

MINUTES
COMMISSIONERS' PUBLIC MEETING
April 16, 2009

The Armstrong County Board of Commissioners Public Meeting was called to order on Thursday, April 16, 2009 at 1:30 p.m. in the Commissioners Conference Room with the following in attendance: Commissioners' Patricia L. Kirkpatrick, Richard L. Fink, and James V. Scahill, George J. Skamai – Chief Clerk, Debra Whiteman – Secretary, Commissioners Office, Mitch Fryer – Leader Times, Josh Walzak – Leader Vindicator, Roy Carney – Public Works Director, Ron Baustert – 911 Coordinator, Nancy Dragan – Health Center Administrator, Gary Montebell – Director Belmont Complex, Sally Conklin – Planning Coordinator, Carly Cowan – Fiscal Officer Area Agency on Aging, Rick Croyle – Director Veteran's Affairs, Deborah Reesman – Volunteer Coordinator Area Agency on Aging, Rich Palilla – Director Planning & Development, Amanda Hiles – First Deputy Controller, Public Attendance by: Mary Ann Badura – Citizen, Regina Lierman – Taxpayer

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ms. Kirkpatrick announced that this meeting is being recorded.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion by Mr. Fink, seconded by Mr. Scahill and carried unanimously, the minutes for the April 2, 2009 Public Meeting were approved.

AWARD MOWING BIDS

Mowing Bids for County Properties

On a motion by Mr. Fink, seconded by Mr. Scahill and carried unanimously, based on the recommendation of Mr. Carney, the Commissioners awarded the mowing bid for the County properties of Canfield Homes at \$1,700 per season, or \$86.00 per week, and 422 Tower at \$570.00 per season or \$28.50 per week to Ron Denny Lawn Care of Worthington PA.

CONTRACTS/AGREEMENTS

Contract for New Electrical entrance between Allegheny Power and Armstrong County

On a motion by Mr. Scahill, seconded by Mr. Fink and carried unanimously, based on the recommendation of Mr. Carney, the Commissioners approved the Contract with Allegheny Power for \$11,434.20 to install a 600 amp electrical entrance in the Information Technology – Records building.

Ms. Kirkpatrick commented that the Information Technology department performs a critical function to all county operations. She went on to add that securing adequate power is essential for long-term use of the building as well as the development of the County's communication infrastructure.

Right of Way Agreement between Mr. Theodore Visnesky and Armstrong County

On a motion by Mr. Fink and seconded by Mr. Scahill and carried unanimously, based on the recommendation of Mr. Carney, the Commissioners approved the Right- of -Way Agreement, which is essential in completing work on the electrical upgrade for the Information Technology department.

The Board of Commissioners noted Mr. Visnesky's generosity to the county and the savings to tax payers that resulted. They added that the commissioners' staff will be sending a formal thank you to Mr. Visnesky.

Oxygen Service Agreement between Columbia Ancillary Services and Armstrong County

On a motion by Mr. Scahill, seconded by Mr. Fink and carried unanimously, based on the recommendation of Ms. Dragan, the Commissioners approved the Oxygen Service Agreement with Columbia Ancillary Services.

Contract Addendum regarding Bench Warrant Interface between New World and Armstrong County

On a motion by Mr. Scahill, seconded by Mr. Fink and carried unanimously, based on the recommendation of Mr. Baustert, the Commissioners approved the Bench Warrant Interface contract addendum with New World Enterprise. The cost of the interface, \$10,000.00, will be funded by wireless dollars.

Contract between Mission Critical and Armstrong County

On a motion by Mr. Scahill, seconded by Mr. Fink and carried unanimously, pending final review by the County Solicitor and based on the recommendation of Mr. Baustert, the Commissioners approved the \$5,850.00 contract with Mission Critical to perform a necessary review of proposals submitted in conjunction with the 911/Broadband project.

Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement between Allegheny Ridge Corporation and Armstrong County

On a motion by Mr. Fink, seconded by Mr. Scahill and carried unanimously, based on the recommendation of Ms. Conklin, the Commissioners approved the Intergovernmental Cooperative agreement with Allegheny Ridge Corporation. The Armstrong County municipalities involved with this study are Freeport, Leechburg, Apollo, North Apollo Boroughs, Kiskiminetas, Parks, Gilpin, and South Buffalo Townships.

DCNR Grant Applications for Belmont Complex of Armstrong County

On a motion by Mr. Fink, seconded by Mr. Scahill and carried unanimously, pending final review by the County Solicitor and based on the recommendation of Mr. Montebell, the Commissioners approved the DCNR Grant Applications for the Belmont Complex totaling \$543,205.00. This action was a result of the recreational study that was completed in 2007.

Phone Contract for the Belmont Complex between Windstream and Armstrong County

On a motion by Mr. Fink, seconded by Mr. Scahill and carried unanimously, based on the recommendation of Mr. Montebell, the Commissioners approved the contract with Windstream. With the expiration of the current contract with Alltel, the county was offered the opportunity to save \$1,900.00 over a sixteen month period with this new agreement.

Freeport Senior Center Lease Agreement between Freeport VFW and Armstrong County

On a motion by Mr. Fink, seconded by Mr. Scahill and carried unanimously, on the recommendation of Ms. Cowan, the Commissioners approved the lease agreement between Freeport V.F.W. and Armstrong County. It was noted that this is a standard lease agreement encompassing an April 1, 2009 thru March 31, 2012 timeframe, with a monthly fee of \$600.00. This fee reflects no increase from the previous agreement initiated on April 1, 2006.

PROCLAMATION

Silver Star Banner Day Proclamation

Prior to reading the proclamation aloud, Mr. Scahill noted that the banner is presented to veterans who have been wounded or are ill.

On a motion by Mr. Scahill, seconded by Mr. Fink and carried unanimously, the Commissioners proclaimed April 16, 2009 as Silver Star Banner Day. Ms. Kirkpatrick invited Mr. Croyle to speak about the Blue Star Banner program. He went on to say that, as a Blue Star family member himself, and having performed for 20 years in the service, he heartily supported the program.

Volunteer Week Proclamation

Mr. Fink read aloud the proclamation.

On a motion by Mr. Fink, seconded by Mr. Scahill and carried unanimously, the Commissioners proclaimed the week of April 19 - 25, 2009 as Volunteer Recognition Week.

Ms. Reesman commented that the agency has 283 volunteers throughout Armstrong County, which is 30 more than last year. She added that a total of 27,471 hours of donated time have been offered by volunteers. Ms. Reesman closed her comments by announcing that the Volunteer Recognition Dinner will be held on April 29, 2009 at the Latin American Club in Ford City, Pennsylvania.

The Board of Commissioners recognized all volunteers in Armstrong County and the work they perform expressing hope that future generations of volunteers are as involved and dedicated to serving others.

RESOLUTIONS

The DCNR Grant Application Resolution

On a motion by Mr. Scahill, seconded by Mr. Fink and carried unanimously the Commissioners adopted the DCNR Grant resolution which is a necessary step in securing the funding available through that program.

The Extension of Existing Keystone Opportunity Zones in East Franklin, Manor, South Buffalo Townships and Apollo Borough

On a motion by Mr. Scahill, seconded by Mr. Fink and carried unanimously the Commissioners adopted the resolution extending the Existing Keystone Opportunity Zones in East Franklin Township.

On a motion by Mr. Fink, seconded by Mr. Scahill and carried unanimously the Commissioners adopted the resolution extending the Existing Keystone Opportunity Zones in Manor Township.

On a motion by Mr. Scahill, seconded by Mr. Fink and carried unanimously the Commissioners adopted the resolution extending the Existing Keystone Opportunity Zones in South Buffalo Township.

On a motion by Mr. Fink, and seconded by Mr. Scahill and carried unanimously the Commissioners adopted the resolution extending the Existing Keystone Opportunity Zones in Apollo Borough.

Participation in Proposed New Keystone Opportunity Zones in East Franklin and South Buffalo Townships

Comment:

Mr. Palilla stated that State Legislation created twelve new zones in Pennsylvania up to 350 acres in size. Armstrong County is working with Indiana County on a joint application for the new zone which total 109 acres in North Pointe, South Buffalo Township and 41 acres in West Hills Park, East Franklin Township.

This resolution will be in effect until December 31, 2020 and provides the same exemptions as the original legislation/resolution (Local real estate and verity of taxes). Freeport has approved the resolution and Armstrong School District, East Franklin Township and South Buffalo will have their respective resolutions under consideration over the next ten days. The deadline for adoption is May 1, 2009.

Ms. Lierman requested that it be noted that she is not in agreement with expanding the Keystone Opportunity Zones. She stated her belief that the elimination of property taxes in our county is the preferable means through which fair zones can be created.

On a motion by Mr. Fink, seconded by Mr. Scahill and carried unanimously the Commissioners adopted the resolution for Participation in the Proposed New Keystone Opportunity Zones in East Franklin Township.

On a motion by Mr. Scahill, seconded by Mr. Fink and carried unanimously the Commissioners adopted the resolution for Participation in the Proposed New Keystone Opportunity Zones in South Buffalo Townships.

BUSINESS/PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Lierman reiterated her opposition to expanding in the Keystone Opportunity Zones stating that some business owners are unfairly required to subsidize those businesses that don't pay taxes as a result of this program. Ms. Lierman stated that eliminating property taxes would create a level playing field in her opinion.

Ms. Kirkpatrick thanked Ms. Lierman for her comments, and then offered the floor to her fellow commissioners.

Mr. Fink mentioned the significance of Volunteer Week wanting everyone to know how proud and honored he is to live in Armstrong County where a tremendous amount of volunteerism exists. Going on to say that it would be impossible to accomplish many things without them. Mr. Fink said that he speaks for The Board of Commissioners when he extends his sincere thanks to all of the county's volunteers.

