Easton, Pennsylvania

December 15, 2016

A regular meeting of the Northampton County Council was held on the above date with the following present: John Cusick, President; Seth Vaughn, Vice President (via telephone); Mathew M. Benol; Matthew H. Dietz (via telephone); Margaret L. Ferraro; Glenn A. Geissinger; Kenneth M. Kraft; Hayden Phillips; Robert F. Werner; Linda M. Zembo, Clerk to Council, Sharon Wengryn, Executive Secretary, Philip D. Lauer, Solicitor to Council.

Prayer

Mr. Cusick led County Council in a moment of silence.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Benol 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 December 1, 2016 and November 30, 2016 meetings shall be approved.

Mr. Geissinger seconded the motion.

The minutes were approved by voice acclamation.

Courtesy of the Floor

Mr. Bernie O’Hare, Nazareth, PA - displayed a map showing items such as the voter turnout and how the parties voted from the recent election. He stated this map was prepared by the Geographic Information Services Division and was on a bulletin board in the Assessment Office where most people did not go. He further stated this map represented the types of things that belonged on the County’s webpage.
Mr. O'Hare advised the webpage had been revamped recently and as far as he was concerned it was a disaster. He further advised when it went live two weeks ago it had pictures of two Lehigh County businesses and failed to include direct links to important things such as where a resident could pay its tax bill or fine or even to a video of this meeting.

Mr. O'Hare stated the election results, which were the most important function of the Elections Office, were not even linked on line and the office itself was buried under the Department of Administration. He further stated the previous webpage had more years of election results and County Council minutes compared to what was on the new webpage.

Mr. O'Hare advised this was not transparency and was a step backwards. He further advised it was a step that was taken if the County wanted to keep the people from government instead of being interested in it.

Controller’s Report

Mr. Stephen Barron, Controller, stated he noticed that County Council was going to consider the position of Emergency Management Services Director tonight. He further stated he believed Mr. Todd Weaver was qualified, but there were a few things that County Council may want to look into to make sure everything was above board specifically with the Fire Training Academies.

Mr. Barron advised Mr. Weaver signed off on approximately $100,000 in training that was paid to Northampton Community College for Hazmat First Responder Training and Fire Training to volunteer fire departments. He further advised one of the primary instructors in those classes was Mr. Richard Weaver who was Mr. Weaver’s father.

Mr. Barron stated he did not know if that relationship should be disclosed under the Ethics Act because he was signing off on a considerable amount of money and had been doing so since 2015 and maybe longer.

Mr. Barron advised he received telephone calls indicating people were not going to these trainings because they were held at the Washington Township Fire Hall and Mr. Weaver’s wife did the concessions there or served the food. He further advised
Mr. Weaver was on the board and his family were members.

Mr. Barron stated he would like to know if the training rotated to different fire departments because the Nancy Run Fire Company just built a new facility on William Penn Highway and they may be interested in hosting something like this. He further stated if revenue was being generated from the sale of food at these events and it was only benefitting one fire hall maybe others would enjoy receiving that revenue or opportunity to host.

Mr. Barron suggested that as County Council was voting on this they might consider making it a condition to look at some of these things even though this was just being presented to County Council due to the salary increase.

In answer to Mr. Cusick's question as to whether his office had been in touch with the new outside auditor, Mr. Barron advised they have started the cycle testing and everything was going to remain as is for now. He further advised the auditors were going to be here in early January to start going over some things, but the one thing they needed was the materiality numbers, which they should be getting.

County Executive’s Report

Mr. John A. Brown, County Executive, stated he signed off on the contracts for fire training. He further stated the training did not consist of just sitting in a fire hall and be briefed, but they also used the fire training house that was situated out there.

Mr. Brown advised he would ask County Council to support the move of Mr. Weaver as he had been doing a good job since 2015 in the acting role and he would ensure the proper checks and balances were in place.

Public Hearing on the 2017 Millage Rate Ordinance

Mr. Cusick advised the following ordinance was introduced by Messrs. Kraft and Benol at the December 1, 2016 meeting:

AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE REAL ESTATE TAX MILLAGE RATES IN THE COUNTY OF NORTHAMPTON FOR THE YEAR 2017
IT IS HEREBY ORDAINED AND ENACTED that the millage rate for real estate tax purposes for the year 2017 shall be set at 11.8 mills on every dollar of assessed valuation of taxable real estate or $1.18 on every $100.00 of assessed valuation.

Public Hearing

Mr. Cusick asked if there were any questions or comments from the public.

There were no respondents.

Mr. Cusick asked if there were any questions or comments from members of County Council.

