

BUSINESS SESSION: THURSDAY, JULY 7, 2022, 10:00 A.M.

Location: Commissioner's Meeting Room, Basement.

**Public meetings are being held both in-person and by conference call. To participate in the meeting please dial 1-408-419-1715 or 1-408-915-6290 and enter meeting number 2468097683#*

Call to Order:

Commissioner Erb called the meeting to order.

Moment of Silent Reflection:

Commissioner Erb called for a moment of silent reflection.

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag:

Commissioner Erb requested that those participating in the meeting please stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Roll Call:

Members Present:

Commissioner Erb, Commissioner Burke, Commissioner Webster and Chief Clerk Hemminger.

Members Absent:

Solicitor Karn and Assistant Solicitor Muriceak.

Others Present:

Sarah Seymour (Elections/Voters Registration), AC Stickel (Controller), Bryan King (Hollidaysburg Community Watchdog Group), Brandon Meck (Finance), Rebecca Robinson (Purchasing), Nicole Smith (Court Administration), Kay Stephens (Altoona Mirror), Allison Senkevich and Melissa Harpster (Commissioner's Office).

Public Comment:

Commissioner Erb called for public comment. **There were no comments noted.**

CCAP 2022 Priorities Toolkit:

Funding and Resources for Elections – Commissioner Amy Webster

Counties have always been responsible to conduct elections. It is our goal to provide free, fair, transparent, and accurate elections and results. The changes that have been imposed upon the counties by the higher levels of government have caused a huge drain on the county taxpayers and county resources. The implementation of Act 77 of 2019 has created vast new processes, procedures, and security concerns that the counties have been left to attempt to navigate. These changes have resulted in significant increases in the monetary and personnel costs required of the counties. For example, here are the costs for the Voter Registration and Elections Office for BC:

*2018 election office costs @\$355,000
2019 election office costs @\$340,000 (after grant towards cost of machines)
2020 (1st year of Act 77 mail-in) @\$570,000
2021 (with a recount in November) @\$645,000
2022 projected costs @\$885,000; more than double the cost in 2018*

These are costs that are beyond the control of the commissioners of the PA counties, because they are mandated by the Commonwealth. With the implementation of Act 77, now every Pennsylvanian can vote by mail and register up to almost the last minute. The costs to accommodate all of this has skyrocketed the financial burden of the Voter & Elections Office. Mail-in voting requires additional personnel, overtime costs for employees of the elections and highway departments, extra training and time for the poll workers, extra paper and envelopes, new equipment, the cost of postage, additional time for processing, and more. With the exception of the extra postage costs in 2020, all of those costs fell to the counties and ultimately, upon the taxpayers.

The effects of and costs for Act 77 and its implementation apparently were not foreseen. There was confusion and inconsistency throughout PA, leaving voters with unanswered questions and concerns, which we discussed previously.

Pennsylvania is in the process of implementing a new SUREVote system. This will require updated equipment costs, programming, and training. Blair County has filed an application for funds from the Election Security Grant, but there is no guarantee that we will receive funds or that the funds will cover this mandate from the state.

Although CCAP and many of PA's County Commissioners have requested help from the state, it is unknown whether appropriate financial resources will be budgeted to address the enormous cost increases in handling elections. CCAP continues to promote awareness within the state government of the extreme challenges that the counties have faced, and will continue to face in the future. Failure of the state to make additional allocations for county elections would be a huge oversight that will continue to increase the costs to the counties and to our taxpayers.

To avoid the financial drain that counties have experienced since 2020, CCAP member counties request the following from the Commonwealth:

Ensure appropriate financial resources are allocated from the state to the counties to support changes in procedures, requirements, and equipment

Allocate sufficient time, in consultation with counties, to implement any new requirements, training, and procedures for the election administration

Support county staff in recruitment and retention, by establishing reasonable workload expectations with new laws and policies, for efficient and effective election operations

Blair County's election office costs have more than doubled since 2018. This is not a sustainable expense. The state must be mindful to reduce its expectations or provide for these financial, procedural, and equipment costs.

Unfinished Business:

Adoption of Resolutions:

Resolution 244-2022 – A resolution approving the FY 22/23 Provision of Single County Authority (SCA) Functions Agreement between the County of Blair and Blair County Drug and Alcohol for the period of July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

Motion by Commissioner Erb, seconded by Commissioner Webster and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 244-2022.

Resolution 245-2022 -- A resolution approving the acceptance of a Conditional Award of Funds from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Authority (PHFA) through the Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement (PHARE) Fund authorized under Act 10 of 2010 and the Realty Transfer Tax (PHARE/RT), in the amount of \$100,000.00, to support the Blair County Water and Sewer Program.

Motion by Commissioner Erb, seconded by Commissioner Webster and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 245-2022.

Resolution 246-2022 – A resolution approving the participation in the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) Office of Children and Families in the Courts/ Dependency Court Improvement Program, COVID-19 Reimbursement Project, with full cost being covered by the AOPC.

Motion by Commissioner Burke, seconded by Commissioner Webster and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 246-2022.

Resolution 247-2022 – A resolution approving the acceptance of an allocation of funding under the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Caseworker Visitation Program under Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, (42 U.S.C §§ 629-629i), in the total amount of \$4,505.00, for the period of 10/01/21 through 09/30/22.

Motion by Commissioner Burke, seconded by Commissioner Webster and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 247-2022.

Resolution 248-2022 – A resolution approving the submission of a Letter of Support of an application to the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and/or PennDOT by the Borough of Hollidaysburg for Multimodal Transportation Fund Program (MTFP) for grant funding for the Canal Basin project.

Motion by Commissioner Erb, seconded by Commissioner Burke and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 248-2022.

Old Business

Natural Gas Pricing:

Continued discussion concerning contract options, pricing and recommendations for the county’s Natural Gas Suppliers.

Current 2.813 blended rate

Contract Term	05/25/22	06/21/22	06/28/22	07/05/22
12 months	7.320	5.85	5.87	5.15
24 months	6.050	5.37	5.30	4.86
36 months	5.450	5.20	5.09	4.77
42 months	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
48 months	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Chief Clerk Hemminger stated that she wanted to clarify for the board that the county signed a contract for natural gas, however, we have not fixed pricing. She stated that as of yesterday, 07/06/22, pricing was as follows:

- 12 months 4.94
- 24 months 4.62
- 36 months 4.55

Commissioner Erb recommended that the board consider authorizing Mike Polosky of Efficient Energy Solutions to lock in 50% of the county’s natural gas supply for a period of twenty-four (24) months for an amount not to exceed 4.39.

Discussion followed.

Resolution 249-2022: A resolution approving authorization for Mike Polosky of Efficient Energy Solutions to lock in 50% of the county’s natural gas supply for a period of twenty-four (24) months for an amount not to exceed 4.39.

Motion by Commissioner Erb, seconded by Commissioner Webster and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 249-2022.

New Business:

None

Adjourn:

Meeting Adjourned,

Nicole M. Hemminger, Chief Clerk