

Huntingdon, PA
Tuesday, June 2, 2009
21-09

The regular weekly meeting of the Huntingdon County Commissioners was held on the above date in the Commissioners Meeting Room with the following being present: Commissioners Fluke, Hoover, and Kough Pittenger; Solicitor, Scot Gill; Chief Clerk, Cinnamon Bair; Maureen Safko, Grants Administrator; Janet Hanks, Register and Recorder and Charles Swigart, Solicitor; George Germann, The Daily News; Jeff Gill, Altoona Mirror; and visitors Charlie Coleman, Randy Carper, Susan Hartman, Mick McMullen, Dee Dee Brown, Glen Stampfle, Ken Myers, Foster Ulrich, Pam Prosser, John Shuck, Lou Maierhofer, Dr. Tom Kepple, Pat Kepple, Cal Barner, Ben Bristol, Matt Price, Erik Linberg, and Yvonne Martin.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chairman Fluke followed by Prayer led by Commissioner Hoover and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag led by Commissioner Kough Pittenger.

It was moved by Commissioner Hoover seconded by Commissioner Kough Pittenger and carried (Fluke, yes; Kough Pittenger, yes; Hoover, yes) to approve the minutes of the May 26 meeting.

It was moved by Commissioner Kough Pittenger seconded by Commissioner Hoover and carried (Hoover, yes; Fluke, yes; Kough Pittenger, yes) to approve payment of invoices for the week of June 1.

There were two additions to today's meeting; discussion regarding new cameras for the Courthouse; secondly Penn State property.

There was no public comment.

No matters addressed by the Solicitor.

First on the agenda, a group of concerned citizens to request the Commissioners reinstate the Black Fly Program. The Program was cut in the 2009 budget, the cost of the program was \$8039/yr. Foster Ulrich, Huntingdon Borough Mayor was the spokesperson for the group. Mayor Ulrich read a prepared statement to the Commissioners. He said that every citizen will be affected by this decision. He said that in the past people have tried many remedies to cope with the "gnats". The Mayor went on to say tourism is a large part of the County's economy and it is important to tourists, visitors, and top priority to the residents that outdoor recreation can be fully enjoyed. The Cost of the program can be equated to 17 cents per capita for the County an investment for the general welfare of the citizens. A majority of the guests spoke about issues that they felt could affect the population in the absence of spraying to suppress the black fly. Glen Stampfle, Huntingdon Borough Council said the last 8-10 years Huntingdon Borough has worked to attract people with the community pool, Portstown Park, Detwiler Field and a new bicycle trail just opened. All outdoor recreation minutes from the Juniata River. Dee Dee Brown representing the Kiwanis added that the children in the County would be affected. Dr. Tom Kepple, Juniata College President spoke to support all previous statements and added the college track would be affected. Cal Barner from the Huntingdon Country Club said the lack of spraying would affect the golfers. Erik Linberg, Manager Hoss's Restaurant said that the impact would come from tourists being bothered by the gnats and not returning to the area in future years. Ben Bristol, owner Family Campgrounds concerned his business will be affected by campers not being able to enjoy the outdoors. Ben also mentioned his personal experiences with black flies. Matt Price, Executive Director of the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau said a study taken last summer showed 90% retention of tourists of at least five years for the County. Matt told the Board 11,000 jobs in the County were provided by tourism, the average job paying \$30,000/yr. Pam Prosser representing the Rotary Club, Seven Points Marina, and as a parent spoke about the youth programs the Rotary has helped with the Community Center to provide a better quality of life and to promote kids to play outdoors. John Shuck representing the Community Center said that the night before Detwiler Field hosted over 900 people for ball games. John brought to the Commissioners the idea to ask local organizations to help fund a portion of the cost in order to allow the County to participate in the program. Commissioner Fluke thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and sharing their concerns. Commissioner Hoover said if organization would like to chip in to pay he would not be opposed to looking into the ability for the County to re-enter the program. Commissioner Hoover said that he was waiting for a call from DEP to discuss the program. The decision to remove the program from the budget was based on a need to cut costs. Glen Stampfle told the Board that the Borough Council had unofficially discussed giving \$1,400 toward the cost based on 20 cents per Borough resident. He said it would need to be approved at a public meeting. Randy Carper added he felt the affect may not be immediate but a potential loss of revenue in the future could result from the annoying pests. Commissioner Kough Pittenger expressed her appreciation to the group for their local activism and showing their concern. As a manager of the County budget the Commissioners looked at the revenue coming in and the need to reduce the expenses. The process was very difficult human services have been directly affected by state cuts. The Commissioners made general cuts and then found it necessary to make additional cuts. The Commissioner told the visitors that she recognizes the importance of tourism. She said that she Chair's the Southern Alleghenies Tourism Board, but she also sits on the Board at MH/MR (Mental Health and

Mental Retardation). Commissioner Kough Pittenger said that the current budget could not pay for the black fly program. She asked the group to organize together and think about another topic the Daily News had an article addressing the State talking about closing the three State Parks in the County. Commissioner Kough Pittenger said she was not trying to get away from the subject but felt it was a good opportunity to bring out this issue that could have a major impact on County tourism. Commissioner Fluke said that he wanted it made known that the State according to a meeting he attended with Southern Alleghenies may cut the black fly and the West Nile programs. Commissioner Fluke added that 33 Counties participate in the program and 34 do not. He added that he too looked at the priority of helping a resident get transportation to a doctor appointment or the inconvenience of a gnat. Mayor Ulrich said that the reason many counties do not participate is that they do not have major waterways. He added the Borough had to spend money they had not budgeted to pay to upgrade a sewer system because it was a necessary project. Foster mentioned they had recognized a handicapped young person at an outdoor concert who was able to enjoy the program, but if gnats were present he would not have the ability to swat them away. Dr. Kepple said the future of the County relies on tourism cutting it off would lower economy for the County. The College has also made cuts but did not cut the admissions office. Commissioner Fluke asked if Foster was the contact person, Foster answered yes. Foster asked if the County would pay \$4000 of the cost to spray if the group could come up with the remaining \$4000. Commissioner Hoover said the closer to \$8000 received the better. Glen Stampfle said the economic impact was the main concern. Commissioner Kough Pittenger said at the last tourism meeting she attended it was said that the State was planning to cut tourism funding by 73%. Charles Coleman commented only a small segment of the County population would be affected by not spraying and it was not fair to the entire population to pay for a program that benefits a few, when more important issues needed addressed. Dr. Kepple stood up to add that Mr. Coleman was not correct, every resident would be within ten miles of a waterway and that is the distance the black fly travels from water. Dee Dee Brown thanked everyone in the group for attending the meeting and asked that everyone work together to get this spraying back in Huntingdon. Dee Dee thanked the Commissioners for listening to their concerns. Commissioner Fluke said that by the time the Commissioners are putting together the budget for next year the State budget should be finalized to see if they will cut the program at the State level. At this time the group attending the meeting for black flies exited.

Janet Hanks and Charles Swigart were scheduled to discuss space needs in the Register and Recorder's Office. Charles started the discussion stating the delays in the Fisher Bailey Building were making it impossible to get work done in the Recorder's Office. He said he was thinking to re-file the law suit against the County for space. They believed the move would occur the middle of this year and are now hearing maybe not this year. Commissioner Kough Pittenger told Charles and Janet that they should be aware that with every project there are delays. She said that the County was using the CReW to help with costs and they are having difficulties with their program, but the contractor is working with them to keep the job moving. At this time the roof has been replaced and the asbestos is completely removed from the building. Charles said that this Board of Commissioners has done more to resolve the issue than any of their predecessors but because of the length of time the problems are more acute. Charles suggested that rather than saving money with CReW the Board should have spent the additional money for a contractor. Charles went on to say that Janet has in her budget approval to hire additional staff but cannot because she has no space to put them. This is causing a back log in work. Commissioner Kough Pittenger said that Janet was and is offered space. Charles noted that the space given was not adjacent to the office and the staff would need to be in one location. Charles said that the Treasurer had spoke that he did not feel it necessary to move to the Commissioners' Office if the time he would move to the FBB would be a short time. The original plan was to relocate the Treasurer to the current Commissioner Office in the Courthouse and give the Register and Recorder Office the room vacated by the Treasurer. Charles said that if the Treasurer would not move Janet was willing to split her office in the Commissioners vacated space and her current office until the Courthouse is renovated. The Commissioners said the project was behind no more than three or four weeks. They agreed that a date for the Commissioners to move into the FBB was never specifically given. Charles also asked about additional furniture and help when moving. Commissioner Kough Pittenger said that was all part of the plan.

Maureen Safko, Grants administrator was next on the agenda. Maureen told the Commissioners that the CBDG applications were due June 12th and she was seeking preliminary approval to have two public hearings on the three year plan. The resolution along with the plan would need final approval at the June 9th Commissioner meeting. Maureen went over the options for the recovery money. The recovery money will be used to complete some of the projects on the three year plan. This allows other projects to be added to the three year plan. Maureen told the Board that the three activities the Commissioners chose were the elevator for the Fisher Bailey Building, the water tank for the Dudley- Coalmont- Coalmont Area, and improvements to the Shirley Home for the Aged. The proposed activity includes replacement of approximately 49 windows and 8 exterior doors, as well as replacement of floor covering and sidewalk. Maureen said the Shirley Home being considered a County wide benefit needs to have a 25% fair share. She said she is working on a grant from DEP called PA conservation Works and the Shirley Home received a grant through Representative Fleck's Office and may be able to use part of it to help with the match. A total of \$24,632 is required as a fair share by the State. Maureen said if the other grants cannot be used the money would need to come from the general fund. Commissioner Fluke said that he was not

in favor of having the project to fix Federal Drive on the three year plan. With the public hearings Maureen told the Board that the CDBG and CDBG-R applications will be on schedule to submit by June 12th.

Debbie Higgins, Court Administrator joined the meeting. She was able to discuss an addition to the agenda regarding security cameras. The Commissioners were sent a letter from Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) awarding the County \$5,500 to install certain security equipment. Debbie thanked the Commissioners for adding it to the agenda but asked them to wait until the security committee could make a recommendation to the Board. The Commissioners agreed.

While Debbie was discussing the AOPC monies Judge Kurtz entered the meeting. The Commissioners asked if they could help the Judge and Debbie with anything. Debbie said that she had just had a conversation Travis Cramer, NAC the County's IT consultant. Debbie explained that NAC had to remove a program that had been installed by them due to the lack to RAM in the computer. When the program was removed the computer did not work. The Judge told the Board that he had a Court Reporter that was being paid and could not do her job. The Judge notified Debbie that he received a call from Travis Cramer and he was coming in to work on the computer. The Judge felt that if NAC caused the problem the County would not pay to fix the error. The Commissioners agreed.

The second addition to the agenda was a request by Commissioner Hoover to have Scot Gill the Solicitor contact Penn State University in regard to the approximately 7000 acres owned by the University that are tax exempt. Commissioner Hoover asked that Scot talk to the University about payment to the County in lieu of taxes. Scot said that he would gather information from the Assessment Office and Treasurer's Office before contacting the University. It was moved by Commissioner Hoover seconded by Commissioner Kough Pittenger and carried (Fluke, yes; Kough Pittenger, yes; Hoover, yes) to have Scot Gill start a dialog with Penn State University regarding payment in lieu of taxes.

The last item on the agenda was the appointment of Adam Miller to the Southern Alleghenies EMS Advisory Board. It was moved by Commissioner Hoover seconded by Commissioner Kough Pittenger and carried (Kough Pittenger, yes; Fluke, yes; Hoover, yes) to appoint Adam Miller to the Southern Alleghenies EMS Advisory Board.

The Commissioners approved payment for 2 Veteran burial allowances, 1 widow/widower burial allowance and 2 bases.

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Kough Pittenger second by Commissioner Hoover and carried to adjourn the meeting at 11:50 a.m. Minutes prepared by Chief Clerk Cinnamon L. Bair.

Respectfully submitted,

Connie Kough Pittenger, Secretary