A regular meeting of the Northampton County Council was held on the above date with the following present: Ron Angle, President; John Cusick, Vice President; Thomas H. Dietrich; J. Michael Dowd; Bruce A. Gilbert; Lamont G. McClure, Jr.; Ann McHale; Barbara A. Thierry; Philip D. Lauer, Solicitor to Council, and Frank E. Flisser, Clerk to Council. Absent was Margaret L. Ferraro.

Prayer

Elder Philip Doyle, Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, Upper Nazareth Township, led County Council in prayer to open the meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Bill White led County Council in the pledge of allegiance.

Approval of the Minutes

Mrs. Thierry made the following motion:

Be It Moved By the Northampton County Council that the minutes of the September 16, 2010 meeting shall be approved.

Mr. Cusick seconded the motion.

The minutes were approved by voice acclamation.

Courtesy of the Floor

Mr. Mike Stershic, Discover Lehigh Valley - provided County Council with the Lehigh Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau, Inc., doing business as Discover Lehigh Valley, 2009-2010 Fiscal Year Audited Financial Statement (see Attachment #1) as required by the ordinance authorizing the hotel tax. He stated that revenues were down 17.3%, however, they were working hard to
attract more visitors and were unveiling a new website in October.

In response to Mr. Cusick’s question as to why the revenues in Northampton County increased while the revenues in Lehigh County decreased, Mr. Stershic advised he believed that more new hotels being opened in the Lehigh Valley over the last several years were located in Northampton County and the location of the Sands Casino.

In answer to Mr. Cusick’s question as to how the Bethlehem Visitors Center being proposed for South Side Bethlehem would affect the current Visitors Center on Main Street, Mr. Stershic stated they were going to continue to operate the one on Main Street in partnership with Star of Bethlehem Partnership. He further stated they would be working with ArtsQuest during their development process.

Mr. Chris Miller, 983 Bushkill Center Road, Bushkill Township, PA - advised he wanted to thank the members of County Council who had exhibited the courage to sell Gracedale because he believed it was one of the things that had to been done to get the County’s financial situation under control.

Mr. Miller stated that he noticed $6 million was put in the budget for Gracedale so he asked County Executive John Stoffa if he had given up on the idea of selling it.

Mr. Stoffa advised he would discuss the matter in his report.

In response to Mr. Miller’s question as to whether he was still in favor of selling Gracedale, Mr. Angle stated he was still trying to analyze the County Executive’s budget which he was finding very difficult to do.

In answer to Mr. Miller’s question as to whether it was the County Executive’s intent to make Gracedale a political issue given that next year several members of County Council would be up for re-election and it would make them look bad, Mr. Angle advised he would like to know the answer to that question as well.

In response to Mr. Miller’s question as to what would happen to Gracedale if the budget, as presented by the County
Executive, was passed, Mr. Angle stated Gracedale could still be sold even though this budget did include the operation of Gracedale for another year.

In answer to Mr. Miller’s question as to whether it was the intention of the County to close Gracedale, Mr. Angle advised there was no one in the County, as far as leadership, that wanted to close Gracedale.

When Mr. Miller asked if the main reason to sell Gracedale was to get the employees off the County’s payroll and onto the payroll of the company who purchased the facility, Mr. Angle replied Mr. Dietrich recently gave a report that indicated when private industry bought a County owned facility, it had operated better than it was County owned. Therefore, it was his thinking, and he thought it was the County Executive’s as well, that more could be done for the patients and that it would take 600-700 employees off the County’s payroll.

In response to Mr. Miller’s question as to the total cost for salaries and benefits for the employees at Gracedale for a year, Mr. Vic Mazziotti, Director of Fiscal Affairs, advised it was approximately $47 million, which was more than 60% of Gracedale’s operating cost.

Mr. Miller stated government spending at all levels had to decrease, noting the United States was $54 trillion in debt, which did not include the unfunded figures for Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. He further stated County Council had to stop accepting the unfunded mandates.

Mr. Ray Berger, 801 Yorkshire Road, Hanover Township, PA - advised he supported the sale of Gracedale, but he wanted to call County Council’s attention to the pension unfunded liability. He further advised if Gracedale was sold, he would like to see the County have some recourse regarding the fund. He noted he would advise County Council to cut it to the extent it could because it had to be way underfunded.

Ms. L. Nyffenegger, 333 Sherwood Road, Easton, PA - stated she was a member of the 912 Group and she was here to listen so she could make her own decision because as a lifelong resident of Northampton County she wanted to see the right thing done.
Mr. Ronnie DelBacco, 636 Seitz Street, Easton, PA - advised he was a member of the 912 Lehigh Valley Tea Party and he supported the sale of Gracedale. He further advised he realized it was a tough decision, but he believed members of County Council would have the support of the voters for making it once the taxpayers realized the savings that could be made. He noted he also felt the facility could be operated better under private ownership because it had been reported that other Counties that have sold their facilities were being run either equally or better as far as quality of care for the residents.

Mr. Bryan Eichfeld, 774 Magnolia Road, Hellertown, PA - stated he wanted to thank County Council for taking the brave step in looking into selling Gracedale and he wholeheartedly hoped they would continue on that path. He further stated he had not seen anything the government operated that could not be done more efficiently privately. He noted a few meetings ago, employees and residents of Gracedale were present and appeared to be under the impression that County Council wanted to close Gracedale, which was not the case. He further noted another reason he was in favor of selling Gracedale was because the entity who purchased Gracedale would be looking to make money so they were going to have to be efficient and provide excellent care.

Mr. Mario Martinez, Forks Township, PA - advised he was representing the Coalition of Alzheimer Patients and provided County Council a petition of names of people who did not want Gracedale leased or sold (see Attachment #2).

Mr. Jack Dalessandro, 705 Front Street, Bangor, PA - stated he was at the meeting when the representatives of Spring Creek gave their presentation to County Council. He further stated after the meeting, he and several other individuals spoke with these representatives who vehemently denied having any association with GHS from Kuwait. However, during their discussion, a representative indicated they were allies so he wanted to know if County Council was willing to sell Gracedale to an entity that was half owned by an outfit in Kuwait and had ties to the Middle East. He noted they also admitted that after they took over, they cut employees and their pay. He further noted that Mr. Angle had taken a poll in his district that indicated people were in favor of selling Gracedale, however, as he lived in that district, he talked to a lot of people who were
Mr. Michael Lordi, 306 Adrian Drive, Forks Township, PA - advised he was with the Lehigh Valley Project 912 Tea Party Group and he wanted to encourage County Council to continue with the exploration of privatizing Gracedale because he felt it would be a benefit to the taxpayers and to the residents of the County. He further advised one of the things he wanted County Council to consider was what effect the institution of the Federal Health Care legislation would have on the County and Gracedale. He noted privatizing Gracedale would provide the flexibility an entity could use to innovate new ideas, to respond quickly and to treat the residents with great care and compassion. He further noted he did not believe a bureaucracy had those qualities. Lastly, government should not be in the business of providing health care.

Ms. Arlene Klocek, 42 Lynnwood Drive, Hanover Township, PA - stated she worked for more than 12 years at Gracedale as a Registered Nurse Supervisor I and the residents received wonderful care, but she wanted to know why there were so many unions at Gracedale. She further stated as a taxpayer and former employee, she was appalled when she read in the newspaper that the Registered Nurses were asking for a 4.5% raise because the County could not afford it. She further noted she did not receive a Cost of Living raise for her pension nor from Medicare and not selling Gracedale would only saddle generations to come with a debt they could never repay.

Ms. Klocek advised she goes to the Bethlehem Area School District meetings as a concerned citizen and they have indicated they were broke and planned to raise taxes more than 6.5%. She further advised she dealt with union people and she was so tired of the unions trying to force money from taxpayers' pockets, therefore, if Gracedale had to be sold so be it because the citizens of Northampton County could not afford any more taxes.

