

Easton, Pennsylvania

December 10, 2020

The regular meeting of the Northampton County Council was held via Zoom on the above date with the following present: Ronald R. Heckman, President; Lori Vargo Heffner, Vice President; John Cusick; Thomas A. Giovanni; Kevin Lott; William B. McGee; Kerry L. Myers; Tara M. Zrinski; Linda M. Zembo, Clerk to Council; Alene M. Shafnisky, Deputy Clerk to Council and Christopher T. Spadoni, Solicitor to Council. Absent was Margaret L. Ferraro.

Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Vargo Heffner led County Council in the pledge of allegiance.

Approval of the Minutes - December 3, 2020; December 1, 2020 (Budget Hearing)

Ms. Vargo Heffner made the following motion:

Be It Moved By the Northampton County Council that the minutes of the December 3, 2020 and December 1, 2020 (Budget Hearing) meetings shall be approved.

Mr. Giovanni seconded the motion.

The minutes were approved by voice acclamation.

Confirmation of Appointments/Reappointments

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 159-2020 **RESOLVED**, by the Northampton County Council that the following individuals shall be confirmed in their re-appointments as indicated hereafter:

GENERAL PURPOSE AUTHORITY

Re-appointment:

Anne Baum  
3621 Hickory Hill Road  
Bethlehem, PA 18105

Terms to Expire: 12/31/25

Re-appointment:

Lori Vargo Heffner  
1481 Sanbrook Court  
Bethlehem, PA 18015

Term to Expire: 12/31/25

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

The vote: McGee, "yes"; Giovanni, "yes"; Heckman, "yes"; Lott, "yes"; Vargo Heffner, "yes"; Zrinski, "yes" and Cusick, "yes".

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 7-0.

Courtesy of the Floor

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

There were no respondents.

County Executive Report

Mr. Lamont McClure, County Executive, stated a letter was received from Master Brady Snakovsky, who was a fifth grader in Strongsville, Ohio, that indicated he ran a non-profit organization called Brady's Canine Fund that donated ballistic and stab approved vests for canines. He further stated that Brady's Canine Fund would like to donate a street fighter custom-made vest manufactured by Line of Fire Defense Systems that was valued at \$1,500 to Boomer of the Northampton County Sheriff's Department. He then asked County Council to accept this vest donation later in the meeting.

Mr. McClure advised after County Council approved the small business grants today they would have given more than \$10.7 million to 766 businesses. He further advised he saw a statistic that indicated small businesses accounted for 44% of all economic activity in the County and were responsible for approximately two-thirds of new jobs created.

With regard to Gracedale, Mr. McClure stated over the last five and a half months, 14 residents tested positive, three have passed with COVID-19 listed on their death certificates, and 18

employees tested positive. He further stated there were five residents who were currently positive, but the last positive resident was diagnosed on November 30<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. McClure advised the entire staff at Gracedale was doing a great job, but they did have five employees who were positive and quarantined.

With regard to the Jail, Mr. McClure advised 37 inmates were in quarantine with a positive diagnosis. He further advised 25 employees have tested positive since the beginning of the pandemic and all have returned to work. He noted there were currently 545 inmates at the Jail.

Consideration of a Resolution Regarding Small Business Grants through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act

Mr. Lott introduced the following resolution:

R. 160-2020

A RESOLUTION APPROVING INDIVIDUAL NORTHAMPTON COUNTY COVID-19 RELIEF SMALL BUSINESS GRANTS TO NORTHAMPTON COUNTY BUSINESSES VIA THE COVID-19 COUNTY RELIEF BLOCK GRANT

**WHEREAS**, Act 24 of 2020 was signed by Governor Tom Wolf on May 29, 2020, and provides \$625 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding by means of block grants for counties in the commonwealth through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development; and

**WHEREAS**, this funding is authorized to be used for the following purposes:

1. Offsetting the costs of direct County response, planning and outreach efforts related to COVID-19.
2. Small Business Grant Programs to support businesses with fewer than 100 employees and to support businesses and other entities primarily engaged in the tourism industry.
3. Grant programs to support the following for costs related to assisting businesses during COVID-19 Disaster Emergency: Certified Economic Development

Organizations, Local Development Districts Industrial Resource Center, Small Business Development Centers and Economic Development Corporations.

