

**BUSINESS SESSION: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2024, 1:00 P.M.**

Location: Commissioners Meeting Room, Basement.

*\*Public meetings are being held both in-person and by Zoom. To participate in the meeting please dial-1-309-205-3325 or-1-646-876-9923, enter meeting number 973 2311 2159, and enter the meeting passcode 339014.*

**Call to Order:**

Commissioner Kessling called the meeting to order.

**Moment of Silent Reflection:**

Commissioner Kessling called for a moment of silent reflection.

**Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag:**

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

**Roll Call:**

**Members Present:**

Commissioner Kessling, Commissioner Webster, Commissioner Burke, Commissioner Karn, and Chief Clerk Hemminger.

**Others Present:**

Carol Dannenberg (Hollidaysburg Watch Dog), A. C. Stickel and Brian McCulley (Controller), Sherry Socie and Mackenzie Carch (Blair Planning Commission), Lindsay Dempsie (Finance), Rebecca Robinson (Purchasing), Kay Stephens (Altoona Mirror), Allison Senkevich (Commissioners), and Nate Taylor (Public Access Channel).

**Executive Session Announcement:**

Chief Clerk Hemminger confirmed there was no Executive Session since the meeting on Tuesday, February 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Public Comment:**

Commissioner Kessling called for public comment. **There were no comments.**

**Unfinished Business:**

**Adoption of Resolutions:**

**Resolution 92-2024:** Approving the submission of the FY 24-25 PATH grant Intended Use Plan Attestation form and Authorizing the Blair County Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities Administrator, Tricia Johnson to submit on behalf of the County.

Motion by Commissioner Kessling, seconded by Commissioner Burke and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 92-2024.

**Resolution 93-2024:** Approving the ratification of the submission of the following reports for the CDBG, HOME, LEAD, PHARE and WHRP programs:

- 1) Report Submitted to: Pa Dept. of Community & Economic Development (DCED)  
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program
  - 2023 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter (Annual) Additional Fund Receipt Report
  - 2023 Applicant Data for Direct Benefit Activities
  - 2023 Beneficiary Report for Low-Mod Area Projects
  - 2023 Beneficiary Report for Urgent Need Projects

HOME Partnership Program

- 2023 HOME Applicant Data for Direct Benefit Activities
- 2023 HOME Annual Performance Report (Revised 1/31)

Whole Home Repairs Program

- 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter (Annual) Reporting

- 2) Report Submitted to: Pennsylvania Department of Health  
Lead Hazard Reduction Grant

- January 15<sup>th</sup> Semi-Annual Reporting

- 3) Report Submitted to: Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA)  
Pennsylvania Housing Rehabilitation & Enhancement

- 20-21 Lead Hazard Assistance
- 21-22 Housing Assistance CLOSE-OUT
- 21-22 Water & Sewer Program CLOSE-OUT
- 21-22 Re-Entry Housing Assistance
- 22-23 Housing Assistance Program
- 22-23 Basic System Repair Program

Motion by Commissioner Kessling, seconded by Commissioner Burke and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 93-2024.

**Resolution 94-2024:** Approving the Print Services Agreement between the County of Blair and Infocon in the total annual amount of \$6,998.00 for Tax Claim Return & Claims, sale notices, Property Sold Letter and November Reminder Letters for the period of 01/01/24 through 12/31/25.

Motion by Commissioner Kessling, seconded by Commissioner Burke and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 94-2024.

**Resolution 95-2024:** Approving the Purchase Agreement between the County of Blair and Infocon Corporation in the total estimated annual amount of \$3,499.08 for daily tracking of all certified mail notices including searches of certified mailing by name, control number, parcel number and situs addresses for the period of 01/01/24 through 12/31/25.

Chief Clerk Hemminger noted that this price is less than what was presented at Tuesday's meeting. The original price was \$9,609.00, but after review, it was determined that there were several items that could be completed in-house, so they were removed from the Agreement.

Motion by Commissioner Kessling, seconded by Commissioner Burke and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 95-2024.

**Resolution 96-2024:** Approving the submission of the DGM-16F Final Financial Status Report to the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), for the Federal FY 2023 Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG), in the total amount of \$67,946.00 for the period of 10/01/22 through 09/30/23.

Motion by Commissioner Kessling, seconded by Commissioner Webster and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 96-2024.

**Resolution 97-2024:** Approving the Mosquito-borne Disease Control Grant Agreement (C990004352) between the County of Blair and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Environmental Protection, in the total amount of \$57,318, for the period 01/01/24 through 12/31/24.

Motion by Commissioner Kessling, seconded by Commissioner Webster and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 97-2024.

**Resolution 98-2024:** Approving a Letter of Engagement from Young, Oakes, Brown & Company (YOBCO) for a financial audit of the Fort Roberdeau Association for year-end December 31, 2023 in the estimated cost of \$2,500.00 to \$3,500.00.

Chief Clerk Hemminger noted that this would be the last separate audit for the Fort since they would be covered under the County's audit in 2025.

Motion by Commissioner Kessling, seconded by Commissioner Webster and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 98-2024.

**OLD BUSINESS:**  
None.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Commissioners:**

Chief Clerk Nicole Hemminger requested approval of an engagement Letter retaining Babst, Calland, Clements and Zomnir, P.C. to jointly represent the County of Blair and other counties with respect to the litigation filed in the District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania titled David H. Zimmerman, et al v. Al Schmidt, Acting Secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, et. al.

Chief Clerk Hemminger explained that the counties involved would share costs with Blair County. She also mentioned that Solicitor Nathan Karn would also provide any legal review as necessary.

Solicitor Karn noted a slight correction to the request, which was to change the District Court to Commonwealth Court. He went on to explain that this engagement letter is necessary due to the litigation which challenges the notion that the canvassing of ballots at a central location is a violation of the Constitution.

**Resolution 99-2024:** Approving an engagement Letter retaining Babst, Calland, Clements and Zomnir, P.C. to jointly represent the County of Blair and other counties with respect to the litigation filed in the District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania titled David H. Zimmerman, et al v. Al Schmidt, Acting Secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, et. al.

Motion by Commissioner Webster, seconded by Commissioner Kessling and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 99-2024.

**OPEN DISCUSSION: TRAILS CONTINUED**

- i. In-person Public Discussion  
Sherry Socie from the Blair Planning Commission mentioned there was a municipal meeting on February 21<sup>st</sup> where she received feedback from Antis Township and offered their support to be a part of the Authority that may be formed, but shared concerns about control in regard to an Authority "taking over" their hard work.
- ii. Commissioner Discussion  
Commissioner Webster opened the discussion with several questions focused on statistics of success and points to consider when it comes to creating an Authority. She talked about defining specific roles between the County and the Authority and cautioned against the County purchasing property and having those become County assets. She felt strongly that there was an opportunity for Blair County to connect to other counties as resources and would like to avoid creating a new department within the County.

Commissioner Burke expressed her concern with creating an Authority, although, the Board appoints the members to the Authority. In her experience, this has not always ended in a positive relationship. She agreed that a central entity of some kind needs to be established, and cited Cambria County's success also came with issues of financial support for maintaining trails. She also felt that the County would eventually have to provide some type of financial assistance.

Commissioner Kessling followed by discussing his family vacations, which center around trails and some type of outdoor recreation. He also talked about the financial impact that trails have on tourism and local businesses and said it would be felt for years to come. He agreed that, if an Authority were to be created, the Commissioners need to be cautious about who would be appointed. He referenced Governor Shapiro's interest in outdoor recreation and felt that if the state was making it a priority, then so should Blair County.

Solicitor Nathan Karn discussed what creating an Authority entails, which included defining the purpose of the entity, which can be broad or narrow. He also mentioned that initially, the Authority would have to have a minimum of five-5 appointed members with varying length of terms of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 years and requirements for each appointed position to begin and 5-year terms following these staggered expirations. He said the Authority can make requests of the Board of Commissioners, but ultimately the Board has to make the decision. He touched on financial support and the Authority's ability to generate sufficient funds for operation and maintenance of the trails and could prove challenging given the fact that trails are open space. In answering a question from Commissioner Kessling, Solicitor Karn advised that local businesses can contribute to funding and that partnerships are also a possibility with organizations like Rails to Trails.

iii. Written Public Comment

Commissioner Kessling read several Public Comments that were submitted to [publiccomment@blairco.org](mailto:publiccomment@blairco.org) in response to the article in the Altoona Mirror, but that arrived after the 2/15 Board of Commissioners meeting. The responses received were supportive of trails in Blair County and highlighted addressing issues of traffic and safety on the trails and the importance of coordinating an effort to seek funding opportunities for outdoor activities.

**ADJOURN:**  
Meeting Adjourned,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Nicole M. Hemminger, Chief Clerk

