy to talk about whatever I want, I will discuss whatever I want in the public comment. Solicitor Farley urged Matthew Contreras to go to the next comment and said please continue.

Matthew Contreras continued, the three of you should know better. You should be embarrassed because you know darn well that the public has a right to speak about whatever they like to speak about. Your job as Commissioner is to listen to the public and address their issues and I expect better from you certainly. I think I expect better from Mr. Waldron as well. He's an elected official. Mr. Farley, we are allowed to make comments about elected officials. It's not a personal attack to say he is not doing what he should be doing. Solicitor Farley said I'm going to let him adjourn the meeting. Matthew Contreras asked, you're going to let him, really? Commissioner Osterberg said I don't have to ask him. Matthew Contreras said I know you don't, I'll let Ms. Caceres make the comment she has to make – I'm sure she agrees with me about public speech and the First Amendment.

Commissioner-Elect Christa L. Caceres, Bushkill, Pennsylvania, said she does agree with Matthew Contreras, to a certain extent, that there are First Amendment Rights. However, I would recommend if possible and if allowed by law, a time limit on comments, three minutes, five minutes. To make sure that anyone in this room that would like to comment has the opportunity to do so and we're not here until 5 o'clock. With that said, the main thing I just want to say in general is it is an honor and I don't necessarily want to do this, but I feel like I need to. It is an honor to be elected to serve as the next Commissioner for Pike County and I want to applaud Commissioner Waldron for all of the fine work that he's done from the time he was appointed as Commissioner. It is fine work that you've done throughout your career working for the County and I just wanted to publicly say that to you, that I appreciate what you've done as well as the other Commissioners. I will say something to the adults in this room and I want people to really hear me. We must have civil discourse. We cannot come into these spaces and conduct ourselves like we're at home at our own kitchen table. I understand passion and, believe me, there are a lot of things that have been said today that have sent me to another floor. There's just a way to communicate, there's a way to say what you want to say and everybody can have their say and we all go home with our blood pressure at a normal level. Having yelling back and forth and all of this kind of stuff it really is not helpful to progress. This is a governmental agency and governmental body, there are limits on what they can do, there are limits on the ways they can respond. I'm just simply saying is when I'm sitting at that seat, you're not going to yell at me. I'm just going to make that clear and you're not going to disrespect me, and you really shouldn't be disrespectful to anyone in this space. At the end of the day, they have a difficult job and I'm not going to agree with every single thing they do either, but they are adults and we're all adults and we can have this type of disagreement and exchange and you made your point and it's fine, we have to be better to one another. We have to recognize the humanity in one another and find ways to talk about difficult conversations. I'm all about having task forces to deal with the issues that were brought up here, I'm all about having conversations with you because I think that some points that you raised are important and worthy. We have to be better about the way we speak to one another, that's all.

Meeting attendee, Gail Neldon, resident of Hemlock Farms, said I heard there was an interest of the Commissioners for a task force against hate and I feel very strongly that someplace where people of different opinions can come together and somehow might be able to understand where somebody is going wrong or explain something to make things easier so that we can get beyond violence or stop the violence and any threats before they happen. Is there a motion to come forward to create a task force against hate or human relations type of task force in the County? It sounds to me that that would be a great preemptive and proactive thing to do and we would be in the forefront of counties if we did something like that.

Commissioner Matt Osterberg said we appreciate that and while you were speaking, I was making a list of the very same thought process. I was going to ask you for your contact information. We can put groups together and this isn't necessarily just a County initiative, this is a community initiative and just making a list of organizations such as in this community I know in Milford there's something called Unity in the Community and Triversity here. There is a part to play in this I think with law enforcement, just as they can make everyone understand what their limitations are, but also what should be done. In my words over this whole time that we've been discussion this is that words matter. What happens is people make disparaging comments about each other and other people act on them. That's what's happening in this world and we need to be aware of that, regardless of which church or wherever they come from. The other group is getting religious organizations together so that people can understand. I don't know if we're going to get some of the real haters out there and I don't even know who they are personally, but it's more important that we educate the community about this, that this is real in this County and regardless of whether it's reported or whatever, perception is reality. If somebody feels threatened walking down the street for some small incident that occurred to them, then it needs to be at least made aware of and that's what I was saying to the troopers about that. If people feel threatened, whether it goes any further, whether it goes into a criminal action or whatever, but at least they know about it. I think it is important that people get together and talk about what it is that they disagree on. The woman over here spoke about that. We will work on that, but I'm not going to say that this is going to be a County organization, meaning Pike County, I think it's going to be something that we can help formulate together. We're not going to be the people that are steering the whole thing. I think the synagogues, the churches, you, me and the community, Triversity, all of these people get together in one space and just talk. A lot of times conversation cures a lot of these things.

Commissioner Tony Waldron said he will back that up with Matt. We talked about this, it just came up early this Summer. We felt it was important to try and interact with the State Police because we were aware of their involvement and trying to deal with these issues and they did a great job of learning what they can do. They can't stop people from hating each other. They can try and education, we even became more aware of things ourselves because of some stuff that came up here last year. I'm not going to be serving as Commissioner, but I'm certainly willing to be involved in that task force. I don't think the Commissioners, including our new Commissioner, should decide exactly who should be on that. They could be involved in it and that would be great. I'm certainly willing to help coordinate that a little bit. At least the office can help pass names around.

Meeting attendee, Gail Neldon, said I think it is important that you lend your support and passing a motion that you are in favor of such a task force and you will facilitate such a task force. Commissioner Osterberg said I think that's what I was trying to say, I'm sorry.

Meeting attendee, Jean Seltzer, said she just wanted to thank the lady down here, who spoke about us having so much more in common than we have differences. I think it's very important, as Gail said, we should start talking to each other and coming to better understanding and focusing on what we have in common and trying to find ways to resolve differences to be constructive about this as opposed to being destructive. Commissioner Osterberg said the other community that needs to be involved in this is the community of the disabled.

Meeting attendee, Kevin Houlihan, said he has PTSD for the past six years, I had a stroke in 2020, all related to hate and hate type issues. I know the DOJ statistics for Pike County, I don't need to share them here. Any intelligent person or any person that wants to learn could go to DOJ and look up the County's stats, any county. Even if it's only one incident, it's too many. I'm thick-skinned, I can take a kick in the face or the groin. My wife, Debbie, has generalized anxiety disorder because of what happened to me. The troopers are helping, they're part of the equation, Ray Tonkin, our DA another part, but these three guys and Steve (Guccini) before Tony (Waldron) and hopefully Christa (Caceres) after Tony, they put up with a lot of stuff from a lot of us. I've emailed all three of them or one at a time over past years. They've always been civil to me and respectful. Please nobody get the idea that anybody out there and then when Christa (Caceres) is up there is ignoring you – they're not. They're caring family people. When you're attacking them, you're also attacking their children, their spouses, their legacies. That type of garbage needs to stop – it really does.

Reporter Preston Ehrler asked can you tell me does hate exist in this County, for the people that don't believe that it does, what do you say to them? Commissioner Osterberg answered I think there are people in this community that are feeling threatened. I don't think there's any doubt that there's hate in this community. Pike County would be unique in the entire globe if that was the case, I think it's easy to say it exists all over in different formats and different amounts.

THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING OF THE PIKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS WILL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2023 AT 11:00 A.M. IN THE PIKE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING.