

Wednesday, December 4, 2019

The first regular meeting of December 2019 of the Pike County Commissioners was called to order by Commissioner Osterberg at 9:00 a.m. at the Pike County Administration Building, followed by the "Pledge of Allegiance" to the flag. Pastor Shirley Geffrand, Faith Tabernacle, Port Jervis, NY offered the opening prayer.

PRESENT: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini; Chief Clerk Orben; Solicitor Farley.

Public Comments/Questions concerning today's agenda.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the December 4, 2019 Agenda.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the November 20, 2019 Commissioners' Meeting Minutes.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the November 20 and 26, 2019 Commissioners' Conference Minutes.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve payment from **GENERAL FUND (County Bills)**, in the amount of **\$219,504.76**, subject to further review.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

PERSONNEL:

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to acknowledge receipt of a letter from Warden Craig Lowe advising that he has hired, with Prison Board approval, the following individuals as full time Correctional Officers for the Correctional Facility, for a 40 hour work week, effective December 9, 2019 with benefits after 90 days: **FRANK TURNBAUGH, DYLAN HENWOOD, TRAVIS VIHTI, KEITH BUCCIERI AND NICHOLAS MYERS.**

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to acknowledge receipt of a letter from Warden Craig Lowe advising that he has hired, with Prison Board approval, **KEVIN ROSTER** as a full time Maintenance Staff Member for the Correctional Facility, for a 40 hour work week, effective December 9, 2019, with benefits after 90 days. This is a replacement position.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to acknowledge receipt of a letter from Prothonotary Denise Fitzpatrick advising that she has hired **ELIZABETH TRIPLETT** as a full time Fiscal Manager in the Prothonotary's Office, for a 37 ½ hour work week, effective December 3, 2019, with benefits after 90 days. This is a replacement position.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to extend the employment of **KATHY JOHNSON** as a temporary part time employee for Children & Youth Services for 13 hours per week from January 2, 2020 to March 30, 2020, with no benefits, to assist in training new supervisors, caseworkers and case manager. This is a temporary part time position.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

Motion: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to recess the Commissioners' Meeting to hold a Salary Board Meeting.

Vote: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

A SALARY BOARD MEETING WAS HELD.

Motion: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to reconvene the Commissioners' Meeting.

Vote: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to open bids received for the purchase of fresh bread and baked goods for the Correctional Facility.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

Solicitor Farley opened the only bid received, which was from Bimbo Bakeries for \$76,073.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to table the bids received for the purchase of fresh bread and baked goods for the Correctional Facility until December 18, 2019.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to present the 2020 Pike County Budget for public inspection on December 6, 2019 with final approval on December 27, 2019 at 9:00 a.m.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

Commissioner Osterberg announced they have a release about the Budget. This year the release says we had some difficulties with the Budget due to mainly insurance issues. The Pike County Commissioners are diligent in our obligation to provide the highest level of services to the citizens of Pike County, while also maintaining vigilance with taxpayer dollars. As we prepare the 2020 Budget, we are faced with challenges relating to the rising County operating costs, particularly, health insurance. That is one of the driving forces that caused us to have a tax increase this year. We have tax increase of 1 ½ mils, which is equivalent to 7 ½% of the total budget. There hasn't been a tax increase for 3 years. When we divide that out it equates to the cost of living, but it really does come down to increases in health insurance. That was one of the major driving forces that caused us to have to do this. This doesn't come easy for us to do. We are announcing that the Budget will be available on December 6, 2019, so it gives the Finance Department a few extra days just to prepare it and get it into its final form so the public can inspect it. We will approve it on December 27, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' meeting room. To give you an idea of what 1 ½ mils equates to, it generates \$1.7M in added revenue to the County. When you divide that by the total parcels, which is 59K, it's on average \$28.83 per year for a tax payer for every ratable parcel in the County. Some are a little higher, some are a little lower. I can tell you that, in the case of my house, it's like a \$57.00 increase yearly in my County taxes. Again, this doesn't come easy for us to do this. We don't like to be raising taxes, but sometimes we have no alternative but to do this. As anybody knows, in their houses and households, things go up. Health insurance was one of the major issues, we are self-insured at the County so we need to cover all of the expenses and we cover all of the claims. There was higher utilization this year, with the aging population, people are using insurance more. That's the biggest part of this whole thing. This increases the expenditures to the County, just in the entire infrastructure with wage increases and many other contributing factors. The health insurance issue is the largest single issue that caused us to have to increase that.

Commissioner Schmalzle added that, as a business owner, we feel this almost every single year because we are not self-insured, but in the County we utilize a fund that's available in case of larger claims and that fund was depleted this year. I think the surprising thing for me, this is the second year I've been working on the Budget, is that it hasn't affected the Budget sooner than it has. When Matt Osterberg talks about utilization, that's actually the costs that are generated by using your insurance. I think we all know that when you check into a hospital or urgent care or any type of medical facility, the costs are higher now. We pay them directly instead of a business that goes through an insurance company. The County's goes up and down with utilization. I would like to thank Sharon Stuart, Finance Director, for all her hard and diligent work in putting this together. This has not been an easy process across the board. The other smaller affect to the Budget was that we had a number of Contracts that are up with our employees around the County. That is something that had a little bit of an impact, but as Matt Osterberg alluded to, most of the impact is in the health insurance end of it.

Commissioner Guccini said that we could take the position that maybe our claims won't be as high next year, maybe they'll decline some. Number 1, I don't think that is going to happen. Number 2, I don't think that is really responsible. I don't think we can say "here's the amount we spent this year, we're just going to somehow benefit next year". That is not a responsible way to do things. These health insurance costs will continue to be an issue in the future, it's something we feel we have to provide to our employees and it's the right thing to do.

Commissioner Osterberg said we are self-insured, we do have something called Stop Loss Insurance, which helps us offset higher claims, but unfortunately in the last year or two, we've had some claims that have caused that Stop Loss Insurance to excel the cost and it all has to do with the utilization. There is a lot that goes into this when your self-insured. We've been fortunate for many years to be pretty stable on our insurance.

Reporter Chris Jones asked what does self-insured mean? Who is your carrier? Commissioner Osterberg said our carrier that processes the claims is High Mark. Once we've determined that we have a policy in place and something is covered, they (High Mark) pay it and we pay them back in simple terms. That's what has happened, they process the claims for us to make sure they are in keeping with our policy and then once they say yes, this is an approved and the fee is \$200. They pay the \$200.00 and then bill us and we pay them. Of course, they take some fees out of there for processing this for us. We control the amount of money in an insurance fund. There is a sheet that shows all of our accounts and one of them is our insurance fund. The insurance fund has been funded every month with a certain amount of money so that we can keep up with the premiums that we have to pay for to Highmark.

Reporter Chris Jones asked if the employees have the same options of any insurance plan? Commissioner Osterberg answered all employees have a scale for singles, families and couples. Yes, they do pay a contribution.

Commissioner Osterberg announced that there is a sheet for the press or anyone else explaining our position and we also have the cover sheet to the Budget, which lists all of the expenditures and all the incomes. The entire budget will be in binder form but it's not ready yet. It will also be made available on our website for public review until December 27, 2020.

Reporter Chris Jones asked if December 27th means anything? Commissioner Osterberg replied it is a meeting just for us to approve the Budget. There is a statute that we have to have so many days that it's available for public review.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to adopt Ordinance No. 29, Designating Processing and Disposal Facilities and Providing Waste Flow Control Requirements to Direct Municipal Waste to Designated Disposal Facilities.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to approve the proposal from Vector Security for the annual fire alarm inspection at the Correctional Facility for the amount of \$2,855.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to authorize the Chairman to execute Amendment No. 2 to the Agreement for Information Technology Products and Services between Conduent Enterprise Solutions and the County of Pike, on behalf of the Recorder of Deeds Office.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to authorize the Chairman to execute the Services Agreement (Cost Reimbursement) between TREHAB and the County of Pike, on behalf of the Workforce Development Agency for the 2020 Work Ready Program.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to authorize the Chairman to execute the Affiliation Agreement between Priority Nutrition Care and the County of Pike, on behalf of the Area Agency on Aging.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MOTION: by Commissioner Guccini and seconded by Commissioner Schmalzle, to execute the 2019 December Senior Rental Assistance Voucher for Delaware Run in the amount of \$2,108.

VOTE: Commissioners Osterberg, Schmalzle and Guccini voted 'aye'. Motion carried.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Presentation and Recognition of Wayne-Pike Adult Literacy – Commissioner Osterberg said he has been an advocate for Adult Literacy in our community. I find Adult Literacy is one of the single most important thing we can give to our neighbors-to teach people how to read and write. It answers many of the issues that effect us through social injustice. Whether it's people that are needing to go to food pantries, to people who need housing, if we can help people being able to read and write and get a GED education and move them on in life, it is the most important thing we can do for our neighbors. I know the work they do at the Correctional Facility and they are here. It is important that this organization continues to do what they not only do in the Correctional Facility, but also outside the Correctional Facility. I was at their dinner and there was a young woman there who was becoming a citizen and there was Wayne-Pike Adult Literacy there and assisted her in becoming a citizen in this Country. Right after the dinner, one of the volunteer was getting in her car and driving to Philadelphia with this person so the very next day they could be sworn in as a citizen. This is the dedication that this group has. There are letters here from the Warden that talks about how important they are and what they do in the Correctional Facility. We have the Assistant Warden here and I would like to let him speak to their importance.

Assistant Warden Robert McLaughlin said that, in terms of recidivism reduction and reintegration for the offenders, we feel education is critical. Wayne-Pike Adult Literacy has been coming to the facility for many years and providing tutoring and GED testing for the offenders and, a part of the Re-entry Coalition and Opioid Task Force that we work on, education always ties back to the foundation for success for these offenders. It's even more critical than you may think when you just hear about taking a class or trying to get their GED-it's the most basic thing you can do to get on your feet and get back into society successfully. You cannot underestimate the importance of it and I'd like to thank Wayne-Pike Adult Literacy for doing such hard work over the years up at the Correctional Facility-they do a wonderful job. I really appreciate it.

Gary Linton, Executive Director of Wayne-Pike Adult Literacy-Wayne-Pike Adult Literacy has been serving the community for 33 years. We are not really looking for any accolades, but we are looking to make a positive change within this community. We have done it thousands of time for our students. We change their entire world when we teach them how to read because they no longer have to depend on another person to get their news and their understanding of what's going on in the world. They can read their medicine bottles, which is just an accident waiting to happen. There are so many things that illiteracy affects. If you go on the internet to any of the national literacy organizations, adult illiteracy in North East Pennsylvania is right now 22%. Almost 1 in 4 are illiterate or below literacy standards. We can't function with that. Every one of our social ills can find their basis in illiteracy. We have tutors, we go to different venues, but like every other not-for-profit, we are always holding on by our fingernails because our costs are high. If any of you have college kids and you spend money on books, you have a pretty good idea of what we're paying. The way GED and those programs are set up, a student has to do all their work inside the books - we go through a lot of books. We are caught in purchasing books and only using them once. When you're looking at a budget line item of \$24K, \$25K for books, you understand that we are always looking for funds. The Commissioners of Pike County have always been generous with us-we're not looking for any more support from you other than help us get the word out to local businesses and individuals. We live on grants, personal donations or corporate donations. To that end, I introduce two local attorneys who have heard this call, their business was the first to respond, it is my pleasure to introduce Ashley Zimmerman and Jason Ohliger, both attorneys from Weinstein, Zimmerman and Ohliger. Jason Ohliger said they decided they wanted to do something to share with the community. We wanted to something interesting, different or, for the holiday season, we met with Gary. The fact that they are a somewhat underappreciated charity, the work that they do is incredibly valuable, we wanted to focus on somebody who may not always get the long end of the stick. To that end, we provided Wayne-Pike Adult Literacy Program a check for \$5K. This will go toward all of their expenses and needs and, hopefully, be able to provide some positive change – especially in the jail.

Reporter Chis Jones stated that we get "grumble" letters sometimes from inmates. Last week I got a sheath of letters, we're not going to publish them-they're not a letter to the editor as far as I'm concerned, they are all people in our age group in a restricted housing unit. Several of them said that when their time in there, which is

23 hours a day, is up, some of them are being told that they cannot go back into general population because there is no room there. If that's true, how does ICE occupation of the jail figure into something like that? Assistant Warden McLaughlin responded the classification system is such that the inmates you're speaking of- in restricted housing units-they are apt to violate facility rules and break regulations. They are serving what they call a disciplinary sanction. There is no overcrowding-it is a system by which they have to serve certain time constraints before being returned to the general population if they're eligible. It's very detailed and it works very well.

Reporter Chris Jones asked if it's true that they're in isolation for 23 hours?

Assistant Warden McLaughlin answered that "isolation" is not a term we use. They are in a restricted housing unit – it's a classification they arrive at based on their non-compliance with the rules and regulations.

Reporter Chris Jones asked how much time they are allowed out of their cell?

Assistant Warden McLaughlin answered they come out to clean their cell, shower and make a phone call-an hour.

Reporter Chris Jones asked if the food is slid under a door?

Assistant Warden McLaughlin answered no. All their trays are served with lids on them.

Commissioner Osterberg added that if groups are interested to have a tour of the Pike County Correctional Facility it can be arranged and we will get in contact with the Warden.

PRESS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

ADJOURNMENT: THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING OF THE PIKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS WILL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2019, AT 9:00 A.M., AT THE PIKE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING.