

Wednesday, June 7, 2023

The first regular meeting of June, 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.

Public Comments/Questions concerning today's agenda.

Meeting attendee, Taylor James, said he was told last night when he spoke to the Commissioners that he would be able to speak. Commissioner Osterberg said everybody will get a chance to speak and added this is questions about what's on the Agenda. Commissioner Waldron clarified, the Agenda itself. Taylor James said he was told he would be put on the Agenda. Commissioner Osterberg responded our Agenda is approved the day before.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the June 7, 2023 Agenda.
VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Waldron voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the May 17, 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 May 24 and 31, 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 **\$238,940.70**, 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 **ACT 89**, in the amount of **\$4,196.20**, 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 ACCOUNT**, in the amount of **\$8,868.56**, subject to further review.

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

PERSONNEL

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to create the position of Acting Director for the Area Agency on Aging for a 40-hour work week, effective June 5, 2023.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to appoint **ROBIN SOARES** as Acting Director for the Area Agency on Aging, for a 40-hour work week, effective June 5, 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.

Commissioner Osterberg said we are now going to recognize our new Acting Director of Aging, Robin Soares. Newly appointed Acting Director of Aging, Robin Soares, said she is happy to assist, thank you. Commissioner Osterberg said we are very happy to have you here and added that Robin Skibber will be here until June 30th. Commissioner Osterberg asked Director Skibber how many years she worked for the County. Director Skibber replied 22 ½ years.

OLD BUSINESS

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to award bids for the purchase of Groceries and Frozen Foods for the period of July 2023 - October 2023, on behalf of the Pike County Correctional Facility as follows: Mivila Foods in the amount of \$80,513.90; Driscoll Foods in the amount of \$166,579.68; Sysco in the amount of \$39,337.06; and Bernard Foods in the amount of \$15,194.20, for a total amount of \$301,624.84.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to open bids for the Bennett Ave Building 1 Interior Renovations Project.

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

Solicitor Farley announced we have three bids, and opened the following bids received: LH Reed & Sons, for plumbing \$141,584.00; Michael Mechanical made two bids, one for plumbing \$344,000.00 and one for mechanical \$483,000.00. I would ask that we table the awarding of the bid. Commissioner Osterberg questioned the two bids from Michael Mechanical, he said I understand the plumbing, but the other one? Solicitor Farley answered they call it 'interior renovations project contract #2 mechanical construction'.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to table the awarding of the bid for the Bennett Ave Building 1 Interior Renovations Project until June 21, 2023 for review by the engineer.

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 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Clean Water Application for an On-Lot Sewage System Permit.

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: State Food Purchase Program in the amount of \$2,517.31; Human Services Development Fund in the amount of \$4,000.00; Emergency Rental Assistance 2.0 in the amount of \$8,744.40; and American Recovery Act in the amount of \$61,079.25.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the CDBG Program Payment Voucher in the amount of \$549.46, payable to The Sunshine Station, 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 CDBG Program Payment Voucher in the amount of \$1,520.95, payable to Ray Evans 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 authorize the Chairman to execute the Settlement Agreement between Wayne Memorial Community Health Centers, the Pike County Board of Assessment Appeals, the Township of Palmyra and the Wallenpaupack Area School District.

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 .Gov Domain Registration Approval Letter, on behalf of the IT Department.

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 Maximus US Services, Inc. and the County of Pike, 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 Purchase of Service Agreement between Valley Youth House and the County of Pike, 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 Purchase of Service Agreement between Clear Vision Residential Treatment Services, Inc. and the County of Pike, 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 Purchase of Service Agreement between Faith Hope & Charity Foster Care Agency and the County of Pike, 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 Purchase of Service Agreement between Merakey Montgomery County and the County of Pike, 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 Purchase of Service Agreement between Perseus House, Inc. and the County of Pike, 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 Purchase of Service Agreement between Family Care for Children and Youth and the County of Pike, 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 PenTeleData Services General Agreement for Bennett Avenue, on behalf of the IT Department.

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

MISCELLANEOUS

- PennState Extension Calendar of Events – Commissioner Osterberg announced that two items are noteworthy for the press to pick up on: 4-H is looking for volunteers. If you know anything about 4-H, you will know it is a very robust organization and it's well done for the youth in our community. The next item is a 4-H First Responder's Camp which is being well received in the community but are always looking for more young people to get involved in our EMS services. If they can just note that and get more interest in it, we would appreciate that.