4. Assistance to cities, boroughs, incorporated towns or townships within eligible counties for response and planning efforts related to COVID-19.
5. Behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment services.
6. Nonprofit assistance programs for entities that are an exempt organization under section 501(c) (3) or 501 (c) (19) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.
7. Broadband internet deployment with priority given to unserved or underserved areas; and

**WHEREAS**, Northampton County was awarded an allocation of \$27,569,940 of COVID-19 County Relief Block Grant Funding by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development; and

**WHEREAS**, on July 2, 2020 Northampton County Council through Resolution No. 60-2020, incorporated hereto by reference, authorized the establishment of a small business grant program for businesses with fewer than 100 employees; and

**WHEREAS**, on December 8, 2020, Northampton County Council received a list of 93 applicants whose applications were deemed administratively complete after being reviewed by a committee consisting of one Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce staff member, members of the County Administration and members of Northampton County Council; and

**WHEREAS**, the recommendations attached hereto and made a part hereof as Exhibit A, consisted of 93 businesses receiving a total of \$1,296,655 in grant funds.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the County of Northampton:

1. That the recommended grants to businesses in Exhibit A are approved.

2. That the Director of Fiscal Affairs is authorized to issue checks in the approved amounts to the approved businesses.

In answer to Mr. Cusick's question as to what type of business was Jason Bradford, Ms. Tina Smith, Director of Community and Economic Development, stated it was a small landscaping business.

In response to Mr. Cusick's question as to what type of business was Daniel Del Maso, Ms. Smith advised it was an excavating business.

In answer to Mr. McGee's question as to whether there were more applicants than awardees, Ms. Smith stated unfortunately they had no funding available for just over 600 additional businesses who applied and it did not look like they would be receiving any additional funds from the State.

In response to Ms. Zrinski's question as to whether this money was available for businesses that started in February or March, Ms. Smith advised one of the qualifications was they had to be in business for one calendar year.

In answer to Ms. Zrinski's question as to whether there would be any money available for them, Ms. Smith stated there were no funds available, but they could have participated in some of the training programs the County set up at Northampton Community College and/or Small Business Development Center at Lehigh University or applied to Rising Tide or through any of the Federal programs for a loan.

In response to Mr. Heckman's question as to what type of business was Beverly Palm, Ms. Smith advised it was a jewelry store.

Mr. Myers joined the meeting at this time.

In answer to Mr. Myers' question as to whether these were new applicants, Ms. Smith replied they were.

Ms. Vargo Heffner stated the committee did an excellent job to make sure there were no duplications or had not received money from other sources.

Ms. Smith advised she wanted to acknowledge Ms. Jessica O'Donnell and Ms. Brittany Wiltshire of the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce (GLVCC) for their hard work and partnership because this could not have been accomplished without them.

Ms. O'Donnell thanked County Council and the County Executive for their leadership because they have heard from many businesses about the impact these grants made and that it was truly a lifeline for many of them.

Ms. Wiltshire stated it personally was heartwarming for her to see County Council and the County Executive put all this effort into helping small businesses. She further stated they have received numerous e-mails and telephone calls from businesses that were really hurting during this time and wanted to thank the County for everything they were doing to help them.

Mr. Lott advised he wanted everyone to know that the GLVCC did this out of the goodness of their hearts since any money they received helped businesses in the Main Street Program. He further advised they were instrumental in getting this money out quickly.

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

The vote: Lott, "yes"; Heckman, "yes"; McGee, "yes"; Myers, "yes"; Vargo Heffner, "yes"; Zrinski, "yes"; Cusick, "yes" and Giovanni, "yes".

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

Consideration of Transfers from 2020 Contingency Account Resolutions: a) \$5,000 to the Center for Animal Health and Welfare; b) \$10,000 to Habitat for Humanity Lehigh Valley; c) \$5,000 to the Saucon Valley Community Center

\$5,000 to the Center for Animal Health and Welfare

Mr. Cusick introduced the following resolution:

R. 161-2020 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Northampton County Council that the sum of \$5,000 shall be transferred from the 2020 Contingency account #05000-76050 to the Center for Animal Health and Welfare.

Mr. Cusick stated every year County employees held a bake sale and the proceeds were given to this organization; however, due to the pandemic, they were unable to do so.

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

The vote: Cusick, "yes"; Lott, "yes"; McGee, "yes"; Myers, "yes"; Vargo Heffner, "yes"; Zrinski, "yes"; Giovanni, "yes" and Heckman, "yes".

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

\$10,000 to Habitat for Humanity Lehigh Valley

Mr. Cusick introduced the following resolution:

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Northampton County Council that the sum of \$10,000 shall be transferred from the 2020 Contingency account #05000-76050 to Habitat for Humanity Lehigh Valley for its South Bethlehem project.

Mr. Cusick advised this project was discussed during the budget process and he felt strongly that it was a good one. He further advised Ms. Jessica Elliott, Director of Habitat for Humanity, informed them she thought she had to apply for a Community Development Block Grant and they would not be eligible.

Mr. Cusick stated after hearing about the project, he felt they could have applied for an Affordable Housing Grant, but there was no funding available at this time so he was requesting to take this money from County Council's Contingency account.

Mr. Lott advised he would like to see a better relationship between Habitat for Humanity and the Department of Community and Economic Development. He further advised he would support this, but suggested having it handled like a grant through the Department of Community and Economic Development.

Ms. Smith stated she talked with Ms. Elliott about this project, informed her they would need additional information and recommended they go through the grant process so her department could monitor their activities.

Mr. Heckman made a motion to add the wording "to be administered by the Northampton County Department of Community and Economic Development".

Mr. Cusick seconded the motion.

In response to Mr. McGee's question as to what would happen to the money if the project was not completed, Mr. Stephen Barron, Director of Fiscal Affairs, advised if it was not completed within a calendar year, it would go back to the Contingency Fund.

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

The vote: Heckman, "yes"; Cusick, "yes"; Zrinski, "yes"; Giovanni, "yes"; Lott, "yes"; McGee, "yes"; Myers, "yes" and Vargo Heffner, "yes".

The motion was passed by a vote of 8-0.

Mr. Heckman called for the vote on the amended resolution:

R. 162-2020 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Northampton County Council that the sum of \$10,000 shall be transferred from the 2020 Contingency account #05000-76050 to Habitat for Humanity Lehigh Valley for its South Bethlehem project to be administered by the Northampton County Department of Community and Economic Development.

The vote: Cusick, "yes"; McGee, "yes"; Myers, "yes"; Vargo Heffner, "yes"; Zrinski, "yes"; Giovanni, "yes"; Heckman, "yes" and Lott, "yes".

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

\$5,000 to the Saucon Valley Community Center

Ms. Vargo Heffner introduced the following resolution:

R. 163-2020 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Northampton County Council that the sum of \$5,000 shall be transferred from the 2020 Contingency account #05000-76050 to the Saucon Valley Community Center.

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

The vote: Vargo Heffner, "yes"; Myers, "yes"; Zrinski, "yes"; Cusick, "yes"; Giovanni, "yes"; Heckman, "yes"; Lott, "yes" and McGee, "yes".

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

Motion to Accept the Donation of a Canine Vest for Boomer in the Sheriff's Department

Mr. Heckman made a motion to accept the donation of a vest from Brady's Canine Fund for Boomer in the Sheriff's Department.

Ms. Zrinski seconded the motion.

In answer to Mr. Myers' question as to who was donating the vest, Mr. Heckman replied a young man from Ohio who started an organization to provide protective vests to canine officers.

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

Mr. Heckman, "yes"; Zrinski, "yes"; Vargo Heffner, "yes"; Cusick, "yes"; Giovanni, "yes"; Lott, "yes"; McGee, "yes" and Myers, "yes".

The motion was passed by a vote of 9-0.

Retirement of County Council's Executive Secretary

Mr. Heckman stated that Ms. Sharon Wengryn, County Council's Executive Secretary would be retiring at the end of the year after approximately 17 years of employment and she was wished all the best.

Council Clerk's Report

Ms. Zembo advised there will be a County Council meeting at 4:30 p.m. on December 17, 2020, to hold the public hearing on the District Magistrate Justice lease.

Adjournment

Ms. Vargo Heffner made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Myers seconded the motion.

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously by acclamation.

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Linda M. Zembo  
Clerk to Council