Mr. Scahill addressed Ms. Lierman's comments by stating that, historically, the Board of Commissioners, both past and present, does recognize the importance of the county's existing companies, but noted the highly competitive market that exists for attracting business, citing an industrial park being developed in the neighboring county of Butler. The KOZ's are a tool, utilized by numerous counties to entice companies to locate within the county. Our country's current economic crisis intensifies what was already a competitive market for attracting new business. Mr. Scahill said that he voted in favor of this measure in an effort to do everything we can to improve the economic situation within the county. He closed by mentioning that the county partnerships with municipalities and school districts as the three taxing bodies. With regards to lowering property taxes; the Board of Commissioners are in total agreement, but that battle must be fought in Harrisburg.

Mr. Fink stated that he voted yes to the KOZ's and is in agreement with Mr. Scahill's comments. He went on to say that the Board of Commissioners signed a Free Trade Resolution and carried it to not only to State Associations, but National Associations as well. He noted the difficulty of competing in global economy when imbalances exist. Mr. Fink reiterated the importance of utilizing every tool available to create new jobs and a better future for families in Armstrong County. He closed by saying that if tax incentives are necessary to that bring new jobs to the county, then we have little choice but to act on them.

Ms. Kirkpatrick referenced the county's mission statement and the unwavering commitment to it. She went on to note that the county has four overarching goals. One of them is to be fiscally responsible to the tax payers and citizens of this county. She stated that the Commissioners, Department Heads and fellow Elected Officials take that objective very seriously. Ms. Kirkpatrick explained that this Board of Commissioners has not raised taxes in three years, and it is their genuine aspiration to continue to hold the line on taxes barring circumstances beyond their control. The unfortunate reality is that many of the financial challenges that the county, and ultimately the commissioners, faces are generated at the State and Federal level. Therefore, the Board of Commissioners diligently maintains an open line of communication with State and Federal legislators who represent the county's citizens, soliciting their support to lower property taxes. On behalf of the Board of Commissioners, Ms. Kirkpatrick then implored the county's citizens and the press to join them in championing that effort.

Ms. Kirkpatrick referenced the DCNR Grant and the county's success in obtaining federal money through that program, noting that in order to apply for the grant a commitment to matching funds must be made. She further noted that fiscally responsibility includes capitalizing on state and federal funding. Ms. Kirkpatrick expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to represent The Board of Commissioners on the Armstrong County Industrial Development Authority and Industrial Development Council. She described her regular attendance at meetings and her development of a rich understanding and appreciation for the work that is done through them. She commended the county's Economic Development staff and those who serve on the boards, contributing their invaluable expertise in attracting and retaining businesses. Ms. Kirkpatrick then referenced the global economy in which we compete and the need to employ every measures to remain competitive. She added her

endorsement for the state's efforts to develop new legislation to remedy the property tax issues and welcomes any opportunity to partake in that endeavor.

Ms. Kirkpatrick announced that next week Commissioners Fink and Scahill will attend Legislative Work Day at the State Capitol. They plan to visit with State Legislature to address various funding issues. She mentioned also that, as an attendee at the Economic Development Conference is being held next week in Harrisburg, she fully intends to take complete advantage of the opportunity, collecting practical information for the Board of Commissioners to utilize in their effort to further economic development.

Ms Kirkpatrick then offered the opportunity for questions or comments.

Ms. Lierman requested that the record reflect that she attended the hearing regarding the Open Space Green Way & Recreation Plan. She then stated that, although she understands that a survey was distributed in regards to park expansions, she did not receive it nor does she know anyone who did. Ms. Lierman expressed staunch opposition to additional taxes and pleaded with The Board of Commissioners to vote against any measure that would require them. She then questioned the necessity of a new recreational plan.

Mr. Palilla responded by explaining that the recreational plan is simply a guiding document to help county officials make informed decisions. He added that studies indicated that an opportunity exists to improve recreation within the county and noted that it is an important, often undervalued, element in the quality of life for our citizens. He then reiterated the point that a recreational plan provides guiding principles and key recommendations for consideration for future investment. Mr. Palilla described the process specifically noting the mandated public meetings, fourteen in all, which provide the opportunity for public comment. He assured that all comments gathered from those meetings will be given significant consideration. Mr. Palilla concluded his response by noting that adopting the plan will not cause the need for additional taxes and that the plan is principally nothing more than a guiding document.

Ms. Kirkpatrick reminded Ms. Lierman that The Board of Commissioners is not voting on the adoption of a recreational plan today and that every consideration will be given to the input she offered. She closed by thanking Ms. Lierman for her input and interest in this matter.

ADJOURN

On a motion by Mr. Fink, seconded by Mr. Scahill and carried unanimously, the Commissioners moved to adjourn the Public Meeting of April 16, 2009 at 2:40 PM.

ARMSTRONG COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

James V. Scahill, Secretary

ATTEST: _____
George J. Skamai, Chief Clerk