

Huntingdon, PA
Tuesday, March 10, 2009
10-09

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; Scot Gill, Solicitor; Chief Clerk, Cinnamon Bair; Maureen Safko, Grants Administrator; Richard Stahl, Planning Director; Kathy Whalen, Huntingdon House Director; Mary Trice, Mary Alexander Outreach Shelter Director; Gloria Pierce, Mary Alexander Outreach Shelter; George Germann, The Daily News; Jeff Gill, Altoona Mirror; and visitors Chris Zwolfer, Moorefield Communications; an Empire Communications Systems representative; Greg Kough.

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

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 March 3 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 March 9.

There were three additions to today's meeting. Bid opening for telecommunications 10 am as advertised; to reappoint a current Housing Authority Board of Directors member; and Commissioner Hoover to make a motion on the Fisher Bailey Building project.

There was no public comment at today's meeting.

There were no matters addressed by the Solicitor.

First on the agenda, Maureen requested that the Commissioners sign two resolutions allowing funding from the Emergency Shelter Grant to help two projects in Huntingdon County. The first Resolution 08-2009 to award the Mary Alexander Outreach Shelter, Mt. Union in the amount of \$87,000. The Tabernacle Church of Christ will donate the property to the Mary Alexander Outreach Shelter once the shelter is incorporated. The donation will serve as matching funds for the project and allow the shelter \$65,000 for rehabilitation; \$11,500 for operations; \$8,500 for salaries; and \$2000 for administration. Mary Trice told the Commissioners that the shelter was a dream of their Church Mother and after she passed away the dream went to Mary. The shelter started in 2005 and has had food kitchens for the homeless, computer training twice weekly. They work with other organizations like Crossroads Pregnancy, Huntingdon house, and the Huntingdon Housing Authority to help women and children find permanent housing and jobs. The shelter had helped 22 women and 9 children since opening. Gloria Pierce gave the Commissioners statistics on the number of rural homeless in Pennsylvania from 1999. Gloria said there has been a change with the recent economic downturn that more of the people in need are two parent families that cannot afford to pay their mortgages and become the "working homeless". The Commissioners asked the three questions about the shelter grant like; the project will be rehabilitation not an expansion? Maureen said correct. Is there room to expand? Mary said yes, it is a triple lot. Is the property in a flood plain? Maureen said yes, but it is the 500 yr flood area. Richard told the Commissioners that the Mt Union High School was in the same area. How long is someone allowed to stay at the shelter? Mary answered 30 to 90 days. Commissioner Fluke said that he had heard longer. Kathy Whalen, Huntingdon House said that the transitional housing at the Huntingdon House allow up to two years. Maureen then requested the Commissioners to sign the second Resolution 07-2009 which would award Huntingdon House \$57,000 for operating expenses including; \$25,300 Utilities; \$10,000 food; \$8,400 for furnishing; \$5,070 salaries; \$4,000 maintenance & repair; \$2,200 insurance; \$840 security; \$1,190 administration. It was moved by Commissioner Kough Pittenger seconded by Commissioner Hoover and carried (Hoover, yes; Fluke, yes; Kough Pittenger, yes) to approve Resolution 07-2009.

Second motion; it was moved by Commissioner Kough Pittenger seconded by Commissioner Hoover and carried (Fluke, yes; Kough Pittenger, yes; Hoover, yes) to approve Resolution 08-2009.

Second on the agenda was the bid opening for the telecommunications for the County. Two bids were received Moorefield Communications from Altoona/ Camp Hill; and Empire Communications Systems, Altoona. Richard Stahl was present to open the bids. The first bid from Moorefield came to a total of \$26,193. The second bid from ECS came to a total of \$70,979. Rich will review the bids. The goal is to award the bid in 3-4 weeks. According to Rich the two contractors said the installation would require 6-8 weeks to install.

On the recommendation of Dawn Sunderland the Secretary of the Board of Directors for the Huntingdon County Housing Authority, reappoint Mr. James Bookhamer III for a five year term which will expire on March 1, 2014.

Commissioner Hoover made a motion, "I move that we complete the asbestos removal and replacement of the roof on the Elks building. And then we concentrate our efforts on completing the electronic record keeping system for the Courthouse records. After that is completed the physical plant and structure of the Courthouse should be evaluated and upgraded as necessary. After those projects are completed there should be an evaluation of the County financial condition to determine if any remodeling should be done on the County's 6 other buildings".

The motion died for lack of a second. Commissioner Fluke asked for discussion. Then Commissioner Fluke read a prepared statement to Commissioner Hoover "Commissioner Hoover, I have stated before and again I am saying, Bill you are entitled to your personal opinion regarding the previous Board of Commissioners decision to purchase the Elks property. However, since you are trying to make a public issue of it for your benefit, your opinion is no more important than the other two Commissioners.

I want to remind you and those in the public sector that the former Board of Commissioners were approached by the Corbin family and asked if we would be interested in obtaining ownership of their family home which is directly across the street from the Courthouse. This family was very easy to deal with. It was their intention that it be county property. The County received ownership of this property for an extremely reasonable amount of money. The Commissioners arranged to have the institutional CREW along with Southern Contractors to make necessary renovations so that it would be suitable for District Attorney's Office. The two worked well together and did an excellent job. The move created additional parking to be used by the County and the rent that we were previously paying the former DA is now taking care of the mortgage payment. Did we dig a hole? I don't think so. It was just good management, Bill. Let's discuss the Elks property. Former Commissioners indicated that years ago they negotiated with the Elks Officials. They came to a standstill at a difference of \$50,000. The previous Board of Commissioners was approached once again and made aware that the Elks wanted to sell. I would like to remind you that at that time we were and still are under a court order to provide more space for the Register and Recorder of Deeds. Bill I know that you have suggested that we microfilm and store records and by doing that it would free up space. It is my opinion that if we removed all of the paper records out of the office and do no more, it would never satisfy that elected official. Don't kid yourself because going that route is not free. Filming and storing is very costly.

If we allowed the Elks property that is next to the Courthouse fall into the hands of someone else, it would have been a large mistake. Perhaps it wasn't the right time for us to make the purchase, but we had to buy when it was for sale. Bill, for you to suggest to halt remodeling or to destroy that building is just beyond comprehension. The architectural firm hired by Huntingdon County has suggested that the Elks building is very structurally sound. I see it as a challenge and I realize it will be more of a responsibility and will take more of each of our time. For example the question was raised as to whether or not we should use the CREW? For you who do not know the CREW consists of inmates from the institution who can work for the County at a rate of \$18 per \$100 of material purchased. They do an excellent job and it's also very beneficial for them to learn a trade. Now let's move forward as best we can. I have said it before and I repeat Huntingdon County has in recent years neglected County building responsibilities but has placed a lion's share of tax dollars for human services and programs. Bill, this is the hole that I want to stop digging. The monies from these services and programs must be moved to cover some of the future mortgage costs. It's just that simple. I know that a politician should never say that. But I do not consider myself a politician. A politician always wants to give voters something to get their vote. I want to earn their vote by being a good business manager". Commissioner Hoover asked to see Commissioner Fluke's statement. After reading over it briefly, Commissioner Hoover said he had two problems with the statement. First, he (Commissioner Hoover) did not suggest not purchasing the Elks property. Commissioner Hoover then said he wanted an apology from Commissioner Fluke because in no way was he making it a public issue for his own benefit, there was no benefit to him. Commissioner Fluke did not respond. Commissioner Kough Pittenger responded that she had no written statement. Commissioner Kough Pittenger said completing the record system was already part of the plan. The question is in what order it will be completed. The Courthouse evaluation was part of the plan, but the other buildings were not. We do not have cost proposals on any other projects. The previous Board realized the Annex II pay off and set up the Elks payment to allow for that to be paid first. Commissioner Kough Pittenger said that Commissioner Hoover's "intention was pretty clear, but the ball is already in motion."

The Commissioners approved payment for 1 Veteran burial allowance, 0 widow/widower burial allowances and 0 bases.

There being no further business, it was moved by Commissioner Hoover second by Commissioner Kough Pittenger and carried to adjourn the meeting at 10:48 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Connie Kough Pittenger, Secretary