

April 1, 2021

There was a Commissioners meeting at 2:00 AM in the Commissioners Conference Room at 700 Sawmill Road Small Conference Room for the regular scheduled Commissioners meeting. In attendance were Commissioners Young, Ridgeway, via teleconference Commissioner Kovach, Solicitor McDonald, Chief Clerk Witchey, Eric Stahley, Treasurer Creveling, Jean Lapinski, Teri Provst, and Julie Wymple.. Via Zoom: Amanda Schumacher, Craig Smith, Jeremy Brown, Kelli McGeehan, Mark Boris, Matthew Vanaskie, Siva Sangameswaran, Theron Bisko and Gini Feigles-Kaar. Joshua Glace, and Dave Hanny.

A motion was made by Kovach and seconded by Ridgeway to approve the minutes of the prior meeting. The motion unanimously passed.

There was a 10:00 work session held in attendance were Commissioners In attendance Comm Young, Ridgeway, Kovach (by phone), Michelle Frye, Eric Stahley, Matt Hess, Teri Provost, Jeannie Lapinski, Julie (Press) and Marcie Strachko. By phone: Jeremy Brown, Sheriff Chamberlain, Jenn Long, Kurt Brungard, Dian Cizewski, and Don Coleman. Jen Long provided an update for COVID-19 she reported the scheduling for Susquehanna Valley is going well. EMA is fielding approximately 60+ calls a day. The Center is understaffed so Jen is trying to find a volunteer to help them with registration, which is extremely time consuming. Governor rolled out new vaccine phases: 3/31: all law enforcement, grocery clerks and other essential occupations can schedule; 4/4 is for Phase 1B, 4/12 – Phase 1C and on 4/19 anyone over the age of 18 can schedule. She called the Warden to make him aware his officers can use my Geisinger to schedule. PEMA stopped all drive thru vaccination sites, and Commissioner Ridgeway stated he is still trying to get Berwick Hospital as a vaccination site and stated that working with the DOH has been anything but easy. Matt Hess then reported on the ERAP program and reported there has been 79 applicants, he is reviewing the first 15. So far a total of \$100,000 has been requested from in the range of \$1,000 – \$6,000. DCED sent an application to Commissioner Young, regarding the closure of SCI Retreat, the intent for the grant is for the following: individuals impacted in the community with job losses, to increase tourism, job creation, job training and blight. (32 employees from Retreat; 8 from White Haven). Commissioner Ridgeway stated he has to return a call from an officer of SCI Retreat. Matt Hess stated he will also reach out to the Deputy Director of DCED on behalf of the Commissioners. Matt Hess stated that the Redevelopment & Housing authority would assist the commissioners in any way with the American Rescue Plan Act. Commissioner Young said, “We will spend it right, don’t spend it quick”. Commissioner Young stated it is a pleasure to work with Matt Hess. Matt is doing a heck of a job and it’s a welcomed change. Matt stated he also enjoyed working with the Commissioners. Eric Stahley provided an update regarding the 2nd phase of the floodwall project. The funding sources are from Wyoming Valley Levy Raising Project to offset adverse impact to downstream counties. There will be \$320,000 left from funds. He would like to contract with Borton Lawson to do preliminary work for Phase 3, which will be from the completion of phase 2 to Kawneer. They need this information to move to the next step of Phase 3. The project ownership is Phase 1: county, Phase 2: school & township; Phase 3: County. The money (320,000) can only be used for river mitigation and this would be engineering for Phase 3. Borton Lawson is recommended because they did Phase 1 and 2 and are familiar with the project. Commissioner Ridgeway asked if Kawneer was aware as they are 1 foot below flood level. Matt Hess asked for a resolution to waive taxes on a dilapidated property at 31 Old Numidia Rd. The blight program cannot pay for unpaid taxes. Due to the property being in the 100 year flood zone, it becomes the township property but remains vacant. If it were not in the flood zone, it could be resold with the money being reinvested in the blight program. His target is for three (3) properties this year. Solicitor McDonald stated the plan is to do a judicial sale for mobile home. In the tax sales, the mobile homes were not sold. Since the mobile homes do not include land, there is less work therefore the request is asking for a reduction from \$2000 to \$500. Teri Provost then provided an update regarding the RFP Fishing Creek Watershed Study selection and stated there were 7 proposals. Her & Geri Lynn Ziegler reviewed independently, then created a rubric. HRG is the recommendation for the Fishing Creek Watershed Study – they were the only proposal that indicated how many sites (60) they will look at which encompasses the entire watershed of Fishing Creek within Columbia County. She reviewed the breakdown of how the \$284,890.00 was to be spent. Teri then spoke about the West End Flood Mitigation Study and stated there were 5 proposals. Her & Geri Lynn Ziegler reviewed independently, then created a rubric. Borton Lawson is the recommendation. They were clearly the best proposal. They did aerial photos based on weather conditions and will be looking at every 1st floor structure. She reviewed the breakdown of how the \$495,000 was to be spent.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS: None

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Covid-19 update

B. Update from the Columbia County Housing Authority regarding the Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

C. Proclamation for the Public Safety Telecommunications Week April 11th -17th

D. Approve Borton Lawson to perform the preliminary design work for phase 3 of the floodwall which is extending the existing floodwall to Kawneer with a not to exceed of 320K of the remaining Wyoming Valley Water Mitigation Authority Funds