There were no respondents.

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

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

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

Consideration of the Director of Emergency Management Services Resolution

Mr. Kraft introduced the following resolution:

R. 149-2016 WHEREAS, Mr. Todd Weaver has been the Acting Director of Emergency Management Services since May 2, 2015; and

WHEREAS, on December 14, 2016, Mr. Weaver has accepted the position of Director of Emergency Management Services, at a salary of $91,051.

IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED by the Northampton County Council that they support the acceptance of Mr. Weaver as Director of Emergency Management Services.
Mr. Cusick stated he had known Mr. Weaver for quite some time in his role as Deputy Director and found him to be very professional and knowledgeable. He further stated the position had been vacant for a while when he took the acting role and it is going to be necessary to have someone with experience when the County integrates with the City of Bethlehem's system.

Mr. Phillips advised he appreciated Mr. Barron's comments, but it would not negatively impact his decision because he believed the County Executive would have the necessary safeguards in place.

In response to Mr. Kraft's question as to why this was being brought forward at this time because there was a rule about presenting appointments to County Council, Mr. Cusick stated this was not an appointment, but a step increase and personally he was happy to see the position being filled.

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

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

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

Consideration of Administrative Code Article XIII Contract Approval Resolution: Pinebrook Family Answers

Mr. Geissinger introduced the following resolution:

R. 150-2016 WHEREAS, Northampton County Administrative Code Article XIII Procurement and Disposition of County Property, Section 13.16 Contracts and Agreements c. (1) requires approval of County Council for "...any contract exceeding $100,000, which was awarded using the Competitive Negotiation, Negotiation After Competitive Sealed Bidding, and Non-Competitive Negotiation source selection methods. For contracts with renewal clauses, the entire potential payout if all renewal clauses are exercised under the terms of the contract must be considered when determining if Council approval is necessary"; and
WHEREAS, on December 7, 2016, the Northampton County Council received a request from the County Executive for County Council to adopt a resolution approving a contract with Pinebrook Family Answers for a term of two years with an option to renew for three additional one (1) year terms for a total expenditure for five years (if all renewals are exercised) of $786,795.22 for inmate treatment classes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Northampton County Council does hereby concur with the recommendation of the County Executive, as set forth in the attached documentation to approve a contract with Pinebrook Family Answers.

Mr. Phillips advised there had been discussions in the past about the recidivism rate and he hoped they would provide information to justify their rates.

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


The resolution was adopted by a vote of 8-1.

Consideration of a Resolution Accepting a Donation to the Gracedale Veterans

Mr. Cusick introduced the following resolution:

R. 151-2016 WHEREAS, Northampton County Home Rule Charter Section 202 (10) provides that County Council shall have, among others, the following powers: “to accept on behalf of the County any gifts of real property and to provide for the acceptance by any agency on behalf of the County of other gifts;” and

WHEREAS, the Lehigh Valley Chapter 190 Military Order of the Purple Heart is donating the amount of $710.00 to be divided and evenly distributed in the house account for each Gracedale resident who is a Veteran.
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Northampton County Council that it does hereby accept the donation of $710.00 for the Veterans at Gracedale.

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

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

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

Intergovernmental Transfer Meeting

Mr. Phillips stated it was decided the County was going to participate again this year in the Intergovernmental Transfer Program so he would be presenting a resolution next year.

Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) Liaison Report

Mr. Phillips advised LVPC was working on their plan for 2030, noting it took approximately a year to put together.

Northampton County Historical and Genealogical Society (NCH&GS) Report

Mr. Phillips stated he was appointed to be the liaison, along with Mr. Tim Herrlinger, Director of the Department of Community and Economic Development, and Mr. Mark Hartney, Administrator, Department of Community and Economic Development, to the NCH&GS for the publishing of the history of the County. He further stated Mr. Hartney was putting together an agreement to codify the grant and how they were using it.

In answer to Mr. Cusick’s question as to how many books were going to be published, Mr. Phillips advised there was going to be 1,000 soft bound books and 1,000 hard bound books. He further advised the publisher agreed to lock in the prices for a year in the event more copies were needed.
Retirement Board Liaison Report

Mr. Cusick stated the Retirement Board met last week and the pension fund balance was approximately $361 million. He further stated they voted not to give a Cost of Living Adjustment to the retirees.

Human Services Ceremony

Mr. Werner advised the Department of Human Services held a ceremony to honor those employees who had given 20 plus years of service to the County.

Adjournment

Mr. Benol made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Kraft seconded the motion.

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously by acclamation.

_________________________________
Linda M. Zembo
Clerk to Council