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

Prayer

Mr. Dowd led County Council in prayer to open the meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mrs. McHale led County Council in the pledge of allegiance.

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. McClure made the following motion:

Be It Moved By the Northampton County Council that the minutes of the March 17, 2011 meeting shall be approved.

Mrs. Thierry seconded the motion.

The minutes were approved by voice acclamation, with Mrs. McHale abstaining.

Presentation of Commendations

Mr. Cusick stated Northampton County had the pleasure of having three high school wrestlers who won State championships this year. He identified the wrestlers as Mitchell Minotti from the Easton Area High School, Zach Horan from the Nazareth Area High School and Mike Racciato from the Pen Argyl High School.

Mr. Angle presented each of the wrestlers with a proclamation signed by the members of County Council.
Presentation of the Easton Area Community Center

Mr. Cusick advised Ms. Lee Grifo requested the opportunity for the members of the Easton Area Community Center to appear to explain the operation of their center.

Ms. Grifo introduced their President, Mr. Mitch Melendez, who gave the presentation.

Mr. Melendez stated the center was established approximately 70 years ago and in 1953, it became the St. Anthony’s Youth Center. He further advised in 1958, they became affiliated with United Way and became a nonprofit organization. He noted in 2004, as they were serving the whole community and to reflect more of the types of programming they offered, they changed their name to the Easton Area Community Center.

Mr. Melendez advised they currently had approximately 300 registered members and at any point in time during any week, they had between 100-150 children present at the center. He further stated they had an operating board with an executive membership and 12 board members with various skill sets. He noted they had a staff of six individuals, two of which were full time, as well as many volunteers.

Mr. Melendez stated they have partnered with various organizations and last year were able to purchase the building they had been leasing from St. Anthony’s Parish. He further advised one of the primary focuses of the center was to provide a safe place for the community’s children, 70% of which were considered to be at risk.

Ms. Kathy Presto, Public Relations, advised she wanted to discuss the four key programs the center provided. She further advised the first program was their educational program which not only provided academic support for what the children were learning in school, but also developed their creative expression. She noted for 2011, they were looking to increase the number of children in the mentor program especially since they have seen the positive effects the program had, engage family members more and to hold fund raisers to help pay for items such as computers, arts and crafts supplies, a copier and storage bins.
Ms. Presto stated another program was the food program, noting they had a full service commercial kitchen where they served more than 1500 meals on a monthly basis and held nutritional, cooking and healthy lifestyle classes. She further stated they had a “back pack buddy program” through Second Harvest whereby the children were given food and the personal necessities to get them through the weekend. She noted for 2011, they wanted to increase the number of children who were served meals and participated in the “back pack buddy program”.

Ms. Presto advised the third program was their summer day camp program. She further advised this was an eight-week program that kept the youth actively engaged in educational and recreational activities through field trips to historical places around the County and this year, installing a community garden next to the center. She noted currently for the field trips, volunteers had provided the transportation so for 2011, they were looking to purchase a van.

Ms. Presto stated the fourth program was the sports program, which taught the children teamwork and skills in both competitive and noncompetitive sports. She further advised their priority for 2011 was to have a summer wrestling program and to obtain more uniforms and equipment.

Ms. Presto advised they have always relied on grants, funding from the United Way and fund raisers, however, with these avenues of revenue decreasing, they planned to reach out to corporations and individuals.

In answer to Mrs. McHale’s question as to whether the center offered any programs for senior citizens, a representative from the center stated the Golden Age Group met once a month there, they offered an adult yoga program, as well as adult volleyball. She further stated American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) was currently there offering free tax services. She noted that their main focus was on the children, but they did try to incorporate many things to appeal to aspects of the community.

Another representative from the center commented they have formed a long term planning committee who planned to look at what the center could be used for while the children were in
school or not using the center.

Courtesy of the Floor

Mr. Jerry Green, United Steelworkers Union - advised since the question to sell Gracedale was going to be on the ballot, he hoped everyone could come together and act professionally. He further advised he did not believe there was going to be a 20% tax increase if Gracedale was not sold because there were many intelligent members on County Council that could come up with ideas to not have that happen, especially to protect the senior citizens who remained in their homes. Further, he did not believe if Gracedale was sold that the residents would be thrown out, however, from his experience, he did think the services would decrease in a for-profit home.

Mr. Green stated County Council was going to have to look at the management of Gracedale. He further stated he did not know how it could be done, but he would really like County Council to be involved in the collective bargaining negotiations.

In conclusion, Mr. Green advised when he presented his position for saving Gracedale, he hoped he did not misrepresent anything and he hoped everyone else did the same.

Reverend Mario Martinez, 2555 Chestnut Lane, Easton, PA - stated he did not want the Gracedale issue to go this far, but since it had, it was now time to move forward. He further stated he hoped County Council and the Administration would not put any more hurdles in place and allow the vote on the referendum to take place.

Reverend Martinez advised the Coalition of Alzheimer’s Families asked him to rectify a statement that was made on a television program as to how this group came into being. He further advised it was stated the group was established because it had problems with Gracedale so they wanted to go on record that they never had a problem with Gracedale. He noted the problem that existed and helped formed this group had to do with one specific employee and the problem was eventually resolved.

Reverend Martinez stated at a previous meeting, a member of the audience commented that if this issue was to go on the
ballot, the residents should be made aware of how it would impact them. He further stated according to the law, taxpayer dollars could not be used to campaign against any election matter.

Reverend Martinez advised they planned to launch a campaign to educate the residents so they could make an informed decision at the polls. He further advised they want to work with County Council and the Administration in serving all of the residents in the community.

In response to Reverend Martinez’s question as to whether there was a Code of Conduct for County Council members, Mrs. McHale indicated there was one and Mr. Cusick stated a copy could be provided to him by Mr. Flisser.

Reverend Martinez advised he asked because on March 23, 2011, a member of County Council threatened his life and the life of other members of the Coalition and he felt County Council had to hold this person accountable for his actions. He further advised he did not go to the police, but it was an issue that had to be addressed.

Mr. John Halligan, Palmer Township, PA - stated it was critical that accurate information regarding Gracedale be presented to the public and the voters of the County. He further stated that putting out the actual facts was not a political campaign, but an obligation of the County to make sure the public was informed.

Mr. Halligan advised he had heard numerous times that it was the position of the majority of the members of County Council not to raise taxes in this fiscal year so he wanted to know if this referendum changed their position.

Mrs. Thierry stated she felt the members who supported keeping Gracedale should be the individuals voting for a tax increase, but she would not.

Mr. Angle commented Mr. Halligan asked what the County was going to do to educate the public so they understood what the truth was regarding the Gracedale issue and he wondered if he was going to receive an answer.
Mr. Cusick remarked there had been offers to write opinion pieces from the media outlets present today and he would encourage those members of County Council who wanted to make their position known to do so.

Mr. Halligan advised he was not interested in the opinions of the individual members of County Council, he was talking about the facts on both sides of the issue being presented side by side in some fashion so that people could make an informed judgement. He further advised he did not believe what had appeared in the newspapers thus far had been presented in an accurate and unbiased manner.

Mr. Angle stated he already began the process to hold three meetings in his district to present the people he represented the facts. He further stated he had spoken to the Morning Call and the Express Times to write, after reviewing the facts, an editorial presenting them to the public. He acknowledged the Express Times had already written three editorials, but the Morning Call did not have an editorial staff so he did not know how this would be handled.

Mr. Angle advised the two issues were the people willing to keep Gracedale and then willing to pay to do so. He further advised if 51% of the people agree to keep Gracedale and willing to pay the price, then it was the County’s obligation to keep it and raise the taxes appropriately.

Mr. Angle stated he did not believe there was a majority of County Council members who would vote for a 15-18% tax increase to keep Gracedale. He further stated County Council did not have a say in how to manage Gracedale because that was the job of the County Executive and he had to operate within a budget so if there was no tax increase, the level of service would decrease. He noted the people who were in favor of saving Gracedale never proved that selling it would decrease the level of service, in fact, the buyers had mentioned a number of things that would improve the quality of care.

Mr. Jack Dalessandro, Washington Township, PA - advised it was illegal to use County money to inform people. He further advised the developer building the prison in West Easton had a Federal tax lien against him in Lehigh County and he wondered what the cost was going to be for the County next year to operate it and where the money was coming from.
Mr. Cusick stated at this time, County Council had received no updated information with regard to that project.

Mr. Bryan Eichfeld, Hellertown, PA – advised it had come to his attention on a school board level that it was not required for the schools to collect union dues and Political Action Committee (PAC) money in each individual contract. He further advised he truly believed it was a travesty that taxpayers’ money was used to collect union dues and especially PAC money, noting the County was collecting the money that allowed them to fight the fight on the union side in the Gracedale issue.

Mr. Cusick commented that was an issue for the State legislatures to address.

Mr. Chris Dawson, Jim Thorpe, PA – asked what was going to transpire if after the election, the people decide to keep Gracedale and the County was no longer providing the funding. He further asked if the decision was made to sell it, could all the paperwork be done in time for the June deadline.

Mr. Cusick stated based on what transpired, the County Executive was going to have to consider a budget amendment, however, County Council had not been provided the County Executive’s plans.

Mr. Justus James, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), District Council 88 – advised he was present to reiterate the union’s position that they were willing to negotiate, but the Administration had made them go through hoops.

Mr. James stated he agreed that since it was going to a vote, the people had to be educated. He further stated there had been so many things said that no one really knew what the truth was, but one thing he did know was during a ten-year period, Gracedale made money for the County so he wanted to remind everyone that once Gracedale was gone, there was nothing the County could do to recoup that revenue.

Mr. James advised those revenues were distributed throughout the County and was never put back. He further advised any money generated by Gracedale should go back to Gracedale so no taxpayer dollars had to be used for it.
Mr. James stated the issue of taxes being increased should not be used against Gracedale because he felt there was probably going to be an increase even if Gracedale was sold.

Ms. Tricia Mezza Cappa, West Easton, PA - advised she was a Registered Nurse and had 23 years experience in health care. She further advised her concerns about Gracedale remaining County owned were very grave. She further advised she would like to see the County’s seniors get the very best of care and the best way for that to happen was in a private institution because there would be more funding and staff. She noted Medicare and Medicaid funding was on a decrease and she feared they were never going to go back up.

Ms. Mezza Cappa stated she did not believe in government by petition because she felt it was dangerous and sent a bad message to every County home and she asked County Council to appeal this case to the Supreme Court.

County Executive’s Report

Mr. John Stoffa, County Executive, advised the new Uniform Parcel Identification program that was established in the Recorder of Deeds Office had collected $108,200 since the first of the year.

Mr. Stoffa stated he wanted to apologize for submitting two names for the one vacancy on the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission.

Mr. Stoffa advised he had asked for a new budget for fiscal year 2011 be submitted by Gracedale, which should be available for distribution to County Council next Wednesday.

Mr. Stoffa stated during the process of redoing the windows in the old Courthouse, the duct work had to be removed in the Criminal Division because it was bringing in bad air from the outside and they discovered high level of lead-based paint above the drop ceiling. He further stated this resulted in the Criminal Division being moved to the third floor Training Room and the Revenue Division. He noted the $2 million received in the Stimulus Grant was paying for all the renovations.
Mr. Stoffa advised Mr. James and Mr. Green were sent e-mails today asking them to sit down and discuss renegotiating the contracts.

In answer to Mr. McClure’s question as to whether he had received the appraisals for Gracedale, Mr. Stoffa stated they received one and were awaiting on the other.

In response to Mr. McClure’s question as to when it would be received, Mr. John Conklin, Director of Administration, advised they would be released when the Administration was ready for County Council to take action.

Executive Session

Mr. Cusick stated at the request of the County Executive, County Council was entering into an Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel issues and matters of litigation.

Mr. Dowd made a motion to enter into Executive Session.

Mrs. McHale seconded the motion.

The motion was adopted by voice acclamation.

Mr. Cusick called the meeting back to order.

Mr. Lauer advised County Council went into Executive Session at 7:38 p.m. and returned at 8:08 p.m., at which time, a discussion was held regarding a litigation matter and a negotiation matter with respect to the labor issue.

Consideration of the Resolution Amending Resolution No. 32-2011 - Lehigh Valley Planning Commission Appointment

Mr. Cusick stated the County Executive requested the appointment of Ms. Sandra Yerger to the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission should be rescinded because he inadvertently recommended two appointees when there was only one vacancy.

Mr. Cusick introduced the following resolution:
R. 40-2011 WHEREAS, the Northampton County Executive has requested that the following appointment of Sandra Yerger to the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission should be rescinded because he inadvertently recommended two appointees when there was only one vacancy.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Northampton County Council that resolution 31-2011 shall be amended as indicated hereafter (sections marked with strikeout have been deleted)

Number 31-2011

RESOLVED, by the Northampton County Council that the following individuals shall be confirmed in their appointments/re-appointments as indicated hereafter:

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Re-appointment: Term to Expire: 3/17/16
Philip E. Gauffreau, P.E.
2230 Stonebridge Lane
Easton PA 18040

GAMING REVENUE AND ECONOMIC REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Appointment: Term to Expire: 12/31/15
Tony Pristash
1637 Main Street
Northampton PA 18067-1542

LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

Appointment: Term to Expire: 12/31/14
(Citizen)
Sandra B. Yerger
2734 Easton Road
Hellertown, PA 18055
Appointment:    Term to Expire: 12/31/11
(Elected Official)
Roger Unangst
7317 Bethlehem-Bath Pike
Bath PA 18014

LEHIGH VALLEY WORKFORCE
INVESTMENT BOARD

Appointment:    Term to Expire: 12/31/13
Kenneth M. Kraft
1707 Markham Drive
Bethlehem PA 18017

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
HOUSING AUTHORITY

Re-appointment:    Term to Expire: 2/9/16
Dwight Harris, Jr.
2625 Swanson Street
Easton PA 18045

PERSONNEL APPEALS BOARD

Re-appointments:    Term to Expire: 2/3/13
William H. Alexander
2821 5th Street
Bethlehem PA 18020

David Sanders
69 East Goepp Street
Bethlehem PA 18018

PERSONNEL COMMISSION

Appointment:    Term to Expire: 12/31/11
Kenneth J. Guerin
353 Kevin Drive
Bethlehem PA 18017
As there were no questions or comments, Mr. Cusick called for the vote.


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

Gracedale

Mr. Angle asked if there was going to be any discussions regarding Gracedale and what the County was going to do because he felt it was important that a plan be developed as to how the public was going to be informed of the facts. He commented it was illegal to spend tax dollars on re-election campaigns, however, he wondered what the legal opinion would be as this was not a re-election campaign, but a ballot issue and the people had a right to know the information.

Mr. Angle suggested bringing in a Certified Public Accountant to take a look at the County records and provide an independent determination as to what the true cost would be to keep Gracedale operating and up to standards.

In answer to Mr. McClure’s question as to who would choose the accountant, Mr. Angle advised it would have to be put out for bid.

When Mr. Cusick stated the time frame was not be workable, Mr. Angle disagreed.

Mr. Cusick advised he did not think that taxpayer money had to be used to inform them of the issue as it had been well reported in the newspapers to date and discussed numerous times, therefore, the voters could make up their minds from the information already out there.

Introduction of the Ordinance Titled, “AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING NORTHAMPTON COUNTY TO LEASE A PORTION OF COUNTY OWNED PROPERTY AT 255 LEVIS ROAD, UPPER NAZARETH TOWNSHIP, NORTHAMPTON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA TO T-MOBILE NORTHEAST LLC”
Mr. Cusick stated the Administration has requested that County Council approve a lease for County-owned property at Levis Road. He further advised during the past few weeks, the Administration reworked and revised the initial terms of the lease to read as indicated. He noted the public hearing, debate and possible vote will take place at the April 28, 2011 meeting.

Mrs. Ferraro and Mr. Dowd introduced the following ordinance:

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING NORTHAMPTON COUNTY TO LEASE A PORTION OF COUNTY OWNED PROPERTY AT 255 LEVIS ROAD, UPPER NAZARETH TOWNSHIP, NORTHAMPTON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA TO T-MOBILE NORTHEAST LLC

WHEREAS, Northampton County Home Rule Charter Article 602 (a)(6) provides that the Northampton County Council shall enact an ordinance for any act which "conveys or leases or authorizes that conveyance or lease of any real property of the County"; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY ORDAINED AND ENACTED by Northampton County Council that it does hereby authorize Northampton County to lease to T-Mobile Northeast LLC, a portion of County-owned property at 255 Levis Road (identified as Tax Parcel No. J7-13-9-PKB-242-Ac), Upper Nazareth Township, Northampton County, Pennsylvania for an initial annual rent of $1,800.00 per month, said rent to be adjusted in accordance with the terms of the lease agreement, attached hereto and made a part hereof as Exhibit "A".

Introduction of the Ordinance Titled, “AN ORDINANCE AMENDING NORTHAMPTON COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CODE ARTICLE XIII, PROCUREMENT AND DISPOSITION OF COUNTY PROPERTY, Section 13.15 PURCHASE, SALE AND LEASE OF REAL ESTATE”

Mr. Cusick advised the Administration requested the Administrative Code Section 13.15 be amended to waive the requirement of obtaining two appraisals in certain instances pertaining to the sale/lease of County property. He further advised the public hearing, debate and possible vote will take
place at the April 28, 2011 meeting.

Mrs. Ferraro and Mr. Cusick introduced the following ordinance:

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING NORTHAMPTON COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CODE ARTICLE XIII, PROCUREMENT AND DISPOSITION OF COUNTY PROPERTY, SECTION 13.15 PURCHASE, SALE AND LEASE OF REAL ESTATE, b. SEALED APPRAISALS

WHEREAS, Northampton County Home Rule Charter Section 202 Powers (7) provides that the County Council shall have the power “to adopt, amend, and repeal the Administrative Code”; and

WHEREAS, Northampton County Home Rule Charter Section 602. Ordinances (a) Acts Required (1) provides that the County Council shall “adopt an ordinance for any act which adopts or amends the Administrative Code...”

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDAINED AND ENACTED by the Northampton County Council that Northampton County Administrative Code, Article XIII, Section 13.15 Purchase, Sale and Lease of Real Estate, b. Sealed Appraisals, shall be amended to read as indicated hereafter (sections marked with **bold underline** have been added and sections marked with *strikeout* have been deleted):

**ARTICLE XIII**

**PROCUREMENT AND DISPOSITION OF COUNTY PROPERTY**

**SECTION** 13.15 **Purchase, Sale and Lease of Real Estate**

Section 13.15 **Purchase, Sale and Lease of Real Estate**

a. The County Executive has the authority to execute or cause to be executed on behalf of the County all deeds and contracts for the purchase, sale, or lease of real estate, subject to the procedures set forth in this article.
b. Sealed Appraisals. The County shall not purchase, sell, or lease real estate without first obtaining sealed appraisals from two (2) professional real estate appraisers. This requirement may be waived by the County Executive and approved by the Northampton County Council, by resolution, where it can be demonstrated that:

1. The costs of the appraisals are likely to exceed the value of the properties or project to which the appraisals pertain;

2. The nature of the project requiring a purchase, sale or lease of real estate does not justify the cost of appraisals or is otherwise deemed unnecessary;

3. The property at issue has been appraised within 2 years prior to the proposed sale, lease or purchase of the real estate, and the appraisals were approved by County Council;

4. Other compelling reasons exist to waive the appraisals for example, "time is of the essence" to complete the sale, lease or purchase, and a reasonable statement of value is available.

5. In any of circumstances set forth in sections 13.15 b.1., 2., 3. or 4., County Council shall approve, by
c. Purchase/Sale/Lease of Real Estate

(1) The County Executive, or his designee, may negotiate a contract for the purchase, sale or lease (with the County as lessor or lessee) of real estate. Any such purchase/sale/lease shall be approved by County Council, and no such contract shall bind the County nor shall any conveyance be lawful, until County Council approves of the terms of the purchase/sale/lease.

(2) In presenting a proposal or a contract to purchase/sell/lease real estate to County Council for approval, the County Executive shall make public the two sealed appraisals received by the County.

Consideration of the Collective Bargaining Unit Agreement Between the County of Northampton and AFSCME District Council 88, the Court Appointed Professional Unit

Mr. Cusick stated at the request of the Administration, County Council has been asked to approve the Collective Bargaining Unit Agreement between the County of Northampton and the Court Appointed Professional Unit.

Mrs. McHale introduced the following resolution:

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 the County of Northampton and AFSCME District Council
88, the Court Appointed Professional Unit, shall be approved
this 14th day of April 2011.

Mrs. McHale advised this agreement was reached through
arbitration and was retroactive to January 1, 2010.

Mr. Conklin stated this contract covered 62 members of the
AFSCME Court appointed professional group. He further stated
prior to his negotiations of the contract, this unit had filed
for arbitration in December 2009. He noted within two months,
due to the efforts of Ms. Radine Harwicks of AFSCME and Mr.
Arquimesdes Colon, President of this unit, they were able to
reduce 42 articles down to two.

Mr. Conklin advised the two items that moved forward to
arbitration were wages and health benefits. He further advised
the wage package for the year 2010 was a one step increase for
employees within the pay grade, which was 4.5%, and for those at
the top of the scale, a 4% increase.

Mr. Conklin stated in 2011, the award was for everyone at
the position in their pay grade in 2010, to be pumped up $1,000
across the board in their salary, no step movement, but a 2.25%
increase.

Mr. Conklin advised for 2012, there was a $500 bump from
where they were at on the 2011 scale, with a 2.25% increase on
top of it.

With regard to the healthcare, Mr. Conklin stated there was
no increase in the health care rates for 2010. He further
stated in 2011, it was increased 1% and for 2012, it would be
increased .5%, but there was a caveat that whatever Career
Service went to, their contribution would be increased the same.
He noted the three contract years averaged out to a 3.5% or less
increase, depending on where the 2012 health care contribution
came in once the Career Service rate was set.

Mr. Conklin advised Mrs. McHale had asked him to determine
a financial impact to the County for the 2011 budget year and he
roughly calculated that to be a little less than $250,000 for
two of the three years. He further stated he anticipated another $150,000 of 2012 monies to be used to complete the contract terms.

Mr. Angle remarked they were being given 3.5% raises and only giving back .5% toward health care benefits while there was more than 10% unemployment and the average person received no raise and was paying a large portion or all of their health care costs. He further remarked he did not think it was right to ask the taxpayers to pay for this so he would not support it.

Mrs. Ferraro commented she wanted to thank Mr. Conklin for all his efforts, but a Registered Nurse previously indicated she had not received a raise in ten years. She further advised arbitration was a powerful weapon that the union had and it never seemed to go in favor of the taxpayer, but always in favor of the union. She noted she was afraid this would set the County up for every contract that would be coming down the road and it was going to take a hit time and time again. She then asked what was the matter with a wage freeze.

Mrs. McHale stated the employees in this unit had not had a salary increase since 2009.

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


The resolution failed by a vote of 2-6.

Consideration of the Resolution in Support of the PennDOT Project to Install Cable Barriers Along Portions of the I-78 Corridor

Mr. Cusick advised at the request of Mr. Dietrich a resolution was prepared which indicated the support of County Council for the installation of cable barriers on the I-78 corridor in the Hellertown-Lower Saucon Area.

Mr. Dietrich introduced the following resolution:
WHEREAS, in the last several years, there have been a number of serious accidents along the Hellertown Borough - Lower Saucon Township portion of the I-78 Corridor (I-78 Corridor), which were caused by vehicles crossing the center median and colliding with oncoming traffic. Further, within the past eighteen months, five of the accidents involved fatalities; and

WHEREAS, responding emergency services personnel have voiced concern for their own safety while responding to accidents in this I-78 Corridor; and

WHEREAS, it is our understanding that the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) has authorized a contract for work to begin that will install cable barriers along Route I-78 from Exit 60 to the New Jersey border; and

WHEREAS, it is our understanding that cable barriers are very effective in stopping crossover vehicles and are easier to install and maintain than steel guard rails.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Northampton County Council that it unequivocally supports the installation of the cable barriers in the I-78 Corridor.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that the Northampton County Council feels that this safety feature is urgently needed to protect the welfare and safety of motorists and emergency responders alike.

FURTHER, the Northampton County Council extends its sincere thanks to PennDOT for initiating this project that will, once completed, protect all those who travel in the I-78 Corridor.

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

Mr. Dietrich advised the reason he was bringing this forward was a lot of local ambulance association members and the fire departments that had responded to some of the fatalities that had occurred on I-78 have brought up concerns that there had been no movement there as far as trying to correct the situation. He further advised there was a large area they felt if the median was significantly expanded, it would allow a person going off the road to be able to correct themselves
before going onto grass.

Mr. Dietrich stated in his research, he determined that PennDOT had already approved this project so he was asking for County Council to join the Borough of Hellertown in supporting this project.

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


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

Consideration of the Workers Memorial Day Resolution

Mr. Cusick advised at the request of Mr. McClure, a resolution was prepared declaring May 1, 2011 as Workers Memorial Day.

Mr. McClure introduced the following resolution:

R. 42-2011 WHEREAS, every year tens of thousands of American workers are killed by workplace injuries and occupational disease; and

WHEREAS, tens of thousands more are permanently disabled; and

WHEREAS, millions are injured or made ill; and

WHEREAS, concerned Americans are determined to prevent these tragedies by:

1. Observing Workers Memorial Day on May 1, 2011, as a day to remember these victims of workplace injuries and disease;

2. Renewing our efforts to seek stronger safety and health protections, better standards and enforcement and fair and just compensation; and
3. Rededicating ourselves to improving safety and health in every American workplace.

    **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Northampton County Council does hereby recognize and proclaim May 1, 2011 as Workers Memorial Day, a day to remember those workers killed, injured and/or disabled on the job.

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


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

**ArtsQuest Center - SteelStax**

    Mr. Cusick stated earlier in the day, Mrs. Ferraro, Mrs. McHale, Mrs. Stoffa and he attended the dedication of the ArtsQuest Center at SteelStax and the County of Northampton was presented a small glass sculpture.

    Mr. Cusick advised Mr. Jeff Parks, President of ArtsQuest, did a wonderful job and with the assistance of a lot of people completed an amazing project.

    Mrs. McHale stated it was a wonderful use of a brownfield and it was good to see such a great project come to fruition.

    Mrs. Ferraro advised the Lehigh Valley and this brownfield was going to be the envy of the country. She further advised she never thought when Bethlehem Steel closed that something like this could rise from the ashes. She noted that there were still a lot of empty buildings, but she would not be surprised that in a few years that whole area would be developed.

    Mr. Dowd stated he toured the building last week and he felt it was County money well spent and was going to be a marketable attraction for the Lehigh Valley.
Economic Development Committee Report

Mr. Dowd advised in the near future, he planned to have Mr. David Haines, the current Chairman of the Lehigh Northampton Airport Authority, attend an Economic Development Committee meeting.

Open Space Committee Report

Mr. Cusick stated he planned to have an Open Space Committee meeting to review some revisions to the Open Space Plan and three potential projects, all of which were in Upper Mount Bethel Township.

Pension Board

In response to Mr. Angle’s question as to whom the liaison was to the Pension Board, Mr. Cusick replied Mr. Gilbert, Mr. Dowd and Mrs. Ferraro.

In answer to Mr. Angle’s question as to what was new with the Pension Board, Mr. Dowd stated the County’s performance against the market was quite good.

When Mr. Dowd advised the County was doing well when compared with other Counties, Mr. Angle suggested they take a look at Berks County.

Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation

In response to Mr. Angle’s question as to what was new at the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, Mrs. Ferraro replied she was not prepared to provide a report this evening.

Mr. Angle commented if Mr. Cusick could find time to attend the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania conferences, he should be able to find the time to attend the Pension Board and Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation meetings.
Solicitor’s Report

Mr. Lauer stated beside the work done on the ordinances which were introduced and reviewing the Court decision regarding Gracedale, he had nothing else to report.

Union Bargaining Agreement

In answer to Mr. McClure’s question as to what happened now that the union’s Bargaining Agreement was not accepted, Mr. Karl Longenbach advised stated he did not know of this ever happening so he would have to review the matter.

Mr. McClure asked Mr. Longenbach to keep Mr. Lauer apprised of the situation.

Gracedale Court Decision

In response to Mr. Angle’s comment that he interpreted the Court’s decision to mean the previous decision provided by the Commonwealth Court based on an Erie County case was wrong, Mr. Lauer advised he believed they indicated the circumstances in the previous case were different from this case and that even though this issue may have a substantial effect on the budget, it did not violate the Home Rule Charter.

Adjournment

Mrs. McHale made a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Cusick seconded the motion.

The motion passed by acclamation.

Frank E. Flisser
Clerk to Council