- Medical Foundation – Commissioner Osterberg announced that tonight we will be formally announcing our Medical Foundation and will be naming the individuals that will serve on that Board. This is the initiative by the County Commissioners to bring expanded medical services to this County. Our dream is a 24/7 Emergency Facility, I don't want to use the word 'hospital' because that gets everyone thinking we're building Mount Sinai, we're not. We're looking for something to give more services to our residents and this will be a long-term goal of ours. Tonight will be the kickoff for that, announcing those individuals who will help us put together funding opportunities to be able to make this a reality in our community. We have seen that the Urgent Care is coming to reality in Delaware Township. We were just notified the other day they are going through all of their licensing and getting their equipment. That one should be open, we believe, within the Summertime, by the new Weis Market in Delaware Township. The other one is still being planned for the 507 Corridor. That is a little bit slower because there needs to be buildings located, which is as we all know in Pike County there is not ample amount of buildings in our County to see that they can moved into. This is all in the plan that we have for expanding medical and tonight will be this next phase that we see. It will give more diagnostic services to our residents and maybe take a little pressure off our Transportation Department, a little pressure off our Aging Office and also provide services for our residents. Maybe you know this or not, about 27% of the population of Pike County is 62 years and older. You're looking at three of them sitting up here! We need to pay attention to this because that number is not going to get any lower. That is all the struggles we face in this County, along with the Aging Office.
- Area Agency on Aging Awarded 2022-23 Senior Community Center Grant- Robin Skibber, Robin Soares and Lana Romeo– Robin Skibber said Senior Center Grants have been, historically, an annual competitive grant program that was an allocation and the last two years due to COVID, so many centers have not opened across the Commonwealth. We are fortunate in Pike County that all of our centers have reopened. We are not all three days opened at every center, but we're working in that direction. Our participation has gone from a low of 75 in COVID, up to 300 participants coming to the senior centers. With this grant, you can do technology, you can do improvements and we're in all perfect buildings, there's no maintenance needed in any of our centers, but we did do programs and services. With this grant, which Lana (Romeo) will talk a little bit about, we will be able to bring in artisans, health and wellness professionals and really bump up the programs that we have. I'll let Lana talk about what we have planned.

Lana Romeo said we are very excited about this grant. You have to realize many of our seniors don't drive. That is why we rely on the Transportation. They don't have family that live here, some of them have families that are far away, and they can't get to certain places to do certain activities that's going to enhance their life. That's why this grant is going to help our seniors. We're going to have foot massages and yoga – I can't be at every center every day so therefore we have to bring people in and now having the financial means to do so, all our centers will be able to have certain activities when they're open every day. This is so exciting. I'm even going to try to talk to people that are beauticians to see if they can come. Our people need this also to socialize. They're lonely all the time and we have to get things to get them really moving and enjoying life and this is what this grant is going to do for our seniors in Pike County. Does anybody have any questions? Reporter Chris Jones asked how much was the grant for? Lana Romeo answered \$35,000.00. Commissioner Waldron said he has known Lana for many years and we are really lucky to have Lana and that is why she has to stay there forever. She is one of the most dynamic and young, older people I know! You do a great job! Lana Romeo added that she knows when her snowbirds come back, they come in and say to her – you're still here!?! I say yes, I am, I'm staying forever.

PRESS & PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS/ADJOURNMENT

Meeting attendee, Taylor James, thanked the Commissioners for their time and introduced himself as the Executive Director of Triversity Pride Center, our area's LGBTQ+ Community Organization. I am a seventeen-year resident of Pike County. Since taking over the presidency at Triversity at the beginning of this year, I hear one thing over and over again – what has happened here? Long time residents of Milford and surrounding areas remember, as I do, walking down Harford Street and seeing Pride flags in every business. We also remember feeling safe to walk the streets of Pike County with our partners and our friends, we remember a time when harassment here was unthinkable. We have to remember that time because that's not the Pike County we live in anymore. Even though as of 2021, Pike County has the largest percentage of same-sex couples per capita in the State of Pennsylvania. It seems our presence in this community has been stifled and hidden away. We stand before you today imploring you to stand with us and to tell the LGBTQ+ community in Pike County that you see them and respect them and support them by declaring June Pride month in Pike County. Celebrating Pride is more important than it has ever been. Since the beginning of this year, the ACLU has tracked over 450 anti-LGBTQ+ bills across this country. Our community is facing threats to our safety and well-being on a daily basis. Hate groups like the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers have sought to make it their mission to eradicate the existence of our community to such an extent that domestic terrorism has now been named the biggest threat to our country's safety. This is not a national issue, it's a local one. On Mother's Day this year a banner was hung across from the high school that read 'Proud Boys We Are Everywhere'. These groups feel welcomed here and we need to ask ourselves why? In the last three weeks I have personally experienced nine instances of harassment and hate crimes in Milford Borough. The silence and polarization of our community has only served to allow this hate to fester and we implore you to stand with us against it before it's too late. Most of our community agrees that it might be too late. Local candidates in past elections just a month ago are on video calling gay people disordered and trans people mentally ill and LGBTQ members can't even speak at our school board without being called a pedophile or groomer. That is the community that we are welcoming in. You have a responsibility to residents of Pike County to stand against this hate. Please declare June Pike County Pride month and show your LGBTQ+ community that we belong here and welcomed here. Communities that are safer for LGBTQ+ people are safer for all. We are fighting at Triversity everyday to make it a safer place. We're a large part of the electorate that put you in office and we need your help. Please help us, thank you.

