A regular meeting of the Northampton County Council was held on the above date with the following present: Margaret L. Ferraro, President; Glenn A. Geissinger, Vice-President; Mathew M. Benol; Kenneth M. Kraft; Lamont G. McClure, Jr.; Scott Parsons; Hayden Phillips; Seth Vaughn; Robert F. Werner; Frank E. Flisser, Clerk to Council, and Philip D. Lauer, Solicitor to Council.

Prayer

Mrs. Ferraro led County Council in prayer to open the meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Kraft made the following motion:

Be It Moved By the Northampton County Council that the minutes of the January 23, 2014 meeting shall be approved.

Mr. Parsons seconded the motion.

The minutes were approved by voice acclamation.

Courtesy of the Floor

Mrs. Ferraro asked if there was anyone from the public who wished to offer comments. There were no respondents.

County Executive's Report

Mr. John A. Brown, County Executive, stated he received an e-mail from Mr. Robert Mateff, Director of Emergency Management Services, indicating they were receiving inquiries from around the County regarding a need for salt. He further stated 17 municipalities have indicated a dire need for salt so he planned to hold a meeting tomorrow to determine what could be done to get them some resources going forward.
Mr. McClure arrived at the meeting at this time.

Mr. Parsons advised he talked to the Borough Manager of Pen Argyl, who indicated they kept their salt approximately a quarter of a mile from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation storage area and they were not allowed to use any. He further advised he talked to Mr. Mateff, who indicated they were going to contact the State to see if they could provide these municipalities with salt.

Consideration of the County Executive's Appointment to the Position of Public Defender

Mrs. Ferraro stated the County Executive nominated Mr. Robert Eyer to serve as Chief Public Defender.

Mr. Kraft introduced the following resolution:

R. 11-2014 RESOLVED, by the Northampton County Council that Robert Eyer shall be confirmed in his appointment as Chief Public Defender in the Office of Public Defender, effective February 6, 2014. The salary shall be at Pay Scale RS, Pay Grade 13, Step 1-A, $57,920.

Mr. McClure advised he was very pleased with this nomination as he had known Mr. Eyer for a long time professionally and personally. He further advised he felt Mr. Eyer was qualified and urged the members of County Council to support this nomination.

Mr. Eyer stated he wanted to thank the County Executive for his consideration and nomination and to thank County Council in advance for their consideration.

As there were no further questions or comments, Mrs. Ferraro called for the vote.

The vote: Kraft, "yes"; Geissinger, "yes"; McClure, "yes"; Parsons, "yes"; Phillips, "yes"; Werner, "yes"; Vaughn, "yes"; Benol, "yes" and Ferraro, "yes".

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 9-0.
Consideration of the Resolution Amending the 2011 Emergency Solutions Grant

Mrs. Ferraro advised the Economic Development Committee met earlier tonight to review a resolution amending the 2011 Emergency Solutions Grant.

Mrs. Ferraro introduced the following resolution:

R. #12-2014

RESOLUTION OF THE COUNTY OF NORTHAMPTON AUTHORIZING THE FILING OF A REQUEST FOR REVISION OF THE 2011 EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania through the Department of Community and Economic Development (PADCED) has awarded FFY 2011 Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program funds to the Northampton County Department of Community and Economic Development (NCDCED) on behalf of several housing services providers, including Catholic Charities, Diocese of Allentown, ProJeCt of Easton, Inc., Victory House of Lehigh Valley and YMCA of Bethlehem, in order to provide Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing assistance; and

WHEREAS, the funds provided to the YMCA of Bethlehem will be returned to the County and unspent funds will be disencumbered; and

WHEREAS, Victory House of Lehigh Valley will disencumber a portion of its funds; and

WHEREAS, both the YMCA and Victory House have voluntarily agreed to these decreases to their grant commitments in order to ensure the funds remain within Northampton County to serve those in need; and

WHEREAS, Catholic Charities and ProJeCt of Easton are each agreeable to modifying their current scope of services so as to ensure the funds are put to the highest and best use prior to the current contract end date of August 30, 2014; and

WHEREAS, the PADCED requires approval of the governing body as a condition of submitting this revision request to the PADCED.
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AND IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED by the Northampton County Council that:

1. The NCDCED, on behalf of the County of Northampton, is authorized to request a revision to its ESG Program from the PADCED in order to modify the budget as requested for Catholic Charities, Diocese of Allentown, ProJeCT of Easton, Inc., Victory House of Lehigh Valley and YMCA of Bethlehem.

As there were no questions or comments, Mrs. Ferraro called for the vote.

The vote: Ferraro, "yes"; McClure, "yes"; Parsons, "yes"; Phillips, "yes"; Werner, "yes"; Vaughn, "yes"; Benol, "yes"; Geissinger, "yes" and Kraft, "yes".

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 9-0.

Consideration of the Codification Resolution for the Period Ending December 31, 2013

Mrs. Ferraro stated the Northampton County Home Rule Charter Section 606 (c) required County Council, by resolution, to adopt a codification of all ordinances, as amended, having the force and effect of law, and of the Charter, as amended. She further stated the codification was an annual housekeeping matter that arranged the ordinances in an index format.

Mr. Parsons introduced the following resolution:

R. 13-2014 WHEREAS, Northampton County Charter Section 606(c) requires the Northampton County Council to provide, by resolution, a codification of all ordinances, as amended, having the force and effect of law and of the Charter, as amended.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Northampton County Council that the attached codification, for the period ending December 31, 2013, shall be adopted this 6th day of February 2014.

As there were no questions or comments, Mrs. Ferraro called for the vote.
The vote: Parsons, "yes"; Werner, "yes"; Vaughn, "yes"; Benol, "yes"; Ferraro, "yes"; Geissinger, "yes"; Kraft, "yes"; McClure, "yes" and Phillips, "yes".

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 9-0.

Northampton County Prison - Community Education Center

Mr. McClure advised he was going to ask the Controller to do an audit on the Community Education Center (CEC). Mr. McClure advised the County committed and continues to commit millions of dollars to this organization that set up various programs at the Northampton County Prison (Prison) without any definitive evidence that any of the programs were returning any benefit to the taxpayers.

Mr. McClure stated what he was looking for, but had been unable to get, was a metric as to how to judge the success of these programs. He further stated he knew it felt good to vote for these programs, but there should be some basic metric to judge whether they were working.

Mr. McClure advised it had been stated that there was a 33% recidivism rate for the individuals who went through the CEC program, but the overall recidivism rate for the Prison had not gone down appreciably so how effective could the program be. He further advised this is what he wanted to find out so he wanted to work with the Controller to come up with parameters for the audit.

Mr. McClure stated a simple audit of whether they were spending the money on what they indicated they would spend it on would not be sufficient. He further stated the County needed to know how, if a judgment could be reached to determine if the programs were successful.

Mr. McClure advised the Prison may be able to tell whether these individuals came back to this prison, but they would not be able to tell if they went to another one. He further advised he would also like to know if they were actually doing the work or hiring other people to do it.

Mr. Parsons stated he agreed with Mr. McClure that County Council had to set the parameters as to what information it was looking for.
Mr. McClure advised besides determining what the audit should consist of, another conversation County Council should have would be whether programs of this type should be going on at the Prison since individuals could not spend more than two years there and the vast majority spent less than that so was there enough time for these programs to be effective or were they more suitable for State institutions.

Mr. McClure stated he was all for General Educational Development programs because there was real solid evidence that a high school diploma kept people from coming back. He further stated he was also for drug and alcohol programs to the extent the Prison could provide them in the short time the people were there.

Mr. Stephen Barron, Controller, advised he would like a resolution from County Council so he would know the exact parameters it was looking at to make sure he addressed each of the issues. He further advised he would not render an opinion as to whether the County should continue these programs or not because that was a legislative decision.

In response to Mr. Werner’s question as to whether he currently monitored the Prison, Mr. Barron stated there were usually a few audits every year that did something with regard to the Prison. He further stated they did performance audits of programs and contracts quite regularly.

Mr. Barron advised once he received the resolution, they would put an audit program together with feedback from County Council.

In answer to Mr. McClure’s question as to whether this was something his office could do, Mr. Barron replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Parsons asked Mr. McClure to put together the information he was looking for and present it to his colleagues for review so a resolution could be prepared for the next meeting.

After some conversation, it was determined that the members of County Council would present the information they were looking for to Mr. McClure, who would then draft a resolution.
Open Space Committee Report

Mr. Parsons stated an Open Space Committee meeting was scheduled for February 17, 2014, at 5:30 p.m., to discuss some park grants and an open space project.

Finance Committee Report

Mr. Geissinger advised the Finance Committee met with the auditors who agreed to look at a parallel accounting system for Gracedale to provide a more accurate picture of both long term liabilities and long term receivables while conforming to the necessary accounting standards of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB). He further advised they also discussed GASB regulations regarding long term pension liabilities that would be coming into effect.

Courts and Corrections Committee Report

Mr. Benol stated it had been a while since this committee met so he wanted to obtain more information from the necessary individuals to determine where he wanted to take it.

Capital Projects and Operations Committee Report

Mr. Phillips advised he had scheduled three meetings to occur at 6:00 p.m., on March 18, 2014, June 17, 2014 and September 16, 2014, to discuss current and future capital projects and to develop a maintenance management plan.

Economic Development Committee Report

Mrs. Ferraro stated the Economic Development Committee met earlier this evening and Dr. David DeRemer, Chair of the Northampton County Housing Authority (Housing Authority) spoke on the future sustainability of the authority. She further stated one part of the Housing Authority was public housing and the other was Section 8, which was now called The Housing Choice Voucher.
Mrs. Ferraro advised they were doing okay with the 100 public rental units, but they were having some difficulties with the 650 units under the voucher program due to constant cutbacks from the Department of Housing and Urban Development program. She further advised for the sake of efficiency and economy, the Housing Authority was now working with Lehigh County, which had 1000 units, to get them through this time.

Lehigh Valley Planning Commission Liaison Report

Mr. Vaughn stated the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) was moving forward with the new proposed FedEx distribution center in East Allen Township. He further stated there were some citizens who had concerns regarding traffic, but from LVPC’s standpoint, it was within the scope of their goal for the future of Lehigh and Northampton Counties so it passed unanimously.

County Council Solicitor’s Report

Mr. Lauer advised a member of County Council made a request regarding the possibility of an ordinance to provide certain types of property tax relief for senior citizens. He further advised there were some issues with the request, which he was reviewing, and would report back at the next meeting.

Adjournment

Mr. McClure made a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Geissinger seconded the motion.

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously by acclamation.