

**Tuesday, January 2, 2024**

A Reorganization Meeting 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 Caceres, Chief Clerk Gromalski and Solicitor Farley.

**MOTION:** by Commissioner Schmalzle and seconded by Commissioner Caceres, to approve the January 2, 2024, Agenda.

**VOTE:** Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Caceres, voted “aye”. Motion carried.

*Questions and comments concerning today’s agenda were entertained by the public-none.*

**REORGANIZATION**

Commissioner Osterberg called for a motion and second for the following items as listed:

1. Motion to appoint Commissioner Matthew M. Osterberg as Chairperson and Commissioner Ronald R. Schmalzle as Vice-Chairperson of the Pike County Board of Commissioners for four years.
2. Motion to set and advertise the Commissioners’ Meetings for the first and third Wednesdays of the month at 11:00 a.m.
3. Motion to set and advertise the Commissioners’ Conferences for the second, fourth and fifth Wednesdays of the month at 11:00 AM.
4. Motion to set and advertise the Retirement Board Meetings for the third Wednesday of the month at 11:00 AM and as needed, at any regularly scheduled meetings and/or conferences.
5. Motion to set and advertise the Salary Board Meetings, as needed, at any regularly scheduled meetings and/or conferences.
6. Motion to set and advertise the Election Board Meetings, as needed, at any regularly scheduled meetings and/or conferences.
7. Motion to adopt Resolution No. 24-01, appointing The Pike County Dispatch, Tri-County Independent, The Pocono Record, The Times Herald Record, The Pike County Courier, and The Law Journal (per statute) as Official Publications of Pike County for the Year 2024.
8. Motion to adopt Resolution No. 24-02, setting forth depositories of County funds for the year 2024; namely, Honesdale National Bank, Dime Bank, NBT Bank, Wells Fargo, Wayne Bank and PNC Bank.
9. Motion to execute the contract between Thomas Farley, Esquire, and the County of Pike, for services as Pike County Solicitor for a 1-year term.
10. Motion to execute the contract between Stacey Beecher, Esquire, and the County of Pike, for services as Pike County Assistant Solicitor for a 1-year term.
11. Motion to appoint Jason Ohliger, Esquire, as Pike County Assistant Solicitor for a 1-year term.
12. Motion to execute the contract between Eric L. Hamill, Esquire, and the County of Pike, for services as Conflicts Counsel for the Public Defender’s Office, for a 1-year term.
13. Motion to recognize the appointment of the following Row Officers’ Solicitors, on an as needed basis, for a 1-year term: R. Anthony Waldron, Esquire – Coroner, Prothonotary, Treasurer; Ron Bugaj, Esquire – Auditors, Sheriff; and Christopher Kimler, Esquire – Recorder of Deeds.
14. Motion to appoint Michael Lamoreaux of MHE Engineering, as Engineer for the County of Pike for a 1-year term at the proposed rates.
15. Motion to appoint Michael Lamoreaux of MHE Engineering, as Dam Inspector for the County of Pike for a 1-year term at the proposed rates.
16. Motion to appoint Commissioner Osterberg to the following boards for a 4-year term: Economic Development Authority, Northeast Pennsylvania Rural Transportation Planning Organization (NPRTPO), Northeast Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA), Penn State Cooperative Extension; Opioid Task Force, Roak Task Force, Tick Borne Diseases Task Force, and Scenic Rural Character Preservation

Board.

17. Motion to appoint Commissioner Schmalzle to the following boards for a 4-year term: Lake Wallenpaupack Watershed Management District, Local Emergency Planning Commission, Planning Commission, Pocono Counties Workforce Investment Board, and representative to the Pocono Mountain Visitor Bureau.
18. Motion to appoint Commissioner Schmalzle to the Pike County Conservation District Board for a 1-year term ending December 31, 2024.
19. Motion to appoint Commissioner Caceres to the following boards for a 4-year term: Area Agency on Aging Advisory Board, Area Agency on Aging Transportation Advisory Committee, Carbon-Monroe-Pike Mental Health and Development Services Advisory Board, Children & Youth Advisory Board, Council of Governments Board, and Reentry Coalition.