Meeting attendee, John Helman, introduced himself as the Vice President of Triversity in Milford and said he performs as a drag queen. Mr. Helman thanked the Commissioners for listening to what the LGBTQ+ community has to say about recognizing Pride Month. Over a month ago on May 3rd the Pike County Commissioners passed Resolution #23-24 which recognized May as Mental Health Awareness month. We applaud this action because we believe we are in an absolute mental health crisis, nationally and especially in Pike County. We need to do everything we can to promote the mental health of every single person in our county and beyond. We are unfortunately living in the worst anti-LGBTQ+ legislative

year in US history. In States that are implementing the anti-LGBTQ+ policies like banning transgender woman from participating in sports or preventing transgender children from using the restroom, we are seeing conversations about how these bills are going to be enforced. There are discussions about using genital inspections to ensure these rules are followed. This is causing a nightmare scenario for children and families across this country and in Pennsylvania there is no exception. Research only enforces this is how this has a significant impact on children. According to the Trevor Project and I will note that these figures are from 2021 which at the time was the worst anti-LGBTQ+ legislative year in history: 86% of transgender and non-binary youths say recent debates about State laws restricting the rights of transgender people have negatively impacted their mental health; 71 % of LGBTQ+ youths say State laws restricting the rights of LGBTQ+ young people have negatively impacted their mental health; 75% of LGBTQ+ youths say that threats of violence against our spaces, community centers, Pride events, drag shows and hospital and clinics that serve transgender people often give them stress and anxiety. At a time when we are having national conversations about mental health and the persistent epidemic of gun violence in our schools, if we are serious about addressing mental health, then we are called, especially as elected officials, to do anything that we can to support all people, especially our LGBTQ friends and family. According to the New England Journal of Medicine, the leading cause of death for US children and teens between the ages of one and eighteen for the third straight year since 2020 is not drag queens, not trans people going to the bathroom, it's gun violence. Any policy that demonstrates science and evidence-based harm to our students' mental health must be rejected and any policy that promotes mental health must be embraced. In school districts where there is a supportive environment for LGBTQ students the impacts can be profound. Also, according the Trevor project, if an LGBTQ student can report even one accepting adult in their life, they are 40% less likely to report a suicide attempt in the past year. If an LGBTQ student believes they are in a supportive environment, their rates of anxiety, stress and depression are significantly lower than their peers. I have had the honor of speaking twice to Paupack United, the official recognized LGBTQ student group for middle and high school students involved in Paupack School District. I have seen how having a space that affirms and supports their lives allows them to blossom and thrive, not only in school, but in their personal lives. Unfortunately, every single high school senior that I spoke to has told me that as soon as they graduate, they cannot wait to leave Pike County because they are embarrassed and feel like they don't belong here because of inaction by their elected officials. You have a chance to send a signal to these kids in the community that you support something that plenty of other municipalities, led by republicans and democrats that exist in rural, suburban and urban jurisdictions have done already for more than two decades: recognize June as the month to honor and celebrate the community that contributes to Pike County's culture, Pike County's arts, Pike County's local businesses and everything that Pike County LGBTQ+ community does in the face of ever increasing attacks. Thank you, I look forward to hearing your reasoning why you eventually will support recognizing Pride month this year.

A meeting attendee, Lisa Jenkins, read a statement from someone who wishes to remain anonymous: I am addressing you anonymously as the mother of a transgender child. We lived in Pike County. I grew up here and we moved our family back here thinking that the only things we needed were an academically sound school district and a beautiful town center. Then my child became who they always were, and we watched the seeds of hate grown in our town and Pike County became a reminder of deep regret for moving my family back here. I suspect my decision to remain anonymous will not come as a surprise to you. You must understand that at least a little bit of the hate and prejudice growing here to not want to be a visible supporter of Pride month and by extension the LGBTQ community. I am biting back my anger and my tears of frustration as I write this because I have very little of any other emotion left. My child, however, who we shelter from the worst of this hate, still has so much hope. My child can spot a Triversity flag a mile away, she points out an ally bumper sticker on other cars and looks for signs for acceptance, understanding everywhere she goes because she knows she is not able to do so without the concern of being safe in her community. She knows that she has to look for these signs that she is accepted; that she can't take for granted that she is. She knows to tread carefully because that is the truth of her world. She has taught herself how to hide in plain sight. A Pride month proclamation would tell my child, and so many others, that adults in charge in Pike County understand her, accept her, celebrate her. I can think of zero ways in which a proclamation would hurt those that do not celebrate Pride, but I can think of many ways in which you think it would hurt a political career. My daughter knows the right thing to do is not always the easiest thing to do. She knows it is not easy to stand up to bullies and she does it any way. She is a child. She does the hard things, she has no choice. I told her Triversity was going to be speaking with you today and that you are afraid to stand up to the bullies who don't understand LGBTQ people. She sort of rolled her eyes at me when I told her this and then she said okay, I'll keep dealing with it myself (the bullies she meant). She'll deal with the bullies alone. You have the choice to stand up for our LGBTQ community and tell my child that she matters or you have the choice to pad the safety of your political career and add your names to the list of names of those who stood silent as hate crept into Pike County. I implore you against my better judgment and, as a mother who is all out of hope, please help me keep my child's light shining. She matters, she should matter to everyone – I am asking you to tell everyone that she does matter.