Motion by Ridgway seconded by Kovach; all approved

E. Discussion regarding the tax forgiveness of the property (listed below) that has been targeted for blight remediation

- Parcel # 09-04-0290100 Cost \$6,871.13

Motion by Ridgway seconded by Kovach; all approved

F. Approve Tax forgiveness for a parcel on a lease hold cabin that was razed.

- Parcel #20-04-026-00,054 Cost \$244.54

Motion by Kovach seconded by Young; all approved

G. Approve the resolution updating the Columbia County Tax Claim Office Cost & Fee Schedule to reflect the change of cost of \$500.00 per parcel for mobile homes on leased land

Motion by Young seconded by Ridgway; all approved

H. Approve HRG's bid of \$284,890 to perform the Fishing Creek Watershed Study conditionally upon written approval from grant funding agencies.

Motion by Kovach seconded by Ridgway; all approved

I. Approve Borton Lawson's bid of \$495,000 to perform the West End Flood Mitigation Study conditionally upon written approval from grant funding agencies.

Motion by Ridgway seconded by Kovach; all approved

J. Approve the exoneration of SARA Tier II fees of \$75 for record year 2020 from Melick Aquafeed which is no longer in business due to a fire

Motion by Young seconded by Ridgway; all approved

K. Approve Adult Probations \$43,000 yearly Grant-in-Aid that is paid through PCCD

Motion by Ridgway seconded by Kovach; all approved

L. Approve Barbara Warnuk seeking the \$130,000 County Intermediate Punishment Program Grant

Motion by Ridgway seconded by Kovach; all approved

M. Approve Steve Ippolito from Push the Rock utilizing Briar Creek Lake Park their Archery Tag Club

Motion by Young seconded by Ridgway; all approved

- N. Approve Rita Millard's request to post laminated signs at Briar Creek Lake Park advising people of ticks and there is a Columbia County Lyme Support Group

Motion by Ridgway seconded by Kovach; all approved

O. APPROVE THE FOLLOWING HIRES/STEP INCREASES/PROMOTIONS:

- Kayin Herb, PT CO, Jail, 6 month step, 3/20/21
- Charlie Miller, Laborer, Parks, Recalled, 4/5/21
- Jerry Moyer, Laborer, Parks, Recalled, 4/5/21
- Alex Karpinski, Telecommunicator, Sr. Level II, Certified/Supervisor, ECEN, Promotion, 4/4/21
- Chad Romig, Telecommunicator, Sr. Level II, Certified/Supervisor, ECEN, Promotion, 4/4/21
- Ken Carey, Telecommunicator, Sr. Level I, Certified, ECEN, Promotion, 4/4/21
- Bridget Kingston, VA Director, VA, 7 yr step, 4/1/21

Motion by Kovach seconded by Young; all approved

P. APPROVE THE DATES OF THE FOLLOWING ELECTED OFFICIALS/COURT EMPLOYEE HIRES/STEP INCREASES/PROMOTIONS:

- John McDaniel, Esq., Conflict Counsel, Courts, Hire, 3/25/21

Motion by Ridgway seconded by Kovach; all approved

I. APPROVE THE DATES OF THE FOLLOWING RESIGNATIONS/TERMINATIONS/RETIREMENTS:

- Thomas Ramsey, PT CO, Jail, Resignation, 4/13/21

Motion by Kovach seconded by Ridgway; all approved

CORRESPONDENCE:

- The Commissioners received multiple letters from some local GOA (Gun owners of America). They are asking the Commissioners to pass a 2nd amendment sanctuary ordinance. The Commissioners then asked their solicitor to interpret the request from a legal perspective, and to determine if it made sense to declare Columbia County a Second Amendment Sanctuary Ordinance (SASO). From the Solicitor's opinion, which is from a practical (not personal) point of view, it is his recommendation to not pass the ordinance. Gun owners are protected by the 2nd amendment of the Constitution as well as the Commonwealth gun ownership language. PA has comprehensive gun laws that states the commonwealth is in charge of gun laws; no municipality can pass a law that is more severe than PA laws. Based upon the recommendation that it is just mere posturing to do a SASO the Commissioners will decline the request.
- The Department of Environmental Protection informed the Commissioners that the final rule making of Class A Stream Redesignations
- DCED approved the Commissioners use of CARES Act Funds, for both the administration and expenditures.
- United States Bankruptcy Court of Southern District of New York notified the Commissioners of Purdue Pharma Notice of its Chapter 11 plan and disclosure statement.

APPROVAL OF BILLS:

- Approve bills from 4-2-21 totaling \$609,901.54

Motion by Ridgway and seconded by Kovach; all approved

- Approve American Paper bills from 4-2-21 totaling \$834.25

Motion by Kovach and seconded by Young; abstain by Ridgway, Motion passes

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Cindy Creveling asked if there was any update regarding DRIVE and Broadband project within Columbia County. The Commissioners stated that a majority of the system will be up and running by April 15th with almost all of the project being complete by Memorial Day 2021.

AJOURN:

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned on a motion by Kovach and seconded by Young. The motion passed.

Attest: _____
David J. Witchey, Chief Clerk