***Any Commissioner can attend any Board Meeting in case of the appointed Commissioners' absence, as a voting member of that Board.***

20. Motion to appoint Glenn Stryas as Chairperson of the Pike County Agricultural Land Preservation Board for a 1-year term ending December 31, 2024.
21. Motion to reappoint the following individuals to the Pike County Area Agency on Aging Advisory Board for a 3-year term ending December 31, 2026: Cordell Bowman, Laura Guccini-Engle, Mary Little, Rita Tepperman and Barbara Shevlin.
22. Motion to reappoint the following individuals to the Pike County Board of Assessment Appeals for a 1-year term: James Gelatt as Chairman, Fred Suljic as Vice Chair, and Frank Tarquinio as Secretary.
23. Motion to reappoint Jeannemarie Passaro to the Carbon-Monroe-Pike Mental Health and Development Services Advisory Board for a 3-year term ending December 31, 2026.
24. Motion to appoint Jayson Pope to the Pike County Children & Youth Advisory Board for a 2-year term ending December 31, 2025.
25. Motion to reappoint John Milliken as Public Director to the Pike County Conservation District Board for a 4-year term ending December 31, 2027.
26. Motion to reappoint the following individuals to the Economic Development Authority for a 3-year term ending December 31, 2026: Gerry Najarian, Tim Gartner and Charles Gillinder.
27. Motion to reappoint the following individuals to the Hotel Tax Grant Program Board for a 2-year term ending December 31, 2025: Bridget Gelderman as Chair, Justin Genzlinger, Rory O-Fee, Ladora Phillips and Gary Wilson.
28. Motion to appoint the following individuals to the Lake Wallenpaupack Watershed Management District Board for a 4-year term ending December 31, 2027: Karl Eisenhauer, Carson Helfrich, Rachael Marques, James Martin and James Shook.
29. Motion to reappoint the following individuals to the Pike County Road Task Force for a 3-year term ending December 31, 2026: Kenneth Coutts-Palmyra Township; Kyle Kellstrom, Alternate-Palmyra Township; and Richard Bailo-Delaware Township.
30. Motion to appoint the following individual to the Pike County Road Task Force for a 3-year term ending December 31, 2026: Daniel Bellino, Alternate-Delaware Township.
31. Motion to reappoint the following individuals to the Pike County Road Task Force, for a 1-year term ending December 31, 2024: Russ York-Porter Township; and Bill Powell, Alternate-Porter Township.
32. Motion to reappoint William Clauss to the Scenic Rural Character Preservation Board for a 3-year term ending December 31, 2026.
33. Motion to appoint R. Anthony Waldron to the Scenic Rural Character Preservation Board for a 3-year term ending December 31, 2026.
34. Motion to change the title of Brian Snyder from Planner/GIS Technician to Planner/Assistant Mapping Director, in the Planning & Mapping Department, retroactive to January 1, 2024.
35. Motion to change the title of Shannon DeVuyst from Communications Director/Administrative

Assistant to Communications Director/Administrative Manager, in the Commissioner's Office, retroactive to January 1, 2024.

36. Motion to eliminate the position of Discovery Coordinator in the District Attorney's Office.
37. Motion to change the position of Victim Advocate to Victim Advocate/File Discovery Coordinator in the District Attorney's Office.
38. Motion to change the title of Rayonna Story from Victim Advocate to Victim Advocate/File Discovery Coordinator, in the District Attorney's Office, for a 40-hour work week, retroactive to January 1, 2024.
39. Motion to acknowledge receipt of a letter from Warden Lowe advising that he has hired Kathleen Cronin as temporary part-time Accounts Clerk from the Correctional Facility, for a six-month period retroactive to January 1, 2024, for less than 1,000 hours per year.

**MOTION:** by Commissioner Schmalzle and seconded by Commissioner Caceres, to approve items 1 through 39 as presented by Commissioner Osterberg.

**VOTE:** Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Caceres, 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 Commissioners' Reorganization Meeting.*

#### **PRESS AND PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS**

Meeting attendee, Kevin Houlihan of Dingman Township, said he had two comments regarding the Reorganization Meeting. In early December we had a Commissioners' meeting in which several groups of individuals talked about concerns with respect to their protective rights categories. I'd like to applaud the Commissioners in this Reorganization, appointing Commissioner Caceres to the Reentry Coalition. I think Pike County has to be applauded when it comes to corrections and the Correctional Facility, we call it recidivism which is the amount of people going back into prisons. The National average is about 43% - 44% according to the Department of Justice statistics. Pike County, the last two to three years, is 19%. That's something to really be proud of for a County this size and the demographic of a County of this type. Meeting attendee, Kevin Houlihan continued the second item is with respect to item #35, Shannon Devuyst. When we talk about hate and negativity, a lot of that is derived from information. You have misinformation, wrong or inaccurate communication for influencing purposes, disinformation which is a little bit more serious and negative because it influences people to think your way and, of course, mal-information where you take things out of context. By elevating the title and position within communications, that's another great sign of the forward thinking of our Commissioners. Thank you to the three of you.

Commissioner Osterberg commented about the Correctional Facility. While we take credit for that, we really give that to the staff at the Correctional Facility. Our Warden is recognized in the State as being one of the top Wardens. When you go to a Commissioners convention, you tell them you're from Pike and if you're talking to people about corrections, they know Craig Lowe's (Warden of PCCF) name and he does a really good job up there. He is very concerned about the individuals that are, unfortunately, incarcerated. He is looking to make sure that they do not come back. When they do come back, he's saddened by that. What he feels is that he hasn't done his job, that's what his job is. His job is to make sure that these individuals get on with a productive life. Thanks for recognizing us, but the Reentry Coalition in this County is an active organization, Christa (Commissioner Caceres) will be on that. It got a little slowed down like other things did during COVID, but it's back up and running again. There are countless volunteers at our correctional facility. Before COVID we would have a luncheon up there, a barbeque to recognize the volunteers, there would be two hundred fifty people there, from all over. Some people as far away as Northampton County, PA. Thanks for recognizing that.

Meeting attendee, Kristina Vigo, asked if the Commissioners got the numbers of how much it will cost for Narcan in every medicine cabinet of Pike County? Commissioner Osterberg answered we did not.

Meeting attendee, Kristina Vigo said she is grateful that we started off giving recognition to those who are doing great jobs and I believe that being active is also preventative and it's about time we touched on how we get some of these issues solved, when inmates come back because he (the Warden) felt like he wasn't able to prevent that. There's a study of four hundred six 17 year olds, in State foster care, between July 2001 and June 2003 where 45% of those were reported of using and trying illicit drugs within the past six months. That's a study done in these youth of two, three, years. Within the past six months they were still able to get their hands on or tried illicit drugs. I remember when I first came here and speaking to you guys about preventative measures. What preventative measures are being placed out there? I think when we were speaking on putting Narcan in every family's medicine cabinet, it wasn't ignorant of me to question the intention or emotion or even ask for a number because the thing is, a dude mentioned the transparency

and how these things are affecting taxpayers? Even though it was said that it was done through a grant, we should know what the numbers are and then for the preventative and active part. What are we doing or putting our money into that may be affecting or causing children or people to become a statistic. We're putting Narcan in medicine cabinets, but we should also be checking what we are putting our money into as far as the Children and Youth system. There was a question of transparency and even honesty when it came to receiving emails on this handle that were being done with the agency. Now, we're having proposals for programs to give out medicine that would be lifesaving for those who are overdosing from drugs but are we making sure that we're being preventative from the things that we're also paying into that may be adding to those statistics? Like the youth that may be ripped away from their families for no good reason, especially against the Constitution and being thrown into a system where they're now left to experience and see whatever this world has to give them. Blowing some whistles on whether we're not only funding the problem, but then covering that as a great secret putting money toward the saving and saying well we're proposing a solution, but we also created the problem. I feel like we should really be checking our hearts and whether our actions are really helping or hindering our County and the pockets of the taxpayers. Commissioner Caceres thanked Ms. Vigo for making her statements and said she greatly appreciates her coming here to voice her concerns. As far as the annual cost, the number was not obtained, but when we get around to making that calculation, it will be publicized. Commissioner Caceres continued that she wants to speak to her concerns with respect to individuals and juveniles in foster care or in the custody and care of the foster department, experiencing or partaking in drugs. As unfortunate as it is, my fourteen-year-old son is here, it's a very cold world out there and unfortunately some children fall victim, just like some adults fall victim, to using and trying drugs. Unfortunately, they get hooked. Our job here is to make sure that the foster care system is adequately financed so that they can properly function. Whether or not a child is rightfully or wrongfully taken from a family, is not within our purview. I can tell you we're very concerned and that's part of our job and that's why we run, to serve the community and serve the County, to make sure we're doing the best we can and these agencies are properly funded. With respect to your question about the Narcan, are we doing the right thing with that, it's almost to your point about being reactive or proactive, right? Reactive versus being proactive. You mentioned the correctional facility and the Warden being concerned when people return, and you felt as though they weren't being as proactive. With respect to the Narcan, when someone unfortunately has an overdose episode in or near their home, would we want some help to be present or would we not? Meeting attendee Kristina Vigo said yeah, sure and I'm not speaking against that, as I said last meeting, I understand. I think I'm just hinting toward the Commissioners that already received emails of mishandling happening within their agency and I don't believe in coincidences but we'll say this program was proposed and I did see it as a beautiful opportunity to request a consideration and overlooking of what the funds have been going out to fund the crime that has been done against me, to be looked at. I requested that my children do not become a statistic and so may need something to look over. I'm not giving any details, just like that man who got emotional last time. I'm removing emotions, I'm speaking only on the logics. I'm speaking to the people who sign the checks because the people who are doing the acts aren't stopping it, so in effect to speak to the ones who are paying for those acts. I can just say that was a door for me to say can we keep those five children from becoming the statistics that you guys are paying to prevent and to keep and if he can answer back the email. Commissioner Osterberg answered, let me just say, we've said that before that we get those emails. We forward those emails to the agency's Directors, sometimes to NERO, sometimes to our Solicitors. The emails that we're getting mention names and children and all this and I don't think, as I've said at the last meeting, that I should be commenting on this because I don't know all the facts. Meeting attendee Kristina Vigo said but you didn't email back. Commissioner Osterberg answered even just sending back, just because you send me an email do I honestly know who you are? That's not my role, to try to investigate who is sending me emails when it comes to sensitive information. These children, your children, all these children have just as many rights as the parents do, that's why when those emails come to us, we don't ignore them, but we certainly don't respond to them. There's two phone calls on my phone right now from individuals calling about this. I forward those to the right agencies to find out more about the story and there's a lot more to the story. I'm not saying yours is any different, but you have to understand, we need to be sensitive of what we do with that information. These are children that we are talking about. Again, I don't know who those people are who are calling my phone. Just because they say who they are, doesn't mean I know who they are or that their being truthful and honest to us. I appreciate what you're saying we will get the numbers on the Narcan for you, that's a legitimate concern of how much we're spending on that.

Meeting attendee Kristina Vigo said NERO, I looked up this NERO and wasn't able to come up with anything. Not even my church family was able to find this, could you give me a specific address?

Commissioner Osterberg answered we will, it's the Northeast Regional Office that oversees our Children and Youth. When these complaints come in, we send them to them (NERO). We send them upstairs, we send them to our Solicitor and we send them to NERO. In many cases, sometimes what happens is people send complaints to NERO and they filter in the other direction. Now, hopefully, I think they are, they are vetting what those complaints are, that the people who are giving the information are actually the ones who should be speaking to these children. When this comes to us, the Courts are really the ones who dictate these decisions. You're right, we write the checks, but in front of those two Judges over there is when the decisions are made. There's no place for us to be getting involved in that. These are real sensitive issues. Meeting attendee, Kristina Vigo, asked for verification purposes, are you now stating that you have been receiving complaints called in or emails about mishandling within CYS agency? Commissioner Osterberg

answered I've been here for twelve years and I can tell you that I have received complaints about CYS, about Transportation and about many different things, and I forward them, I do not ignore them. I know Commissioner Schmalzle doesn't either and the other Commissioners before us didn't either. We have a responsibility of how we handle those, particularly to CYS.

Meeting attendee, Kristina Vigo, asked do you know the problem process to register a complaint? I've been going through all the processes, and I've not received any response, not even from the DA, but I will keep going as a mother. Commissioner Caceres asked outside of the County, are you aware of the proper protocol? Meeting attendee Kristina Vigo answered I would utilize the County first because I'm the preventative type, why make it a big thing when we can situate it and settle that?

Meeting attendee Kristina Vigo said what brought me here was actually the meeting on December 6<sup>th</sup> where it was asked about whether you had been receiving emails because you said no and I was like oh, that's like basically asking me to come. I'm grateful that we finally got to the truth and answer, which was posed on December 6<sup>th</sup> which was if you think if there was any word coming to you guys about mishandling in that agency and this was a clear answer. There have been, it's just you guys are handling the information.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**THE FIRST COMMISSIONERS' MEETING OF THE YEAR WILL BE HELD IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE REORGANIZATION MEETING.**

**THE NEXT PUBLIC MEETING OF THE COMMISSIONERS WILL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2024 AT 11:00 A.M. IN THE COMMISSIONERS' MEETING ROOM, ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, 506 BROAD STREET, MILFORD, PA 18337.**