Mr. James Edwards, 420 Berks Street, Easton, PA - stated someone had to learn to say no, indicating his mother was at Gracedale for 15 years. He further stated he understood the members of this County Council had inherited the problem, but they should go back to see how things went so bad and maybe some of those people should be held accountable. He then questioned how people who lived in the Middle East could come over here and
Mr. Tom Olick, 4014 Crestview Avenue, Easton, PA - advised the purpose of government was to provide for the needs of the people and there were some things it could do better than private industry. He further advised he felt the County would be putting its head in the sand if it thought private industry would come into Gracedale and operate it at the same quality of care because they would not make a profit.

Mr. Olick stated in 2007, he received notice from Northampton County that he had not paid his real estate taxes since 1995. He further stated he went to the Solicitor who filed the claim and provided stamped/signed receipts that showed the taxes had been paid, but that was not good enough as he wanted cancelled checks, which he was unable to provide. He noted the matter went to Court and a ruling was made that he did not owe the money, however, the County listed his property for Sheriff Sale. He further noted he had to sue the County and in the settlement agreement, which was signed by the County Executive of Northampton County, it indicated that the County was never again to go after him for the taxes that had already been paid by him.

Mr. Olick advised the County went to his mortgage company and received the money from them and that company was now after him so he was suing again because they were trying to collect these taxes for a third time. He further advised he had been handling this himself so there were no attorney fees on his side, but the County was paying $400 an hour to a Philadelphia attorney for three and half years fighting with him for taxes that Attorney Chris Spadoni had agreed the very first month that he did not owe. He wondered how many other taxpayers were being defrauded of money by having to pay taxes a second and third time.

Mr. Angle stated this was the first time he had ever heard of this.

In response to Mrs. McHale’s question as to who informed him he had to pay these taxes, Mr. Olick replied it was Attorney Spadoni who filed a tax claim against him.
Mr. Karl Longenbach, Northampton County Solicitor, advised he would look into the matter.

Mr. Angle stated he just wanted to say a lot of the things being said about the Gracedale issue were inaccurate. He further stated that a majority of County Council members felt the selling of Gracedale was a good one because the people buying it could do as good or a better job, the employees would receive the salary and benefits of the market area and the buildings would go on the tax rolls.

County Executive’s Report

Mr. Stoffa advised he wanted to begin by congratulating the Prison Administration for receiving a Certificate of Compliance for the 2010 inspection cycle. He further advised this was probably the first time in the history of the County that the Prison received 100% compliance under Title 37, Chapter 95, which were minimal standards for local adult detention facilities. He noted because of the Prison receiving this certificate, it was exempt from the normal one year inspection cycle so the next inspection would not be held until 2012.

Mr. Stoffa stated there were 807 retirees and 53 beneficiaries, who were individuals receiving benefits after the retiree died.

Mr. Stoffa advised the Mortgage Foreclosure Assistance Program had been extended into 2011 at a cost of $25,000. He further advised as of October 7, 2010, 2,048 conferences were scheduled. He noted 1,495 conferences occurred with 803 people showing up and agreements were reached in 208 cases.

Mr. Stoffa stated since January 1, 2010, 1,676 properties have gone up for Sheriff Sale and 884 properties were listed for tomorrow’s sale.

With regard to the Bethlehem Tax Increment Financing agreement, Mr. Stoffa advised to the best of his knowledge the matter had been settled. He further advised a detail to be worked out was a different millage rate regarding the 911
Mr. Stoffa stated he asked Mr. Steve DeSalva, Director of Public Works, to look into the possibility of installing solar panels over the parking deck.

Mr. Stoffa advised he was looking into spousal subordination of the health benefits, which was when an employee’s spouse who had medical insurance opted out of their insurance plan and used the employee’s insurance. He further advised this could be eliminated in an effort to save on health care costs and hoped to have it implemented by January 1st of next year.

Mr. Stoffa stated Act 57 of 2005 provided that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania would reimburse 65% of the salary of the District Attorney so the County received notification it was going to receive a check for $33,686 for the year 2008. He further stated this indicated the State was behind two years and that was one of the reasons he felt it was a good idea to meet with the State legislators on a regular basis to discuss issues such as this.

Mr. Stoffa advised the proposed budget assumed the sale of Gracedale in 2011, noting it was the only way the budget would work and as a result of that, five firms were interviewed to help with the process. He further advised a firm was selected and that recommendation would be provided to County Council so the Finance Committee could consider it at their October 20, 2010 meeting, with consideration by the whole of County Council at their October 21, 2010 meeting. He noted he was in favor of selling Gracedale as soon as possible.

In answer to Mrs. Thierry’s question as to what the budget would look like if Gracedale was not sold, Mr. Stoffa stated last year he wanted a tax increase, which would have brought in $7.3 million for 2010 and 2011, but it was not voted through. He further stated the County could make it through 2011, but 2012 would be a disaster because of the Swaption so he felt the County’s best option would be to sell Gracedale. He noted he was concerned about the patients, but he believed they would continue to receive good care. He also believed they could find a good vendor to take over and help the employees with interviews in an effort for them to retain employment. He noted
325 were eligible for retirement with 230 eligible for lifetime benefits.

Mr. Stoffa advised the sale of Gracedale would give the County approximately $25-31 million, which would help with the Swaption and monies left over to help keep the County running.

Mr. Cusick stated that he noticed that the West Easton treatment facility was budgeted so he wondered if Mr. Stoffa was shutting the door on the Bethlehem Township facility.

Mr. Stoffa advised when he took office the County had just paid $24 million for 224 additional beds at the Prison, with plans for more additions. He further advised studies were done and it was determined that by 2010, the County would need 1,125 beds so they planned for that number, however, the County currently only required 822 beds so the studies were wrong. He noted while they were looking for space for a treatment center, they looked at the Borough of Glendon, but its officials turned them down. He further noted they then looked at other areas and Bethlehem Township became a possibility.

Mr. Stoffa stated in 2008, the County seriously looked at Bethlehem Township and as everyone knows, it had been a long drawn out process. He further stated the County had not gone over the 822 beds because of the cooperation of the Courts and some of the programs that have been instituted at the Prison.

Mr. Stoffa advised they were considering West Easton at this time because the County did not need 300 beds and West Easton would be a 100 bed facility. He further advised West Easton was also more acceptable because it was closer for food, medical and transportation.

In response to Mr. Cusick’s question as to how the figure of $750,000 was arrived at, Mr. Stoffa stated they were planning on using $350,000 for the lease and transferring staff from the Prison so there would be no additional employees. He further stated this was the cheapest alternative they could come up with and it would provide the County some time to look at long term planning.

In answer to Mrs. Thierry’s question as to whether those 100 beds were needed now, Mr. Stoffa advised there were Driving
Under the Influence (DUI) individuals who should be in jail, but were not due to lack of space. He further advised it would be irresponsible not to address this population.

Mr. Angle stated a budget was submitted to County Council and the Home Rule Charter indicated it was the responsibility of the County Executive to submit a budget which was his thoughts, ideas and spending plans for the following year. He further stated it was County Council’s obligation to look at that budget to determine if they were going to adopt it.

Mr. Angle advised the budget that was submitted called for no tax increase and to keep Gracedale running, therefore, he questioned how any good politician could not adopt a budget that called for no tax increase and gave everyone everything they asked for. He further advised he believed there were already five votes for this budget so it would probably be adopted.

Discussion and Consideration of the Northampton County DUI Program

Mr. Angle stated that Mr. Gary Rute, Gary Rute and Associates, currently ran the DUI Program and asked to address County Council regarding the proposal to bring this program back into the County.

Mr. Rute provided his expense sheet for 2009 (see Attachment #3), which reflected that the difference between revenues and expenses was approximately $4,300. He also provided a chart showing the number of individuals who completed the Alcohol Highway Safety Program from 1999 through 2009 (see Attachment #4).

Mr. Rute advised every individual who was convicted of a DUI had to have a Court Reporting Network evaluation done and complete 12.5 hours of Alcohol Highway Safety School.

In response to Mr. Angle’s question why he felt the County should not bring this program back into the County, Mr. Rute stated he felt his company could do it more efficiently and he did not think the County could revenue what they revenued. He further stated he listed 120 individuals for Court every month, which was how he was paid and that resulted in Court costs and fines for the County.
Consideration of the DUI Program Personnel Resolution Initially Considered at the September 16, 2010 County Council Meeting and Subsequently Tabled to the October 7, 2010 Meeting

Mr. Angle stated at the September 16, 2010 meeting, a resolution to revise the manner in which the DUI Program was administered was introduced, but was eventually tabled.

Mr. Cusick made a motion to remove that resolution from the table.

Mrs. McHale seconded the motion.

Mr. Angle advised the motion was passed by voice acclamation.

Mrs. McHale and Mr. Dowd introduced the following resolution:

R. 89-2010 RESOLVED, by the Northampton County Council that the following personnel transactions shall be approved for Court Administration, Northampton County Court of Common Pleas, effective January 1, 2011:

1. The one new full-time position of DUI Probation Officer II, pay grade CP-25, salary range $39,982 to $54,411, shall be created in the DUI Division, Court Administration, Northampton County Court of Common Pleas.

2. The one new full-time position of Clerical Specialist, pay grade CR-16, salary range $26,419 to $35,953, shall be created in the DUI Division, Court Administration, Northampton County Court of Common Pleas.

3. The one full-time position of Juvenile Probation Officer II, pay grade CP-25, salary range $39,982 to $54,411, shall be abolished in the Juvenile Probation Division, Court Administration, Northampton County Court of Common Pleas.

4. The one part-time position of Judicial Secretary pay grade CS-19, salary range $32,236 to $46,875, shall be abolished in the Court Administration Division, Northampton County Court of Common Pleas.
Mrs. McHale stated the members of the Personnel Committee present at the meeting held September 15, 2010, voted unanimously to recommend these positions to the whole of County Council for approval.

Mr. Dowd advised he had no reason, at the moment, to doubt that the Courts could produce the revenue they were anticipating, however, if not, then they would have to go back to the private sector.

Mr. Gilbert stated he agreed with Mr. Dowd, noting each department was asked to see where they could streamline their expenses and suggest ways to increase their revenue. He further stated as these positions were approved at the Personnel Committee, he saw no reason not to allow them.

In answer to Mr. Angle’s question as to whether this could be tracked next year to determine if the Courts was generating revenues, Mr. Mazziotti advised that could be done.

Mr. Dietrich stated if this was brought in house, he would like to see a benchmark system as to how effective the program was.

Mr. Dowd advised he thought that would be a good idea and he felt one of the ways to determine its success was by tracking recidivism.

Mr. James Onembo, Court Administrator, stated the County had a very comprehensive DUI program which processed approximately 2,000 offenders a year. He further stated the Courts were comfortable that they could handle the legislated requirements that Mr. Rute’s company currently handled. He noted Mr. Rute’s company had done a very good job over the years, but the growth of the DUI program had begun to yield large sums of money, noting between 2005-2010 nearly $1.6 million passed through the Criminal Clerk to Mr. Rute’s organization.

Mr. Onembo advised they were looking at taking two positions that were currently in the existing budget, with benefits, and moving them into the DUI program. He further advised by doing that, the County would have no additional expenses, except for the start up costs.
In response to Mr. Cusick’s question as to how long the whole process took from the time of arrest, Mr. Lauer stated it depended on the nature of the case.

In answer to Mr. Cusick’s question as to whether some of this could take place at the West Easton facility, Mr. Onembo advised at this time he could not really say because there was currently room at the Criminal Administration Building. He further advised their motivation was the revenue because between the Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition (ARD) Program and the Second Offender Program, the revenue was approximately $900,000 a year and he believed this program would bring in approximately $200,000 a year.

As there were no further questions or comments, Mr. Angle called the vote.


The resolution was adopted by a vote of 8-0.

Bethlehem Tax Increment Financing

Mr. Angle stated it appeared that all the documents pertaining to the Bethlehem Tax Increment Financing were now in order and would be signed shortly.

Consideration of the Collective Bargaining Unit Agreement Between Northampton County and the United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union, AFL-CIO, CLC, LU 2599

Mrs. McHale introduced the following resolution:

R. 90-2010 WHEREAS, Northampton County Charter Section 202 (12) provides that, “The County Council shall have the power to approve any collective bargaining agreements with officers and employees”.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED By the Northampton County Council that the Collective Bargaining Unit Agreement between NORTHAMPTON COUNTY and the UNITED STEEL, PAPER AND
FORESTRY, RUBBER, MANUFACTURING, ENERGY, ALLIED INDUSTRIAL AND SERVICE WORKERS INTERNATIONAL UNION AFL-CIO, CLC, LU 2599, shall be approved this 7th day of October 2010.

In response to Mr. Cusick’s question as to how often the Labor Management and Safety Committees met, Mr. Ross Marcus, Director of Human Services, stated Labor Management usually met quarterly, but he was not sure about the Safety Committee.

In answer to Mr. Cusick’s question as to how many members of this bargaining unit were part time, Mr. John Conklin, Director of Administration, advised he did not have the specific breakdown, noting there were approximately 50 individuals, five of which were Social Services workers and the remaining were Registered Nurses.

In response to Mr. Cusick’s question as to whether this contract provided them with prescription and vision benefits, Mr. Conklin stated it continued the existing 2006-2008 contract.

Mr. Cusick advised he felt it was a somewhat generous contract, but given the situation with Gracedale, he believed it was fair and put the employees in the situation where they had the ability to bargain collectively with the potential new owner or lessee so he would be supporting it.

Mr. Thierry stated she would not be supporting it because even though she felt they deserved the money, she felt it would be better to hold off until there was a new owner.

In answer to Mr. Dietrich’s question as to whether action had to be taken tonight, Mrs. McHale advised if no action was taken, it would proceed to binding arbitration.

Mr. Tom Heimbach, Northampton County Labor Attorney, stated this particular bargaining unit did not have the binding arbitration option, but they could strike. He further stated if this contract was not approved tonight, it would go back to the bargaining table where the negotiations could continue or the union could exercise its option to strike.

As there were no further questions or comments, Mr. Angle called for the vote.
Consideration of the 2010 LEDA Resolution

Mr. Dowd introduced the following resolution:

R. 91-2010  WHEREAS, the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has enacted and amended the Industrial Development Assistance Law for the purpose of promoting the welfare of the people of the Commonwealth by the rendering of financial assistance to industrial development organizations engaged in promoting the development and expansion of business, industry and commerce in the respective Counties of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions of the Industrial Development Assistance Law only one such industrial development organization shall be designated and qualified in each County to receive such financial assistance in accordance with the provision of said law; and

WHEREAS, to so qualify for such financial assistance, an industrial development organization must be designated for that purpose by the governing body of the County which such industrial development organization is to represent; and

WHEREAS, the Northampton County Industrial Development Authority, with its principal office at 669 Washington Street, Easton, Pennsylvania, is hereby designated by the Council of Northampton County as the industrial development organization for the County of Northampton with full power and authority to represent said County in all matters relevant to and for all purposes of the Industrial Development Assistance Law.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AND IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED THAT:

Section 1. The Northampton County Industrial Development Authority is hereby designated as the industrial development
organization for the County of Northampton with full power and authority to represent said County in all matters relevant to and for all purposes of the Industrial Development Assistance Law.

As there were no questions or comments, Mr. Angle called for the vote.


The resolution was adopted by a vote of 8-0.

Consideration of the Northampton County Gaming Revenue and Economic Redevelopment Authority Municipal Gaming Grant Program Resolution

Mrs. McHale and Mr. Dowd introduced the following resolution:

R. 92-2010 WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania Race Horse Development and Gaming Act (Act 2004-71), as amended established a coordinated system for ensuring that local governments received a share of the revenues generated by gaming; and

WHEREAS, the Northampton County Gaming Revenue and Economic Redevelopment Authority has established the criteria by which all applications seeking a share of local gaming funds will be awarded; and

WHEREAS, Northampton County is an "eligible recipient" of local gaming funds.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Northampton County is authorized to apply for 2010 funds through the uncommitted funds Municipal Gaming Grant Program of the Northampton County Gaming Revenue and Economic Redevelopment Authority in support of:

1. $125,000 for comprehensive training to the volunteer and professional emergency responders in Northampton
Mr. Conklin advised in conversations with Mr. Rick Weaver of the Northampton County Fire School; Mr. Thomas Barnowski, Director, Emergency Services Training, Northampton County Community College; Ms. Helene Whittaker, Vice President for Administrative Affairs, Northampton County Community College, and Dr. Paul Pierpoint, Community Education/Dean, Northampton County College, it was determined that it was becoming more costly for them to provide public safety/first responder type training for firefighters and the County’s emergency management services individuals.

Mr. Conklin stated as there were no funds in the General Fund for this expense, he looked at other ways to obtain it and the gaming revenue came to mind. He further stated as they were a non-governmental entity, they had to apply through the County which was the reason this resolution was being presented.

Mrs. McHale advised the Northampton County Gaming Revenue and Economic Redevelopment Authority still had to approve it.

As there were no further questions or comments, Mr. Angle called for the vote.


The resolution was adopted by a vote of 8-0.

Budget Hearings

Mr. Angle asked the members of County Council if they felt they should hold budget hearings because they were presented a budget with no tax increase and every program that anyone wanted money for was intact so if there were five members who were in favor of it, there was no reason to hold the hearings.

Mr. Dowd stated even though not a lot of changes came from the budget hearings, one benefit was the members of County
Council got to meet face to face with the individuals who were charged with implementing programs.

Mrs. McHale advised she felt it would also be beneficial to the newer members of County Council.

Mr. Gilbert stated he felt it would not only be beneficial to the new members of County Council, but also for the older members because he felt County Council should never just look at line items or the budget overall and assume they knew exactly what they were looking at. He noted if he ever got to the point where he did not think going through the process and taking it seriously was important, then he would have to recuse himself from the process itself.

Mr. Angle advised it was the County Executive’s job to submit a budget that was his plan for 2011 and as this one did not increase taxes or change any programs, he was combining the usual four meetings into two.

Economic Development Committee Meeting Report

Mr. Dowd stated an Economic Development Committee meeting was held earlier in the evening and one of the items that came up for discussion was the Lehigh Valley Land Recycling Initiative. He further stated he planned to invite them to appear at the next committee meeting to discuss how the funds were being used.

Mr. Dowd advised there had been changes at the Lehigh Valley International Airport and Mr. Larry Krauter, the Interim Executive Director, would be coming to a meeting to address that issue.

Mr. Dowd stated the representatives of the State Theatre wanted to come and thank the members of County Council for the support they have received over the years.

Prison Liaison Report

Mrs. Thierry advised she wanted to remind everyone there was a graduation ceremony at the Prison scheduled for November 3, 2010.
Adjournment Motion

Mr. McClure made a motion to adjourn.

Mrs. McHale seconded the motion.

Mr. Angle called for the vote on the motion.

The motion failed by a vote of 2-6.

Budget Hearings

In response to Mr. Angle’s question as to whether the members of County Council who wanted to hold budget hearings was because they did not agree with the budget, Mr. Gilbert responded a person could not agree or disagree by just looking at it.

Mr. Angle advised he felt this budget was the worst budget he ever saw and County Council was left to do the job the County Executive did not do and come up with a different budget.

Solicitor’s Report

Mr. Lauer stated he did not have anything to report at this time.

Adjournment

Mr. Dietrich made a motion to adjourn.

The motion passed by acclamation.

Frank E. Flisser
Clerk to Council