Meeting attendee Amanda Pauley, Triversity secretary, said her story is personal and wanted to share it. My daughter is twenty-eight years old and she does a lot of health care in Pike County, but she did not feel safe to show her face. As a parent of a queer daughter raised in Pike County I can assure you her life has not been easy here. We moved from a diverse school district in New York to the sheltered halls of DV. Often, she heard homophobic slurs in classrooms and no role models for people like her. She felt forced to hide who she was from her community and even her family. It wasn't until she was twenty-two years old that she came out and her words to me that day were 'I think there's something wrong with me'. Finding access to mental health care in Pike County wasn't easy so we travelled to Westchester, New York twice a week, for a year. In that time, my daughter tried to take her life twice. Being queer is not something she wanted to be; it was who she was. She was called names like dyke and had faggot written with lipstick on her car. Eventually our family and her circle rallied around her and now, at twenty-eight, she bought her first home here with her fiancé. Of course, they had to wait until after an election, because they knew if one other candidate won, they might not be legal in PA. The hate I have experienced while speaking up for my child by some of my neighbors are beyond terrible. I've been called a groomer and a pedophile out shopping with my children. My son has been called named in high school, even my grandson who just turned six, was told by his peers on the school bus that having two moms is disgusting. When he came home and told me that there's kids on my bus that just don't have any pride. I'm sure as leaders of the community you know what the statistic rates are for suicide rates in the community. My daughter found that 71% - a nightmare I don't wish on anyone. We know what's proven to save lives, and that's acceptance. It just takes one supportive person. Imagine what it would do if the community spoke up? I promise you that in making this Pride proclamation, you will save a life

and that's more important than any election that you can win. This isn't about politics, it's about human rights. Thank you.

Meeting attendee Alexander Lipori from Dingmans, said they are transgender male. I was told that a resolution would not be signed due to fear of backlash. One thing I must express is welcome to the lived experience of everyone in the LGBTQ community. Everyday that we put ourselves out there, everyday Triversity is opened, everyday John performs as a drag queen, every time Taylor speaks, every time Amanda stands up at school board meetings, we face backlash. We face repercussions, glares and names called to us and threats and physical violence. Not too long ago, there was a meeting where we talked about a resolution to make Pike County safe for LGBT much as the same as the Second Amendment Sanctuary group did. Now they were able to get their resolution passed as gun activists, but I am seeing some stalling with the resolution for LGBT. This was a resolution that was proposed by a cis gender, heterosexual, white male, republican who came in and listened to our stories and empathized with our experiences – Mike Mancino. He came in and asked all the right questions and learned and he spent time with us. Human rights are a bipartisan thing, not something that should be perpetuated by the left. Everybody should be on board with something like this. There are a lot of resolutions across the state of Pennsylvania, in townships. There's even a city sanctuary now, I don't remember which state it's in. We don't have a county yet in this country that would be a safe sanctuary for my community. We could be the first to do so which would make nationwide news and bring attention that we deserve here in Pike County to provide this declaration that we support you. According to every major, reputable poll out there, three out of four Americans support the LGBT community in some way or form. That number goes up when you look at Gen Z specifically, with every major poll stating that 80% to 90% of Gen Z support LGBT rights. These kids are your future. I am a young millennial myself, and I was once a transgender youth. There is no waiting for a time to support human rights. There's no safe way to support them. Every time we're at Triversity, we don't know if someone is going to come in and shoot us up. We don't know if there's going to be a bomb threat. We've hired security. I know there's other places in the area, there's a Jewish camp down the street from me that had to hire armed guards because of groups like the Proud Boys. I think, honestly, there's no more waiting. If you're able to cater to the Patriots, with their Second Amendment Sanctuary, I don't know why you wouldn't support us and support the youth and support the future of this County. Osterberg, I speak to you directly, from one historian to another, I would rather be excluded for those that I include than included for those I exclude. Which side of history do you want to be on? How do you guys want to be remembered?

A meeting attendee, Jansen Polka, said I feel like I need to talk about my fourteen-year-old daughter, she identifies as queer. When she got an opportunity to go to high school in New Jersey with my husband, she took it like that because she thought she'd feel more welcome there and so far, she has. Thank you for making every effort to bring healthcare into this area. I have a sixteen-year-old daughter who has multiple disabilities. She's medically fragile. We are frequent fliers of hospitals and I often say if I'd already had her, I would have never moved up here – thank you for any steps your taking to make me say that less often.

Commissioner Waldron said he would just like to comment, partly because, in fact, at the request of Mike Mancino, I did meet with the folks from Triversity back in the end of April to talk about trying to get more awareness and that word came out a few times and that's a really significant word. I was really impressed by what people are trying to do there. Having a legal background, having been involved with municipal government for a long time, I said if I can do anything to help by maybe writing up some wording this was the idea of going to the municipalities, the individual townships and boroughs and proposing this and I think that's still a plan that's in the works. We didn't meet that long ago. Yes, the election got in the way of a lot of things, quite honestly. I also was provided toward the end of May with this proposed proclamation. We didn't really have a chance to review that until the beginning of this week, part of it was due to people being on vacation, the election, etc. Having said that, I'm certainly fully supportive of the idea. I will also say that you talk about how the children are affected, that's the worst thing. A telling comment was just made about how Gen Z accepts this. We said that just in talking the other day. Unfortunately, we are that older generation. That doesn't mean to say that we can't do things and that we aren't prepared to support people, because we all care about people's lives. We care about the mental health. When you're being impacted because you're being discriminated against, that's a mental health issue. It's a mental health issue because, yes I'm aware of suicides going on in our community. Jill Gamboni (Representative Adams' office) and I sit on a committee that have to review deaths in Pike County and I did that for the first time about a month ago and some of them were teen suicides, twenty-one and under. It's just horrible to think that that's the only way out, but I get that. I'm also still the attorney, I step aside from most of my legal duties to become Commissioner, for the Wallenpaupack Area School District and I was gratified to hear that they were opening up an opportunity with the Paupack Club for people to share their experiences and support each other. I think that would be really great if DV would do the same thing and I know that's what some people are hoping could happen. We don't have the ability to tell the school district what to do or any other municipality, by the way, for that matter. That doesn't mean to say that we can't have a voice because we do need to have more acceptance in this community. I will tell you that my colleagues here, even though we have different letters on the ballot, we all support the idea that we have to help people and help people in our community. I admit, some of the things that you brought up, some of the statistics and all, are things I really wasn't aware of. There's some ignorance on my part, even though a lot of people in my community are gay. I've been involved with representing people along the way. In fact, Debbie said to me we're really lucky that we know all these gay people, because every time they buy a house in Pike County, they're coming to us. My point is, we really do need to be more open and inclusive. We haven't shut the door on the idea that there needs to be some acknowledgment by us to do that. We've never been asked before and I checked to see if that was true, to do a Pride proclamation in Pike County. When this came at the end of May, and we had a chance to look at it. That Second Amendment Resolution, which I did vote against, that was a process. We met with them for three or four meetings before we finally and, in fact I'm going to say publicly, I helped to water down that thing. It does not say we are a sanctuary county, it does acknowledge the Second Amendment and is titled that way. I don't know why we can't come up with something that creatively will allow us to say, let's be supportive here. If some people get pissed off about it, we're big boys. We can deal with that. On the other hand, we get that 'why are you doing it for them and not for other people' kind of attitude. In fact, it came up when we did the Second Amendment resolution. I think it shouldn't be 'us' versus 'them' - it should be 'we'. I think we need to figure out a way to get more 'we' involved and not say what is your party affiliation, what is your sexual preference, what is the color of your skin? We just need to be all 'we' and I think we want to try and make that happen and I will certainly advocate for that as well in what I do with Triversity, but also with the school situation and even when we try to evaluate how we can be more helpful in this situation.

Meeting attendee, Jennifer Leroy, said she very much appreciates the comments and your commitment. I see you nodding while listening to the stories which is a very hard thing for us. I just want to make it clear that it is strong public inaction that gets into the community. When you do things like appear at meetings and things like that, obviously that's fantastic, but there is strong public action that is visible and recognized by individuals and even individuals who are living within the community where they feel they are not represented. They need to hear some voice that is coming from a higher place and say they are okay. Even though I really believe in what you say, it is equally important that somebody says something at a high level.

Commissioner Osterberg said he didn't know there was such hatred going on in Pike County over this. I'm sorry, I don't live in hate. I let everybody live their lives however it is. I'm very concerned about it. Tony (Waldron) is right – we just got this resolution, where not saying that we're not going to do this, we are, but at the same time I want to recognize the diversity of the entire community. I've lived here for fifty years, I went to high school here, I don't remember this ever going on when I was younger. A young woman told me that she just moved here. She's a woman of color and her son was being harassed in the school. My wife, who's lived here her entire life, we didn't think that that was going on. Our kids went to school here, I don't remember my children sharing this type of experiences that went on there. We hear what you're saying, but we just got it. We're not saying we're not going to do anything, we will, and something will be said from this office about this. Until I heard you speak and heard Taylor (James) speak, I didn't know that there were people harassing you in your homes. I don't live on FaceBook and I know a lot of this stuff goes out there. I live the real world, people talk to me and I go to lots of events and I don't see this. It's a mixed crowd that I go with, I just don't run with one crowd. That Proud Boys flag had me just as upset as all of you. Ron (Schmalzle) I'm sure would say the same thing – that's horrific. I don't know who did it and I know there are some people investigating what was going on with that. That is terrible to see in our community and we won't stand for that, and we won't stand here for hate or anything where people are feeling unjust in our community. It's unfortunate that this is going on in Pike County.

Commissioner Schmalzle added that if you feel that I would promote hate or not do what I can do to stop hate, you don't know me. I welcome you here today to speak out and to tell us about your experiences here in Pike County. I will also say this, every resolution and proclamation that we sign, when you put something in writing we feel that it has to be a document that stands the test of time and speaks to how we feel. We just did get this, I reviewed this two days ago. Someone said today that we were against it. We're not against it. We want to understand it and we want to work on it and come up with something that is powerful to the community and to all communities. That's how the path is for everything. The Second Amendment Resolution is not a Sanctuary Resolution – it was a year and half when it was first given to us. When it was given to us, we said absolutely not, we can't do it. Each of the resolutions, a lot of them are renewed every year, but when something is new and has our name on it, I hope you respect the fact that we want to look at it and we want to talk about it; we may even want to meet about it to make sure it is addressing what you feel will help your community. We will do that and please don't put words in our mouth about who we are and who we represent, because that's false. We will come out with something and speak to the community about it. Thank you.

Reporter Chris Jones asked when was Pride Month?

Triversity members answered June.

Reporter Chris Jones asked the Commissioners if they could still do a resolution for Pride month since you have a meeting in two weeks?

The Commissioners answered we do.

Reporter Chris Jones asked is a plan afoot to do that?

Commissioner Osterberg said Ron just stated that. We are going to review it and put it together so that it respects everybody in this County. What we heard these story say and the story I told you about the young boy that felt threatened at the school, we're going to draft it and Tony (Commissioner Waldron) will help us and if we have to, we'll meet with Triversity and make sure they're comfortable with what we are doing. As Ron alluded to, we did that with the Second Amendment – a year and a half. We did not just pass it.

Reporter Chris Jones said don't mention them – I'm not interested in them.

Commissioner Schmalzle replied, you should be interested – we are telling you there is a process. That's all we're saying.

Reporter Chris Jones said you have two weeks – will you do a Pride month? There's proclamations every week. In fact, the first thing I sat down today and looked at the Agenda and said, no proclamation. They're everywhere and some of them, to me, are gratuitous.

Reporter Chris Jones said the two people on my left came here before the Board of Commissioners making their case. Now I'm going to ask them why they sat down during the Pledge of Allegiance? It's respect for the country and for the Commissioners who invited them to stand up for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Schmalzle said (to the attendees asked) you don't have to answer that.

Solicitor Farley said that's enough! They did what they did, I didn't even notice – that's their right at this point. Your time for public comments is to talk to us. If you want to ask them questions, go outside and ask them.

Reporter Chris Jones said I accept that.

Solicitor Farley said let's move on.

Reporter Chris Jones asked what about other statements, on the record, by some of the speakers I have the opportunity to question them, right? Commissioner Osterberg said okay. Reporter Chris Jones asked, is that right? Commissioner Osterberg answered directing the questions through us, yeah. Solicitor Farley said comments to them, if you want to disagree, that's fine. Reporter Chris Jones said I asked a question about rights. Solicitor Farley said Chris, just ask them (Commissioners) questions. Okay? Next question to the politicians who have an obligation to listen and respond to the press.

Reporter Chris Jones said Taylor James said he had six or seven incidents in Milford Borough of some kind of an attack against a gay person. Taylor (James) would you give me an example?

Solicitor Farley said he isn't here anymore, he had to leave.

Commissioner Osterberg added that is something you can follow up on with him.

Reporter Chris Jones asked John Helman you mentioned that 'now is the worst anti-LGBTQ incidents in history'. Does that mean that it's worse than before gay marriage was passed? Before Stonewall? Before gay rights became an issue? Because that's history. Worse now, than it was before persecution?

John Helman responded what the ACLU is tracking is legislation that are introduced across the country. There are 491 Bills introduced this year alone to target the LGBTQ community. Solicitor Farley added he meant legislation. Reporter

Chris Jones clarified not incidents? John Helman answered I said legislation.

Reporter Chris Jones said you said incidents? Okay, thank you.

Meeting attendee Erica Maney from Milford Borough thanked everyone for the comments and information then said she had two thoughts. One, we've been celebrating Pride Month as a Nation for years, while I understand that the proclamation language was brought late, is it too late to vote on it at this meeting? I would love to see a Commissioner, or a commissioning team, that would be more proactive in supporting a community that makes up a large percentage of our population. The other thing is I hear a lot of 'I didn't know this was happening', but what I would like to do is figure out a way to get more connected, not just about LGBTQ issues. We moved here three years ago, my daughter started going on the bus in first grade and was immediately reporting a horrific amount of racism. My family is Jewish, and she was like no one has ever met a Jewish person. They were asking me antisemitic questions. It was wild and long on anti-gay things. These things are happening in the community – my eight-year-old is not on FaceBook yet, but things are happening in our community, on FaceBook, I understand you're not on it, but that's where a lot of this community debate. There were nine separate hate instances in the last week alone. What can we do to get the Commissioners more connected? As you all noted, you are not of the millennial generation, what can we do to make it more clear what's happening to our youth, millennial, Gen Z? These things are absolutely happening on-line and off. If you guys aren't aware of it, then that signifies a massive problem with not connecting with the young families that make up Pike's current make-up and future. I'd really like to see if we can find a resolution and move forward to get more connected.

Commissioner Waldron responded that he really enjoyed the fact that he was able to meet with people in here. When Mike (Mancino) invited me to come to the Triversity, albeit for a specific purpose, I will be glad to be part of their regular meetings, just as a liaison if you will. It has nothing to do with which party I'm in or any of that kind of crap, it's more because I care. Quite frankly, my two children, who are in their late thirties, they don't see any issues. Yes, we are older people, but that doesn't say we can't learn. I feel bothered that I don't know enough about this. We all can learn, and these guys (Commissioners Osterberg and Schmalzle) can learn too. I've worked with them for the last year and half, they're really empathetic people, but we don't always see everything. We live a little sheltered existence because of who we are, where we live and what we do and, mainly, because of our age. We can still learn. As a start, if I can be invited to the regular meetings, maybe we can meet more often. I'm more than happy to do that John (Helman).

Commissioner Osterberg added he always tells everybody if they're feeling threatened in our community, you can certainly share it with us, but if you are truly feeling threatened, I really do think you need to be notifying law enforcement. Many replied we are. Commissioner Osterberg said I'm just making sure that's being done because I know sometimes people are afraid to do that. I know there was just a local case about some threatening things that was just on the news, some mother was attacking another mother and it was in a local court and it had to do with the election and the woman was convicted and charged and fined. I want to make sure people are doing that because with everything that goes on with our community, however small it is, that unless you tell the authorities, not necessarily just us, I'm talking about the police, the State police, you don't know if there was another report of that the day before. At least then they can connect the dots and they can know what's going on in the community.

Meeting attendee Erica Maney said talking about threats, which I absolutely agree with you on, when that Proud Boy flag went up, being a Jewish family, that hit me hard on Mother's Day. What worried me more than the flag itself was the response from our community. Again, this is on FaceBook, the parents of the Delaware Valley School Board were so supportive of the flag that it floored me. It made me go from we took this flag down, it's one isolated incident to oh my God, the people my children are going to school with want to eradicate my family. I can't report that to the police. It's a general toxic stew and we are living it and it is terrifying. There's a lot going on that if you guys are not aware of, we need to find a better venue that makes these concerns to you because it is scary out here.

A meeting attendee added I've been here for twenty five years and it just stuns me Matt (Commissioner Osterberg) that you say you haven't seen it. It was at least fifteen years ago that me and the Mayor were walking at a protest, and they were yelling out 'faggots' to us. It was on film, you had to have seen it! Do you know these things are going on? Commissioner Osterberg answered that I'm not saying that I didn't know it was going on. I'm talking about the number of what Taylor (James) spoke about – the numbers of it. I'm not saying I'm totally living in a bubble. I know that there is hate out there, I just didn't know it was at that level. There's been hate around forever. I just didn't know it was at that level and what the other gentleman spoke about.

Lana Romeo said she had no idea and coming to this meeting I was so happy to talk about my grant. I had absolutely no idea that this was going on and you have opened my eyes. If there is anything that I can personally do to help or anything – please let me know. I am so sorry that you are subjected to this stuff, I really am.

Meeting attendee Mike Mancino said I live in Lackawaxen Township, and we do have a gay community in Lackawaxen Township. We also don't have the intensity of what I've heard goes on in this area, in Milford (Borough). We're very accepting of our neighbors, we're very caring and supporting of our neighbors up in Lackawaxen. Tony (Commissioner Waldron) is also a resident of Lackawaxen, so is Solicitor Farley. When I first came to Triversity and heard what was happening there, I was equally surprised that this was going on and like Matt said, I understand there's jerks out there, intolerant or insecure people that maybe need to devalue another human being to feel better about themselves. We don't see that in our neck of the woods. My first trip to Triversity was a campaign visit, I'll admit that, it started out as me just stopping in to say hi. Four hours later, I made some new friends and met some really great people. My biggest take away from that experience was that white, straight, male – that's cis gender. I was in Triversity listening to these horrible stories, experiences that everybody was going through, and I suddenly had this feeling of fear come over me. The thought that someone could walk down these steps and start shooting and it was the weirdest feeling. It was the first time that I ever felt unsafe somewhere. As I was driving home I realized that, here I am as a cis gendered male, my own life can be endangered by being connected to this community. It was the most powerful catalyst for my own experience to say this community needs help and that's when I reached out to them and shared some things. Not that we live in a bubble, but we're just not in an environment where this is something that people we know are sharing.

Meeting attendee Alexander Lipori said in response to a couple of things here, my grandfather was in his eighties when he passed. When I officially came out as a trans-man to him, I wrote a letter to him because we did snail mail in those days. I explained to him everything about what I learned from my generation and Gen Z. A lot of people have this misconception that LGBT is all about who you take behind bedroom doors and have intercourse with and it's not like that at all. I explained the romantics to my grandfather and the gender identity spectrum to my grandfather, the sexuality spectrum and I even brought up historical references of how transgender people have existed for thousands of years. Other LGBT

people have existed for thousands of years. Native Americans even have a word for it, the Navajo have a word called *nadleehi* which means two spirits. The Lakota also have this; a man who encompasses both male and female spirits and they were usually feared in their tribes. In every major culture across the globe there is something outside of the gender binary and science facts it up to 'I am an environmental scientist, and I study biology, wildlife biology', and it's not as simple as the chromosomes. So many different sciences back up all of these things and when I explained this to him he wrote back and he said at eighty-two years old, he wished he had access to this vocabulary when he was younger, because he thought he might have identified differently. This was a man who married a woman, my grandmother, and never cheated or anything and traditionally seen as a cis gendered male. I just want to say that I'm okay with opening the door to educating. I understand the nuances of the LGBT community are not necessarily in your face every day if you're not actively engaging with people. I also want to say that there is a shield of privilege that does prevent you from seeing a lot of those experiences. Whether it's racism, antisemitism or queerphobia in the community, people may not express it to you because they do see you as a conservative, cis gendered, white, heterosexual, male and they may not confide these things in you. They don't know where you're going to stand and how much you're going to be able to help them. That's where a lot of the distrust comes from. I want to reach across the aisle, I want to educate and show these allegations of being pedophiles or groomers are completely nonexistent. We have been here for forever. If my grandfather, at eighty-two, can say this is awesome, your generation is amazing, I am so proud of you and I wish I had known this for myself, I think anyone is capable of learning that. It's not just about sex, there's so much to it. There's so much history that's rich in my community, not just activism, the way we see the world from colors and clothing and gender roles and everything. I think everybody in this room would benefit from such an education. It would make you just go, you know what? I have been putting myself in a box all my life. There's so much out there that I didn't even think I could be that way. I didn't even know it was okay to do that. I just want to open that and please feel free to reach out to me and reach out to Triversity and my friends here because there's so much really cool stuff about the community. I just want to put that out there for everybody.

John Helman thanked everyone for listening to what we have to say. I hope you understand a little bit more than when we started and why we're coming with such intensity about why this is a life and death situation for us. I think for me, personally, I got my first death threats about being active around gay issues when I was a junior in college in Boston. When the Proud Boys flag came up on Mother's Day, I told Erica and a few other people that I have never been more scared for my personal safety. For the last two years, people organizing for a particular party has literally used an image of me calling me a pedophile and a groomer to mobilize their base. There's a church in our County called the Rod of Iron Church that has promoted lining up homosexuals and shooting them dead. Just in case you're not aware of it, you're aware of it now.

Jansen Polka added that she didn't want this to feel like a 'dog pile' to anybody because that's not going to accomplish anything. If I didn't have a daughter who identified as queer, I wouldn't be tuned into what's going on in the gay community in the area. If I didn't have a daughter with disabilities, I wouldn't be tuned into what's going on in the disabled community. I think the world would be better if we could all move to a place where it doesn't have to affect you directly for you to care about it and I think that's all everyone here is trying to work toward.

Meeting attendee, Pierre Tardy, said knowing that in New York State there's some order that they want to stop buses coming from New York with immigrants. Now that they are suing the County and Orange County filed for State of Emergency, I'm wondering does Pike County have a plan to deal with the situation if it comes here? Commissioner Osterberg said I don't believe we have any jurisdiction over this and to them in Harrisburg. I'm not so sure this is an issue here in Pennsylvania, I hear what's going on in New York, but on the other side of it though, and I'll let the legal speak to this, we are a different form of government than the State of New York when it comes to County government about what County government can do and what we can't do. I don't believe we have any jurisdiction to tell someone who can come and stay in a hotel and who can't. Solicitor Farley added that our power as Commissioners is created only by the Statute, that was created in the 50s and has not been updated. That's not something we can do. Mr. Tardy asked again, so you cannot stop them? Solicitor Farley answered no, we're a Commonwealth, the intent in this State, in a Commonwealth is to give power to the grass roots movement – the Townships, the Boroughs, the Counties. The Supervisors of the Townships and the Boroughs, the Mayor and the Councilman have more control over what happens in their area than we do. Period. The answer is no – I can't be any clearer than that right?

MEETING ADJOURNED. THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING OF THE PIKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS WILL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21, 2023, AT 11:00 A.M. IN THE PIKE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING.