

BUSINESS SESSION: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2019, 10:00 A.M.:

Location: Commissioners Meeting Room, Basement, New Addition.

Members Present: Commissioner Erb, Commissioner Tomassetti, Commissioner Beam, County Administrator Schmitt and Solicitor Karn.

Others Present: A. C. Stickel and Angela Wagner (Controller's Office), Don Weakland (IT Department), Laura Burke (Commissioner Elect), Theresa Rudy, Ken Dean and Jackie Saylor (Social Services), Paul Shaffer (Highway), Chris Tatar (Sheriff's Office), Mary Ann Bennis (Register and Records Office), John Bennis (Public), Anita Terchanik (Register/Recorder Elect), Rocky Greenland (Public Works), Nicole Hemminger and Melissa Harpster (Commissioners Office) and Jenn Sleppy (Finance).

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 all present stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – DECEMBER 10 AND 17, 2019:

Commissioner Erb called for corrections or changes to the minutes of December 10 and 17, 2019. **There were no corrections or changes noted.**

Motion by Commissioner Tomassetti, seconded by Commissioner Beam and unanimously approved to accept the minutes as prepared.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Commissioner Erb called for public comment.

Phil Ray, Altoona Mirror Reporter, asked the Board for an update on the Salary Study. Commissioner Erb stated that this time was for public comment only and not a time for discussion. Commissioner Erb stated that he could address Mr. Ray's question after the meeting adjourned.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

Wednesday, January 1, 2020	New Year's	Courthouse Closed
Thursday, January 2, 2020		
Friday, January 3, 2020		
Monday, January 6, 2020	9:30 a.m.	Inauguration Ceremony (1875 Courtroom 2 nd Floor)
	2:00 p.m.	Organizational Meeting (Public Mtg. Room, Basement)
Tuesday, January 7, 2020	10:00 a.m.	Commissioners Work Session (Public Mtg. Room, Basement)

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS:

Commissioner Erb called for commissioners comments.

Commissioner Tomassetti – no comments noted.

Commissioner Beam – no comments noted.

Commissioner Erb stated that the next item listed on the agenda (Presentation of Certificates of Retirement and Appreciation) would be moved to the end of the agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Resolution 562-2019:

- a. Payment of two (2) Warrant Lists dated December 30, 2019, in the amounts of \$486,387.75 #191230TL and \$152,495.77 #191223SS, which include payment of the following invoices:
 - Keller Engineers, Inc., in the total amount of \$8,060.83.
 - UPMC Altoona, in the total amount of \$16,920.59.
 - **2017 Project Fund/Bond/Courthouse & Prison Roof Project:** Application #2, received from J M Young & Sons, Inc., in the total amount of \$324,530.14.
 - Ratification of Total Payroll for the Check Date December 19, 2020, in the total amount of \$788,321.66

- b. **Employment:** Brenda A. Bryan, FT, Payroll Administrator, HR, \$30,000.00/yr., effective 12/30/19; and Susie J. Gutshall, from PT, Clerk Typist 1, Prothonotary, \$10.00/hr., to FT, Clerk Typist 1, Prothonotary, \$10.00/hr., effective 10/26/19.
- c. **Terminations:** Nolan A. Plumley, PT Fill-In, Corrections Officer, Prison, \$15.08/hr., effective 12/23/19.

Commissioner Tomassetti noted his abstention due to a conflict of interest on the payment of invoices to Keller Engineers, Inc.

Commissioner Erb noted his abstention due to a conflict of interest on the payment of invoices to UPMC Altoona.

Motion by Commissioner Beam, seconded by Commissioner Tomassetti and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 562-2019 with abstentions as noted.

OLD BUSINESS:

1875 Courtroom Judges' Portraits Restoration of Frames:

Commissioner Erb continued discussion concerning a proposal received from Conservator John Rita in the total amount of \$2,100.00, to restore and re-gild, seven (7) portrait frames, including polishing and re-lacquering of the brass nameplates and provision of the proper hanging hardware. Work to be completed within the first half of 2020.

Commissioner Erb stated that while attending a recent engagement he had the pleasure of speaking with Michael McLanahan, Chairman of the Board of the McLanahan Corporation. He stated that through their conversation, they had talked about the courthouse restoration project and the restoration of the 1875 Courtroom Judge's Portrait Frames, and that by the end of their conversation Mr. McLanahan stated that he would like to pledge to pay for the restoration of the frames.

Commissioner Erb stated that Mr. McLanahan was in attendance at today's meeting and he invited Mr. McLanahan to the podium to speak briefly, as to why he has graciously pledged to pay for this project.

Mr. McLanahan stated that the McLanahan Corporation would turn 185 years old on Monday, making them 11 years older than the county. He stated that his family is related to four of the judges in Blair County history and that he is glad to be able to pledge to cover the cost of the restoration of the judges' portrait frames.

Mr. McLanahan stated that the commissioners are to be commended for their efforts in the restoration of the courthouse stating, "*It is an outstanding piece of work.*"

Commissioner Erb as well as fellow Commissioners Tomassetti and Beam extended their thanks and appreciation to Mr. McLanahan for his generosity.

Resolution 563-2019: A resolution approving a proposal received from Conservator John Rita in the total amount of \$2,100.00, to restore and re-gild, seven (7) portrait frames, including polishing and re-lacquering of the brass nameplates and provision of the proper hanging hardware with work to be completed within the first half of 2020.

Commissioner Tomassetti noted his abstention due to a conflict of interest on voting on the adoption of Resolution 563-2019.

Motion by Commissioner Erb, seconded by Commissioner Beam and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 563-2019 with abstention as noted.

NEW BUSINESS:

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Adoption of Resolutions:

None

PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATES OF RETIREMENT & APPRECIATION:

Commissioner Tomassetti read the following Certificate of Retirement and Appreciation in recognition of Mary Ann Bennis' 16 years of service to the County of Blair.

**Certificate of Retirement and Appreciation
Presented to
MaryAnn Bennis
For over 16 years of service to the County of Blair**

WHEREAS, Mary Ann Bennis was elected in November 2003 as the Blair County Register of Wills and Recorder of Deeds; and

WHEREAS, immediately upon taking the oath of office in January 2004, Mary Ann set her plan of updating and modernizing the office in to action; and

WHEREAS, Mary Ann meticulously inventoried the office furniture and computer system, and became familiar with the staff and their abilities in order to develop a long range plan to make the office more functional and more inviting to the public and the staff space more efficient; and

WHEREAS, over the past 16 years, there have been many changes to the floor plan and to the organization chart of the Register of Wills and Recorder of Deeds Office all of which have proven to be of benefit to all who work in or conduct business in the Register of Wills and the Recorder of Deeds Office; and

WHEREAS, Mary Ann is to be applauded for her plan of maximizing the office space and the abilities of the staff in order to provide the best service to the residents of Blair County and to the visitors of the courthouse who are in search of documents filed in the office; and

WHEREAS, it is through Mary Ann's efforts and guidance that hundreds of thousands of dollars have been brought in to the county's general fund operating budget through the fees collected in her office, all of which have been used by other county offices and departments to provide the mandatory county government services, which are not funded through state or federal dollars: and

WHEREAS, Mary Ann has been an exemplary elected official and a tremendous asset to Blair County government.

Presented with gratitude and appreciation this 31st day of December, 2019

BLAIR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:

Bruce Erb, Chairman

Terry Tomassetti, Vice-Chairman

Ted Beam, Jr., Secretary

Attest:

Helen P. Schmitt, Chief Clerk/County Administrator

Commissioner Tomassetti as well as follow Commissioners Erb and Beam, County Administrator Schmitt and Solicitor Karn presented the Certificate to Mrs. Bennis, thanked her for her years of service to the County of Blair, and extended their best wishes to her in all her future endeavors.

Mrs. Bennis shared a few brief words and thanked the Commissioners for their recognition.

Commissioner Erb read the following Certificate of Retirement and Appreciation in recognition of Commissioner Ted Beam, Jr.'s 8 years of service to the County of Blair.

**Certificate of Retirement and Appreciation
Presented to
Ted Beam, Jr.
For over 8 years of service to the County of Blair**

WHEREAS, Ted Beam was elected Commissioner in November 2011 and began his first term in office in January 2012; and

WHEREAS, Ted has served a liaison commissioner to the Sheriff, District Attorney, Victim/Witness, Department of Public Works, Office Services, Veterans Services, Ft. Roberdeau, PSU Cooperative Extension, Prothonotary, Coroner, Elections/Voter Registration, Blair County Airport Authority, Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, Explore Altoona, Blair County Convention & Sports Facilities Authority, County of Blair Housing and Redevelopment Authority; and

WHEREAS, his involvement with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board has resulted in numerous grant for various park projects throughout Blair County, upgrades to the existing pavilions, the addition of pavilions, and water and electricity to the pavilions, the expansion and upgrades at Fort Roberdeau to include the completion of the bastion log replacement project, the upgrades to White Oak Hall, the installation of the Altoona Area Mt. Lion Observatory and a variety of other projects; and

WHEREAS, Ted has played a key role in the selection and funding for the newly purchased election equipment, which was successfully implemented this past November, and he has been instrumental in the design and future operational plans at the Blair County Airport, which will be paid for in part through Department of Agriculture funding; and

WHEREAS, he has worked diligently with the members of Explore Altoona and the Blair County Convention Center and Sports Facilities Authority to accentuate the beauty of Blair County and to market the tourist spots throughout Blair County; and

WHEREAS, Ted's involvement with Blair County Redevelopment and Housing Authority afforded many property owners with much needed funds for home weatherization, heating and other structural repairs; and

WHEREAS, Ted has worked closely with the District Attorney's Office and the Victim Witness Office to make certain that these departments have the necessities to ensure the prosecution of criminals and the protection of victims; and

WHEREAS, Ted, throughout the past eight years has worked closely with the Prothonotary, Coroner, Veterans Affairs and PSU Cooperative Extension to assist them in obtaining support and funding to meet the needs of their department in order to provide the best public service to the citizens of Blair County; and

WHEREAS, over the past several years Ted has worked closely with the Blair County Public Works Department and the Blair County Engineer to review and inventory the county-owned buildings and structures to make certain that the necessary repairs have been made or have been scheduled and that a preventative maintenance schedule has been developed in order to sustain the life of the structures; and

WHEREAS, over the past 8 years, there have been many changes to Blair County Government, and Ted has been instrumental in them, always seeking to make the courthouse and Blair County a place where people can come to do business, to work and to live; and

WHEREAS, Ted is an elected official that Blair County can be proud of, an asset to Blair County government, and he is to be congratulated for his dedication to Blair.

Presented with gratitude and appreciation this 31st day of December, 2019.

BLAIR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:

Bruce Erb, Chairman

Terry Tomassetti, Vice-Chairman

Attest:

Helen P. Schmitt, Chief Clerk/County Administrator

Commissioner Erb as well as fellow Commissioner Tomassetti, County Administrator Schmitt and Solicitor Karn presented the Certificate to Commissioner Beam, thanked him for his years of service to the County of Blair, and wished him well in all his future endeavors.

Commissioner Beam shared a few brief words stating that he has been able to come to terms with the fact that he was not re-elected for a third term and that the eight years that he was privileged to serve were "an unbelievable ride." He stated that since his time working as a student for the county highway department, "being a county commissioner was his dream job."

Commissioner Erb read the following Certificate of Retirement and Appreciation in recognition of Commissioner Tomassetti's 12 years of service to the County of Blair.

Certificate of Retirement and Appreciation
Presented to
Terry Tomassetti
For over 12 years of service to the County of Blair

WHEREAS, Terry Tomassetti was elected Commissioner in November 2007 and began his first term in office in January 2008; and

WHEREAS, Terry has been involved in numerous county project to include the upgrades to the Blair County cell towers, the rehabilitation and expansion of the Emergency Communication Center, the modernization of the Assessment Office, and re-establishing the Blair County Tax Claim Bureau, which had been outsourced; and

WHEREAS, during his first term in office, Terry agreed to be the liaison Commissioner to Valley View Nursing Home, where he was instrumental in obtaining the professional services of Affinity Health Services, Inc. to oversee the administration of the home; and

WHEREAS, as a result in the reduction of Medicare reimbursement and the increase in operating expenses, Terry, was forced to explore the future feasibility of the home and the ongoing operating cost to all Blair County taxpayers; this lead to the eventual sale of the home in May, 2013; and

WHEREAS, the proceeds from the sale were used to help to reduce the deficit in the Blair County Pension, to pay for costs associated with former Valley View Home employees, and to reduce the need for additional tax increases for the General fund; and

WHEREAS, Terry has been a member of the Blair County Soil Conservation Board since he first took office and has served as liaison to the Blair County Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Board, where he has been a strong advocate for the sustainability of the program, which has over the past several years been funded through Marcellus Shale (greenway) funds, leveraging thousands in state funds; and

WHEREAS, since 2013, Terry has worked diligently with other professionals and the county workforce to reduce the water infiltration in the 1875 and 1906 sections of the courthouse, to make the necessary repairs to the clock tower, windows, HVAC system throughout these two locations and for the complete renovation of the 1875 courtroom; and

WHEREAS, over the past 12 years, there have been many changes to Blair County government, and Terry has been involved in nearly all of them, always seeking to make the courthouse and Blair County a place where people can come to do business, to work and to live; and

WHEREAS, Terry is an excellent elected official and asset to Blair County government who is to be applauded for his foresight and fiscal responsibility which have minimized the impact of increasing operating costs to the taxpayers of Blair County; and

Presented with gratitude and appreciation this 31st day of December, 2019

BLAIR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:

Bruce Erb, Chairman

Ted Beam, Jr., Secretary

Attest:

Helen P. Schmitt, Chief Clerk/County Administrator

Commissioner Erb as well as fellow Commissioner Beam, County Administrator Schmitt and Solicitor Karn presented the Certificate to Commissioner Tomassetti, thanked him for his years of service to the County of Blair, and wished him well in all his future endeavors.

Commissioner Tomassetti shared a few brief words thanking the present board as well as past board members that he has had the pleasure of working with for their devotion to county government and stabilizing the county's finances with the selling of Valley View Home, by instituting reassessment and by working to fully fund the county's pension fund. Commissioner Tomassetti stated, "By the end of my second term in office the board was able to operate county government the right way."

Commissioner Tomassetti spoke with very high praise of the services provided to the county by County Solicitor Nathan Karn and that of retiring County Administrator Helen Schmitt. He stated that, "We have a great team here."

Commissioner Tomassetti stated that County Administrator Schmitt was a leader who educated the commissioners on the ins-and-outs of county government and that she had the ability to change the board's thinking just by suggesting another point of view. He stated that after discussing the other point of view with Mrs. Schmitt, a light bulb would go off in his head, stating, "Oh, now that makes sense."

Commissioner Beam read the following Certificate of Retirement and Appreciation in recognition of County Administrator Helen Schmitt's 26 years of service to the County of Blair.

**Certificate of Retirement & Appreciation
Presented to
Helen Schmitt
For 26 Years of Service to the County of Blair**

WHEREAS, in 1993, Helen Schmitt began her career as a secretary in the Blair County Commissioners Office and in 2001 was promoted to the position of assistant Chief Clerk. Thereafter, because of her diligent and superior service, she was appointed Chief Clerk in 2006 and then to the dual role of County Administrator and Chief Clerk in 2016.

WHEREAS, County government has become increasingly more complex and expansive, the duties and required level of knowledge of Chief Clerk and County Administrator have likewise increased dramatically. With duties ranging from official record keeping and public meeting administration to compliance of County purchasing procedures and administrative oversight of numerous County contracts, projects and offices, the position of County Administrator is the most important administrative position in Blair County government.

WHEREAS, during her tenure and, in particular, her last 13 years as Chief Clerk and now County Administrator, Helen Schmitt has performed her duties at the highest level of skill and talent so very much needed for the County to succeed. Her commitment, intelligence, leadership and excellent communication skills, along with her comprehensive knowledge of operational requirements of the Pennsylvania County Code and the operation of our many offices, departments and boards, were invaluable to the County.

WHEREAS, her keen administrative oversight was key to the success of many major County projects during her tenure including numerous bridge replacements, County bonds, the construction of state-of-the-art 911 communication towers, the sale of our County nursing home, the restoration of our historic courthouse and the first countywide reassessment in almost 60 years.

WHEREAS, Helen represented Blair County at numerous County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) events and conferences to include their highest achievement: The Academy of Excellence in County Government certificate in 2019.

Now, Therefore, Be It Proclaimed That the Commissioners of Blair County wish you, Helen, much happiness as you embark on your next journey through life. Presented by the Blair County Board of Commissioners with heartfelt gratitude and appreciation this 31st Day of December 2019.

Bruce R. Erb
Chairman

Terry Tomassetti
Vice-Chairman

Ted Beam, Jr.
Secretary

Commissioner Beam as well as fellow Commissioners Erb and Tomassetti and Solicitor Karn presented the Certificate to County Administrator Schmitt and thanked her for her years of service to the County of Blair, and wished her well in all her future endeavors.

County Administrator Schmitt shared a few brief words and thanked the Board for their recognition. Mrs. Schmitt stated that she was grateful to be able to serve the residents and taxpayers of Blair County

ADJOURN:

Meeting Adjourned,

Helen P. Schmitt, County Administrator