

Wednesday, August 16, 2023

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

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

Public Comments/Questions concerning today’s agenda - NONE

Commissioner Schmalzle announced he is going to make a motion to Amend the Agenda to include a motion to award the bid for Springbrook Road, which will be under “OLD BUSINESS”.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle to Amend the Agenda to include a Motion to Award the Bid for Springbrook Road, under Old Business.

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

Motion to recess the Commissioners’ Meeting to hold a Retirement Board Meeting.

A RETIREMENT BOARD MEETING was held.

Motion to adjourn the RETIREMENT BOARD MEETING and reconvene the Commissioners’ Meeting.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the August 16, 2023, Agenda.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the August 2, 2023, Meeting Minutes.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the August 9, 2023, Conference Minutes.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve payment from the **GENERAL FUNDS (County Bills)** in the amount of **\$220,527.67**.

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

PERSONNEL

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to hire **MIRIAM RIVERA** as part-time clerk in the Tax Claim Bureau for less than 1,000 hours per year, effective August 28, 2023, pending successful drug screening. This is a replacement position.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to hire **LISA MARIE WILSON RIVERA** as full-time clerk in the Prothonotary’s Office for a 37.5-hour work week, effective August 28, 2023, with benefits after 90 days. This is a replacement position.

VOTE: Commissioners 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

Commissioner Schmalzle announced this is something we set aside at the last meeting, but I’d like a motion to award the bid for the Springbrook Road over Rattlesnake Creek Bridge Replacement Project to Rutledge Excavating Inc. for the base bid amount of \$1,212,253.40.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle to award the bid for the Springbrook Road over Rattlesnake Creek Bridge Replacement Project to Rutledge Excavating Inc. for the base bid amount of \$1,212,253.40.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to open bids for Re-Bid Bennett Ave Building 1 Interior Renovation Project (GC, EC).

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

Solicitor Farley announced there are two bids. One from Grimm Construction – Total Lump Sum Bid \$1,048,153.00 and there are some additional items requested, fresh stone, when you add that it’s an additional \$10,175.00 for a total of \$1,068,328.00. The second bid is from Pro Solutions – Lump Sum Bid \$988,580.00 and the additional, extra work, is only \$1,044.00 so the total bid from Pro Solutions is \$999,624.00. I would ask that these be tabled to be reviewed by the engineer until the next meeting.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to table the award of bid for Re-Bid Bennett Ave Building 1 Interior Renovation Project (GC, EC) until September 6, 2023, Commissioners’ Meeting.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to authorize the Vice-Chairman to execute Change Order No. 2 for the Pike County Bennett Avenue Building/Roof Replacement Project.

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

NEW BUSINESS

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the Human Services Development payment Voucher to transfer \$500,000.00 to the ERAP 2.0 account, on behalf of the Office of Human Services.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to authorize Vice-Chairman to execute the Cooperative Agreement by and between Pike County Human Services and Neighbor Works Northeastern Pennsylvania.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to execute the Memorandum of Understanding for the Provision of Physical Abuse/Neglect Evaluations between the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the County of Pike, on behalf of the District Attorney's Office Dickson House Children's Advocacy Center.

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

District Attorney Raymond Tonkin introduced Sara Loeb, Director of Victim Services and said this is one of the final things for Dickson House for the Children's Advocacy Center to bring physical abuse and neglect exams by the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Previously we did sexual abuse exams, and we will continue to do that, but the key here is moving this to physical abuse exams and, as with many things in life, this comes down to funding. There is State funding for sexual assault exams, we were able to find some funding working together with Children and Youth Services and their Needs Based Budget to bring this agreement here to have physical abuse exams conducted here at our Advocacy Center as well. It's now the full package that children won't have to travel to Scranton for those services.

Director of Victim Services Sara Loeb continued that working with CHOP, people don't realize that child physical abuse is the most common form of child maltreatment, and the majority of children's advocacy centers focus on child sexual abuse. There are many, many children that don't get the benefits of a medical exam and we're going to be able to offer that to children that are victims of maltreatment, neglect and all of those things. We're going to be able to offer a child, any child that comes to our facility, the benefit of a medical exam. There are a lot of children that maybe don't see a doctor on a regular basis. This gives them an opportunity to get world care from our partners at CHOP, which are amazing and be able to get that benefit. Also, child physical abuse is the second leading cause of child death for children under one. To bring this here and be able to have this, is really important to the children of Pike County and the children that we serve at the Children's Advocacy Center.

District Attorney Tonkin concluded with we appreciate the Commissioners' support – thank you.

Reporter Chris Jones asked who will be the doctors doing these exams? DA Tonkin answered doctors from Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Director Loeb added it's a telemedicine program that we currently do with sexual abuse victims. Reporter Chris Jones asked a tele-visit? Director Loeb said yes, and we have a Physician's Assistant (PA) here on staff and then we have doctors at CHOP through telemedicine that conducts the exam and do the medical reports and everything like that. The children become CHOP patients and if there's any other condition, they can refer them to CHOP doctors if they need it or facilities.

Reporter Chris Jones asked if the Physician's Assistant is a County employee? DA Tonkin answered the Physician's Assistant is a County employee, yes.

Reporter Preston Ehrler asked how many kids do you see, in terms of the exam, how many do you expect to see through this? How many are you seeing on the other side of the sexual exams you're already doing? Director Loeb answered, before COVID, we went to Scranton because they provided physical exams for child abuse victims for physical abuse and sexual, we were going there two or three times a week. Director Loeb continued, after COVID, things have really slowed down and we don't travel there as much. We anticipate being able to get those children that have marks on their bodies, are suspected child abuse, before it would be 10% physical abuse children are being seen and I believe that number will increase dramatically with the ability to be able to do it right here on site in the County. Sexual abuse exams we continue to hope to have our numbers, not that we hope our numbers go up, but we provide that and offer that to any child of sexual abuse, whether there is a disclosure or not because often children are not going to disclose if sexual abuse happens. Continuing to work with our partners in Children and Youth and law enforcement we anticipate those numbers to also go up. Each Friday here we have three time slots so we are able to see three children a week right now for sexual abuse and also physical abuse.

Commissioner Waldron thanked Director of Victim Services Loeb and District Attorney Tonkin for, again, bringing medical services to Pike County even though we're near a metropolitan area, we're certainly a rural county and the opportunity to make it easier for people to follow through. I imagine sometimes you get somebody started, and then to travel alone might get them not to follow through as much. I think it's a great you guys do something here at a local level. District Attorney Tonkin added that even the initial thing about the logistics of coordinating with the family, Children and Youth, and law enforcement, if they have to go to Scranton, that just provides a barrier in itself even to get in the door initially. These exams are really for the health and overall knowledge of the child that their body will heal and their body will be okay. It's really one of the first steps in the healing process for a child who has been abused and a lot of people think it's about evidence collection and, I'm sure some of it is, but it's really designed for the child and their family.

Meeting attendee Craig Kelstrom asked, you said it's about two to three times a week that you'd have to go to Scranton for the children reviews and it slowed down after the pandemic, I'm wondering if the facility is to be staffed full time or as needed, how does that work? District Attorney Tonkin responded I'll give you a little bit of familiarity with it. There are

some full time County employees, there's a part time County employee, a Physician's Assistant, that is scheduled certain days and that's in conjunction with CHOP. Specifically, for the sexual/physical assault case exams that is on a part time basis.

Craig Kelstrom asked is there general services as well or it's just for the abused a general medical exams for children or only for the abused? District Attorney Tonkin answered it's only based on a report of abuse or serious neglect. Director of Victim Services Loeb added we offer other services like a Victim Advocate there, but it is always a family that there is suspected child abuse, meaning sexual, physical or neglect so we do offer and try to connect them with services or if they're looking for food, we provide those services by helping connect families with services. The Victim Advocate on staff provides all those additional services to connect families within the community based off their needs.

Craig Kelstrom asked if there will be plans for any growth, where maybe one day they would cover Medicaid type exams or it's just not that kind of set up? District Attorney Tonkin answered no, it's not a general clinic. One of the important things though is it's connecting children here in Pike County with world class health care specifically for children. They will have those connections with CHOP. If they have anything in the future, they've been a CHOP patient and then there will be connections with Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. I know the Commissioners have done a lot to bring just general healthcare here for adults and children, but this is very specialized healthcare, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia are world renowned. There are people who travel from all over the world for their healthcare. Director of Victim Services Loeb said she can say this about the medical exams: it's not just a normal doctor that we have here, they are specifically trained in physical abuse, sexual abuse and maltreatment to look for specific things and identify specific patterns or bruising and things like this. They are specifically trained in child maltreatment and to identify things that are happening within the family.

Commissioner Schmalzle said he would like to add to what Tony (Commissioner Waldron) is saying. Thank you for your good work over there. It takes leadership to make something like this happen and your leadership in bringing in an exceptional organization like CHOP to Pike County is just fantastic – thank you, keep up the good work.

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to execute the Letter of Engagement between Zelenkofske Axelrod LLC and the County of Pike.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to execute the Purchase of Service Agreement between White Deer Run LLC DBA Torrance Cove Prep and the County of Pike, on behalf of the Children and Youth Services.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to authorize the Vice-Chairman to execute the Standard Agreement between Devereux Pennsylvania Children's Services and the County of Pike, on behalf of Children and Youth Services.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to execute the Supervision Fund Agreement between the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, acting through the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, and the County of Pike, on behalf of the Adult Probation Department.

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

MOTION: by Commissioner Waldron and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to authorize the fiscal year 2023 second quarter payment from the Pike County Emergency Medical Services Matching Grant fund to Blooming Grove Township in the amount of \$106,661.68.

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

MISCELLANEOUS

- PennState Extension Calendar of Events – August 16, 2023
- NEPA MPO Long Range Transportation Plan Public Meeting August 16, 2023 – Director of Pike County Planning and Mapping, Mike Mrozinski – Director Mike Mrozinski announced that tonight we have an Open House for the Northeast Pennsylvania NEPA MOP Long Range Transportation Plan. It will be held at the East Stroudsburg North High School from 6PM – 8PM. This effort is part of the Long Range Plan which is a twenty year plan and we're in the updates cycle right now. We're interested in getting from this is feedback. PennDOT has 631 linear miles of roads in Pike County. We're looking at trying to find out what your concerns are with roadways that have not been addressed and other ideas - it could be pedestrian, it could be bicycles, it could be safety intersections, drop-offs and the like, stormwater concerns. Similarly, we have received comments and concerns for lack of charging stations for electric vehicles. I'm happy to report that to Mirabito at the Lords Valley Interchange was just awarded \$830K grant to provide a charging station up there. Previously for the Long Range Plan there was concern that there was a lack of cameras and vehicle message signs on Interstate-84, at all the intersections I just heard that is now in the plans to get a VMS, I don't know the location where the sign will be, and cameras along the exits on I-84. This is a dual purpose meeting that we have tonight, it's also part of the Pike County Comprehensive Plan process where we have community collaboration meetings. The consultant is the same, Michael Baker Associates for our Comprehensive Plan as well as NEPA MPO Long Range Transportation Plan. I have flyers on both efforts – tonight from 6PM – 8PM at East Stroudsburg North High School. Tomorrow afternoon at noon at Wallenpaupack Area High School and tomorrow as 4PM at the Delaware Valley High School. I want to get the word out and get as many people out there to express their concerns for the future of Pike County.

Commissioner Schmalzle said he saw the press release on charging stations, they list that location (Lords Vally Interchange) as being in Wayne County because it says I-84 to I-80, where I live. Director Mrozinski said they fixed it.

Reporter Chris Jones asked are there other charging stations in Pike? Director Mrozinski answered there are a few. There's one in Milford. Commissioner Waldron added there's one at the Dunkin Donuts in Palmyra Township, those are Level 2. This newest one will be a Level 3, that's the one Ron (Commissioner Schmalzle) and I look for because I also own an electric car. That charges your car fully in about 30-40 minutes.

Craig Kelstrom asked if there is a fee to charge the car? Commissioner Schmalzle answered yes.

Director Mrozinski said what they are looking at is to try to get interchanges on the major highways. Commissioner Schmalzle said the goal is to have one, a network of them, on the interstates at every 50 miles. I think that's the goal going forward.

Craig Kelstrom asked who's goal is that? Commissioner Schmalzle answered Penn DOT. Commissioner Waldron added there's funding in the Federal Infrastructure Bill to pay for some of that.

PRESS & PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS/ADJOURNMENT

Reporter Chris Jones asked under OLD BUSINESS, the first motion you made is not on the Agenda, can you repeat what that was? Commissioner Schmalzle offered Chris Jones a copy from the one? Reporter Chris Jones said yes. Chief Clerk Gromalski added the Agenda was amended at the beginning to hold that motion.

Reporter Chris Jones asked about the ERAP grants, can I have the background of that? Commissioner Schmalzle said I asked the same question because it's such a large amount of money. It was money awarded to the County and we're just putting it in the proper account.

Reporter Preston Ehrler asked what is the ERAP for? Chief Clerk Gromalski responded Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Reporter Ehrler asked so there's more money coming into that? Commissioner Schmalzle answered there is. Chief Clerk Gromalski added we received more funding from the Federal government and it went to the General Fund. Commissioner Schmalzle said it went into the General Fund and now it's being placed in the proper place. Treasurer Gilpin added the Human Services Fund. Reporter Ehrler asked has the structure of that changed at all, or is it still the same as it has been? Commissioner Schmalzle answered it's the same.

Meeting attendee, Craig Kelstrom, asked the rate what they are charging to charge the electric car at these stations? Commissioner Schmalzle answered it's a competitive market. I have an electric vehicle, but I've never charged it other than my home. Mr. Kelstrom asked do we know who receives the money? Is it the power company? Commissioner Schmalzle answered I think that through this program I think their making arrangements with the landowner because the landowner has to contribute 20% of the costs of the infrastructure build out and then they would receive some profit from the charging. Commissioner Waldron added that there's usually a service company, there's a number of them, Electrify America, Charge Point, EVO, all of which work with apps. Mr. Kelstrom asked standard rates apply kind of thing? Commissioner Schmalzle said yes. Commissioner Waldron said they do differ, some charge by how many kilowatts per hour you're putting in there and some charge by another factor. For a 300-mile charge, it goes anywhere from as little as eight or nine dollars to sixteen dollars, but that's about what it is to charge 300 miles worth of travel. Mr. Kelstrom asked so it's not like a Federal Government oversight of some utility taking over? Commissioner Waldron said no, as a matter of fact, VW (Volkswagen) actually owns one of the major providers now. VW makes Audi's and VW's and have got into the charging business because they're rolling out a bunch of vehicles that have electric. Tesla has their own proprietary which is what Ron (Commissioner Schmalzle) has. Mr. Kelstrom said I understand they have different ports for the Tesla versus the others, would it be servicing both? Commissioner Schmalzle answered you can, you have adaptors, it's almost like buying an Apple product. You have adaptors that fit all of the various uses, but I do think in the future they're moving to a standard plug for everything.

Meeting attendee, Greg Latoro, asked for a little bit of an update about the medical facilities that are coming to the County. Commissioner Schmalzle answered I think you probably saw the signs are up in the Dingman location at the Weis market. The opening date is soon, I know we helped them secure some bids for the build out. It's a new building but they have some work to go inside. That I think will be, I hate to say dates because I've been proven wrong, things take a lot longer, but before the end of the year we'll see that open. The second location up on the Route 507 corridor up by Lake Wallenpaupack has been identified and a contract is being negotiated right now. Third, and most importantly, is the commitment of Northwell and a Pennsylvania partner, to build a 24/7 mini/micro hospital-emergency center in the center of the County. They have made that commitment prior to this meeting. We have a weekly update on that and that is progressing in that they're formulating a relationship with a Pennsylvania provider to build it. We have organized a group of people to raise money to help them with the initial capital costs and on-going costs. As I've said, many, many times, if it were profitable for a hospital to be in Pike County, it would be here. It has not been profitable to this point, but they are a large organization, the largest employer in New York State. I see on social medial threads that the concern is that they will not be taking various insurances because of the history they had right here in Milford, I can assure you that's a concern that has been addressed and one of the primary reasons they are partnering with a Pennsylvania hospital. It's all good news, it takes time. Their timeframe for building the big facility is three years. Judging by the commitments they've made on the other things, it may be just a little longer than that, but that's a short period of time to produce something like they're planning to produce. If you were to wonder what it would like, it's going to be modeled very similar to the facility that was opened up in Dickson City and the new facility in Monroe County within the last two years. Beautiful facilities with good services to the community. The focus will be emergency services with sixteen to twenty-four beds and general things we need. Pike County is the most underserved County in the State for medical services. It is our number one agenda item and priority to make sure that we improve it.

Reporter Preston Ehrler asked have they released where the location is on upon on 507 yet? Commissioner Schmalzle responded no. Commissioner Waldron added we are familiar with it, but they haven't made that public yet. It is going to be in Pike County, because at one point they were even looking at Hawley. It's going to be near Hawley, but in Pike County in Palmyra Township. Until they sign the lease, it's not appropriate to say where it's going to be. They are working on one sight that got problematic so they switched, that's why it's been taking long. As far as when they will open, I think they can be opened next summer. To say they'll open this year, I don't think that's feasible. The lease they're working on right now, literally this week, is an existing building, but it still needs to be retrofitted for the services. I would expect by spring or summer 2024 that would be doable.

Reporter Preston Ehrler asked if they've signed with a partner yet? Commissioner Waldron answered they have, but they didn't want us to reveal who that partner is. They told us at the end of June that within sixty days they'd be announcing that. We expect to hear by mid-September of the hospital provider, it's a regional hospital provider in Pennsylvania.

Craig Kelstrom said not to press a hot button, I support this, I like this idea, I'm not trying to be a thorn, but is there a large commitment of County taxes towards this? Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron answered no. The meeting attendee said no commitment at all, there is no rise in taxes? Commissioners Schmalzle and Waldron repeated no. Commissioner Schmalzle added it's their organization's investment, we will raise funds through donations, not taxes. Commissioner Waldron said the prior Commissioners did decide when money came from the Federal government to deal with COVID through the American Recovery Act, to take \$2M of the \$11M that came to Pike County and set it aside for some sort of medical services. They didn't envision that Northwell is going to come in the door, but the good news was in the beginning of 2022 when I started to serve as Commissioner, they (Northwell) did come to us and said we'd like to work with you on the Urgent Care. We're even willing to talk to you about a larger plan. There's \$2M in Federal money, taxpayer money, that went into a foundation, the other several million that we expect to raise that's going to be through private donations. Although we've already talked to our Federal and State legislators about the fact that if we can raise \$10M, we already have \$2M, could they match that? Most of them are telling us they can definitely find us money. The timing is an issue, what do you need it for and exactly how much, but we're going to hit on every pot we can to try and get appropriate amounts. Ideally, we expect to fund half of the project and possibly even more. The other half is going to come from Northwell and their Pennsylvania partner. Commissioner Schmalzle added in the same breadth, Northwell told us they expect to lose about \$1M a year, per urgent care, for the first couple of years and they are accepting that as an investment into the County. It's a really exciting and good relationship we're establishing.

THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING OF THE PIKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS WILL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2023 AT 11:00 A.M. IN THE PIKE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING.