

Easton, Pennsylvania

December 3, 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; Margaret L. Ferraro; 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.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Myers led County Council in the pledge of allegiance.

Approval of the Minutes - November 19, 2020

Mr. Myers made the following motion:

Be It Moved By the Northampton County Council that the minutes of the November 19, 2020 meeting shall be approved.

Ms. Zrinski seconded the motion.

The minutes were approved by voice acclamation.

Confirmation of Appointments/Reappointments

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 134-2020 **RESOLVED**, by the Northampton County Council that the following individuals shall be confirmed in their appointments/re-appointments as indicated hereafter:

AIRPORT AUTHORITY BOARD

Appointment:

James Irwin
440 Spruce Lane
Nazareth, PA 18064

Term to Expire: 12/31/25

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY CONSERVATION
DISTRICT BOARD

Appointment:

Tara Zrinski
4715 Harriet Lane
Bethlehem, PA 18017

Term to Expire: 12/31/21

MENTAL HEALTH, EARLY INTERVENTION
AND DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMS
ADVISORY BOARD

Reappointment:

Jean Morgano
123 2nd Street
Nazareth, PA 18064

Term to Expire: 1/23/24

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

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

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

Courtesy of the Floor

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

Mr. Matthew Munsey - stated he addressed County Council previously about his concerns regarding the 2019 election and he was here tonight to talk about the 2020 election. He further stated a lot of things had changed with regard to the election process.

Mr. Munsey advised he wanted to thank the Elections Office for running as smooth as an election that could be done under the circumstances. He further advised there was mail-in voting for the first time and approximately 80,000 ballots were sent out with 70,000 of them returned to be processed.

Mr. Munsey stated there were also 2700 provisional votes as a result of the mail-in ballots with 400-500 of them being challenged. He further stated he believed provisional ballots would continue to be an issue in the future so he hoped the Elections Office was preparing for them.

Mr. Munsey advised people had difficulty getting ballots sent to them so perhaps a tracking system could be established with the postal services. He requested the County to provide the resources for 2021 and beyond when CARES Act funding would not be available.

Ms. Jessica Elliot, Director, Habitat for Humanity - stated she received a telephone call from Mr. Cusick inquiring about whether they had a project within Northampton County, which they did, so she was requested to participate tonight to answer any questions.

In answer to Mr. Heckman's question as to what were their plans for next year, Ms. Elliott advised there was a piece of land in South Bethlehem that they were looking to build a twin home of approximately 1300 square feet each. She further advised they did have some funding to start and they were applying for the permits. She noted they planned to complete the project in one year.

In response to Mr. Myers' question as to where in South Bethlehem, Ms. Elliott stated on Williams Street.

In answer to Mr. Heckman's question as to why there had been no communication with the County's Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) since 2019, Ms. Elliott replied they had a good relationship with them, but they have not applied for any funding since then.

Mr. Lott advised Habitat for Humanity was a great organization and there was grant funding available, but to be fair to all the non-profits looking to receive those funds, they should follow the application procedures.

Ms. Elliott advised they do follow the grant process, but they have not submitted an application because the first page indicated the City of Bethlehem received their own Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding and the County was looking to serve programs servicing the townships and boroughs outside the City of Bethlehem so based on that statement, she felt they would not be able to receive funding.

Ms. Tina Smith, Director of DCED, stated they did not fund CDBG projects in the City of Bethlehem, but this project would be funded from the Affordable Housing grant.

In response to Ms. Zrinski's question as to whether this project would qualify, Ms. Smith advised it would, but that was competitive grant program. She further advised at this time they did not have enough funds in their coffers to create a competitive round so they felt it would not be fair to the rest of the non-profits.

In answer to Ms. Zrinski's question as to whether they would be circumventing the process by approving this funding, Ms. Smith stated they would love to work with Habitat for Humanity if they had a substantial amount to open a competitive round for 2021, but they did not the funds available.

In response to Mr. Heckman's question as to whether they could get funding in 2021, Ms. Smith advised they would not because \$150,000 was already allocated for 30 families to receive \$5,000 each to enable them to get into a home and the carryover balance was committed to previous grants. She further advised if they reserved this money, they could provide \$5,000 to four families to get into a home.

Ms. Zrinski stated her concern was Habitat for Humanity did not ask for this money so did they just find a project in order to receive it. She further stated she felt this money might be better spent on COVID-related needs that may arise in the next few months.

Mr. Cusick advised it was unfortunate there was a misunderstanding with regard to the difference between this grant and the CDBG and if it had been explained, this may have been avoidable. He further advised one of the options County Council had was to take the funds from its Contingency account because he felt this was a worthy project and they were ready to start next year.

County Executive Report

Mr. Lamont McClure, County Executive, stated tonight could possibly end a process that started on June 1, 2020 with the Administration preparing a budget that was given to County Council on October 2, 2020, without a tax increase and over 20 hours of budget hearings. He further stated this budget was 11% smaller than last year's and that was 6% smaller than the previous year

while still fully funding farmland preservation, environmentally sensitive land and open space priorities.

Mr. McClure advised Gracedale, with all of its requested needs, was also being fully funded without a contribution from the County so he respectfully requested that County Council adopt this budget unanimously.

Consideration of Matters Related to the 2021 Northampton County Budget and Capital Improvements Plan:

Consideration of Budgetary/Position Related Issues:

(1) Created or Eliminated Positions

District Attorney's Office - County Detective

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 135-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the Northampton County Council that one (1) full time position of County Detective, pay grade DE-25-1A, salary \$57,516, shall be created in the District Attorney's Office, effective January 1, 2021.

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

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

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

District Attorney's Office - Public Relations Administrator

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 136-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the Northampton County Council that one (1) full time position of Public Relations Administrator, pay grade CS-21-1A, salary \$46,097, shall be created in the District Attorney's Office, effective January 1, 2021.

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

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

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

Court Services Administration - Clerical Technician 3

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 137-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the Northampton County Council that one (1) full time position of Clerical Technician 3, pay grade CR-15-1A, salary \$29,825, shall be created in the Department of Court Services - Administration, effective January 1, 2021.

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

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

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

Court Services Criminal Division - Clerical Technician 3

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 138-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the Northampton County Council that one (1) full time position of Clerical Technician 3, pay grade CR-15-1A, salary \$29,825, shall be eliminated in the Department of Court Services - Criminal Division, effective January 1, 2021.

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

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

Court Services - Archives Division - Clerical Technician 3

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 139-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the Northampton County Council that one (1) full time position of Clerical Technician 3, pay grade CR-15-1A, salary \$29,825, shall be created in the Department of Court Services - Archives Division, effective January 1, 2021.

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

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

Department of Public Works - Parks and Recreation - Parks Maintenance Summer Staff

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 140-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the Northampton County Council that one (1) part-time position of Parks Maintenance Summer Staff, pay grade CS-6-1A, salary \$11,554, shall be created in the Department of Public Works - Parks and Recreation, effective January 1, 2021.

In answer to Mr. Myers' question as to how many months would this individual work, Mr. Michael Emili, Director of Public Works, replied from May until August.

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

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

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

Department of Human Services - Area Agency on Aging - Van Driver

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 141-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the Northampton County Council that one (1) full time position of Van Driver, pay grade PS-26-1A, salary \$27,766, shall be eliminated in the Department of Human Services - Area Agency on Aging Division, effective January 1, 2021.

In response to Mr. Myers' question as to why they were eliminating this position, Ms. Susan Wandalowski, Director of Human Services, stated there has not been someone in this position for two years as there was no need. She further stated they kept the position vacant until now in case a need arose, but none did so it was decided to eliminate this position and create a Clerk Typist 2 position to help with the paperwork in this division.

In answer to Mr. Myers' question as to how the County was getting its elderly that needed assistance around, Ms. Wandalowski advised most of the seniors were eligible to use Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority services, which the County subsidized.

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

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

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

Department of Human Services - Area Agency on Aging - Clerk Typist 2

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 142-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the Northampton County Council that one (1) full time position of Clerk Typist 2, pay grade PS-27-1A, salary \$29,157, shall be created in the Department of Human Services - Area Agency on Aging Division, effective January 1, 2021.

In response to Mr. Myers' question as to whether they provided help inside the home to the elderly and how much was budgeted for that, Ms. Wandalowski stated that was done through their Options Program.

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

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

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

Department of Human Services - Mental Health - Accountant 2

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 143-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the Northampton County Council that one (1) full time position of Accountant 2, pay grade PS-38-1A, salary \$47,532, shall be created in the Department of Human Services - Mental Health Division, effective January 1, 2021.

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

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

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

Department of Administration - Conduct of Elections -
Elections Technician

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 144-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the Northampton County Council that one (1) full time position of Elections Technician, pay grade RU-16-1A, salary \$32,089, shall be created in the Department of Administration - Conduct of Elections, effective January 1, 2021.

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

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

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

(2) Upgraded Full Time Positions

Department of Fiscal Affairs - Budget Administrator

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 145-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** that one (1) full time position of Budget Administrator, pay grade CS-37-1A, salary \$96,288, shall be upgraded to pay grade CS-37-2B, salary \$100,621, in the Department of Fiscal Affairs, effective January 1, 2021.

Mr. Cusick advised this person was doing a fine job, but since he was only in the position for a year, he did not think he warranted a 7% increase so he would not be supporting this resolution.

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

The vote: McGee, "yes"; Lott, "yes"; Myers, "yes"; Vargo Heffner, "yes"; Zrinski, "yes"; Cusick, "no"; Ferraro, "yes"; Giovanni, "yes" and Heckman, "yes".

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

Department of Fiscal Affairs - Fiscal Administrator

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 146-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** that one (1) full time position of Fiscal Administrator, pay grade CS-32-1A, salary \$76,489, shall be upgraded to pay grade CS-32-2B, salary \$79,931, in the Department of Fiscal Affairs, effective January 1, 2021.

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

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

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

Department of Human Resources - Leave Administrator

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 147-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** that one (1) full time position of Leave Administrator, pay grade CS-20-2B, salary \$46,008, shall be upgraded to pay grade CS-22-2B, salary \$50,445, in the Department of Human Resources, effective January 1, 2021.

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

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

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

Department of Community and Economic Development - Community and Economic Development Specialist

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 148-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** that one (1) full time position of Community and Economic Development Specialist, pay grade CS-23-1A, salary \$50,545, shall be upgraded to pay grade CS-23-2B, salary \$52,820, in the Department of Community and Economic Development, effective January 1, 2021.

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

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

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

Sheriff's Department - 2 Clerical Specialists

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 149-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** that two (2) full time positions of Clerical Technician 3, pay grade CR-15-2B, salary \$62,336, shall be upgraded to pay grade CR-17-1A, salary \$65,406,

in the Sheriff's Department, effective January 1, 2021.

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

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

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

Department of Corrections - Public Safety Administrator

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 150-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** that one (1) full time position of Public Safety Administrator, pay grade CS-31-3C, salary \$79,770, shall be upgraded to pay grade CS-31-4D, salary \$83,360, in the Department of Corrections, effective January 1, 2021.

Mr. Cusick stated he felt there was no clear reason for this upgrade so he would not be supporting it.

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

The vote: McGee, "yes"; Cusick, "no"; Ferraro, "yes"; Giovanni, "yes"; Heckman, "yes"; Lott, "yes"; Myers, "yes"; Vargo Heffner, "yes"; Zrinski, "yes".

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

Department of Human Services - Area Agency on Aging - Area Agency on Aging Administrator

Mr. McGee introduced the following resolution:

R. 151-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** that one (1) full time position of Area Agency on Aging Administrator, pay grade HS-47-A, salary \$74,185, shall be upgraded to pay grade HS-47-B, salary \$77,524, in the Department of Human Services - Area Agency on Aging, effective January 1, 2021.

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

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

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

b. Consideration of 2021 Salary Resolution

Ms. Vargo Heffner introduced the following resolution:

R. 152-2020 **RESOLVED**, By the Northampton County Council that the 2021 salaries of the Career Service and Exempt employees, not within Collective Bargaining Units, whose job classifications are within the parameters of the Northampton County Career Service and Exempt Pay Scales, respectively, as well as the part-time professional employees, shall be as indicated on the attached pay scales.

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

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

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

c. Adoption of the 2021 Budget and 2021 Capital Improvements Plan:

Considerations of Amendments to the Proposed 2021 Budget

Ms. Vargo Heffner introduced the following resolution:

R. 153-2020 **RESOLVED**, By the Northampton County Council that the proposed 2021 Northampton County Budget shall be amended as indicated on the attached document.

Mr. Heckman asked if there were any questions or comments regarding the Executive, Farmland Preservation - Route 33 TIF, OSI Farmland Preservation or Conduct of Elections amendments.

There were no respondents.

Mr. Heckman asked if there were any questions or comments regarding the Court Systems and Corrections - District Attorney amendment.

Ms. Vargo Heffner made a motion to put the \$50,000 into the County Council Contingency account until such time as County Council received a presentation from representatives of the Regional Intelligence Investigative Center (RIIC).

Mr. Heckman seconded the motion.

Mr. Myers advised taking money from the District Attorney's budget was not a smart thing to do.

Mr. Heckman stated he would support it because it gave County Council the control of this money.

In answer to Ms. Zrinski's question as to what would happen to the money if the District Attorney's Office never receives it, Mr. Heckman advised any money that was not used at the end of the year went back into the General Fund.

Mr. Lott stated he would like to see this issue of whether to give the money to the District Attorney or not resolved tonight.

Ms. Vargo Heffner advised this was not about cutting his funds, it was about not adding additional funds until County Council received further clarification about the RIIC and its funding sources and what exactly was being funded. She further advised the other day it was decided they would receive a report early next year.

Mr. Lott stated he wanted to know how the RIIC was funded, how it was used, how it benefited the County, what the County received and how many crimes were actually solved. He further stated the \$50,000 was not his concern because a while back there was a request for \$500,000.

Mr. Lott advised he believed when the request came for \$50,000, that County Council indicated they would match anything the municipalities gave because they were the ones who got the value from it. He further advised as far as he knew no municipalities thought it was worthwhile enough to ask for money from their taxpayers, which were the same taxpayers the County had to ask money from.

Mr. Lott stated he did not see the point of holding \$50,000 if County Council was only looking for more information. He further stated if District Attorney Terence Houck would indicate he would have the director of RIIC come in January or February to provide that information, the money should be given to him now.

Mr. Lott advised if District Attorney Houck did not want to do that then as Mr. Cusick had previously indicated he could use Drug Forfeiture money to pay for this. He further advised he would like to see this resolved with a promise from the District Attorney to have someone provide this information, as well as what was the future of the RIIC and would they be asking for more money.

Mr. Heckman stated this County Council was not bound by any decisions made by previous County Councils. He further stated tonight they were voting to take the \$50,000 that was decreased in the District Attorney's Operating budget and placing it in the County Council Contingency account so County Council could control these funds.

Mr. Spadoni advised County Council had control over its Contingency account and monies could be released by a majority vote of County Council.

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

The vote: Vargo Heffner, "yes"; Heckman, "yes"; Myers, "yes"; Zrinski, "yes"; Cusick, "yes"; Ferraro, "no"; Giovanni, "yes"; Lott, "yes" and McGee, "yes".

The motion passed by a vote of 8-1.

Mr. Myers suggested having representatives from RIIC appear at Courts and Corrections meeting.

Mr. Lott stated County Council increased the District Attorney's budget over \$100,000. He further stated they were holding the line on one budget item, which was the RIIC.

Mr. Lott advised County Council did not decrease the RIIC or hamper its function in any way. He further advised he was not against the program, but he did not receive any paperwork about the RIIC until approximately three hours before the last meeting where this was discussed and he did not have time to review that information.

Mr. Lott stated he had a lot of questions, but he felt they would be more appropriate at a meeting where the representatives would be present. He further stated he could easily support this, but he was worried about what was going to be coming down the road because it was funded with a lot of grants.

Mr. Lott advised the County may be asked to put more money in at some future time and if that was the case, it should prepare for it now. He further advised the previous County Council was asked to contribute \$500,000 and it was their job to look at the funding.

Mr. Lott stated he supported the District Attorney and the RIIC, but County Council's job was to make sure the finances worked for the County and kept taxpayers in their homes. He further stated if they were going to support the RIIC, he wanted to know how many cameras were in Northampton and how much crime was solved because they may have to cut other services to support it.

Mr. Cusick advised there was \$878,000 in the Drug Forfeiture Fund and in the past those funds had been used for shiny glossy mailers from the District Attorney's Office that provided some nice information, but he believed a program like this would certainly be a worthy use of those funds so he would like to see some buy-in from the District Attorney's Office from those funds at least in the short term.

District Attorney Houck stated he was getting frustrated because people were talking about the past or what may happen in the future and he never sent one glossy mailer. He further stated this was about \$100,000 being requested for the RIIC and the amendment that was proposed wants to cut it.

District Attorney Houck advised this was the amount of money he felt was necessary to keep the County safe and alternatives would cost a lot more. He further advised he knew nothing about the \$500,000 asked for in the past, but it was not his intention to ask for any more money because the price to get into this was \$100,000 and he had no problem bringing the director in for a meeting.

District Attorney Houck stated whether the local municipalities put in money or not was irrelevant because some of them did not have it and everything ended with his office's prosecutions and having the information they could provide was critical.

District Attorney Houck advised it was not his decision as to what the Drug Forfeiture Fund was spent on in the past, but it would be his going forward and it had to be spent on drug-related cases.

District Attorney Houck stated his office used the RIIC to help prosecute high-level murder cases that were not exclusively drug related. He further stated he was not trying to hoard the Drug Forfeiture Funds, but he felt it was not appropriate to use those funds for this.

District Attorney Houck advised it seemed the money was being held in abeyance until the director came to a meeting and provide information on the RIIC so he could not understand why he could not be given the funds now and he promised the director would come to a meeting.

In response to Mr. Heckman's question as to how much information would they be able to provide due to the nature of their work, District Attorney Houck stated they would be able to explain how they received their information, how many employees they had and the technology they used.

Ms. Vargo Heffner advised she was not cutting his budget and was not telling him how he should fight crime. She further advised he had a \$4.7 million budget and was given everything he had asked for. She further advised they were asking to hold \$50,000 in abeyance until they received further clarification about the RIIC.

Ms. Vargo Heffner stated this was a valuable resource, but she did not understand the funding mechanisms. She further stated she saw it as a bi-County venture, but was told it was regional so she needed to know what that meant.

Ms. Vargo Heffner advised she needed to understand the funding with regard to the State, Federal and the County because the County had its name on grants for this. She further advised the other day District Houck made a comment that if he did not receive this funding, it was going away and then he said it was not exactly going away.

Ms. Vargo Heffner stated she wanted to support his efforts and this funding, but she wanted to keep it where it was until she received further clarification. She further stated the RIIC had a \$1.6 million budget so she just wanted to know the funding

structure between the State, Federal and County governments and what services was the County receiving for their contribution.

Ms. Vargo Heffner advised the lack of transparency with regard to the funding opened the door to questions from the taxpayers. She further advised no one was defunding anything and in fact, County Council was giving them an increase in his budget.

District Attorney Houck stated he did not know where the word defunding came from, but he asked for \$100,000 and it was being cut by this amendment. He further stated he never said the RIIC was going away because he did not control it, but he would not know what their response would be if he could not give them the \$100,000.

District Attorney Houck advised their participation in the RIIC was worth more than \$100,000 and he felt the County had been underpaying for years. He further advised he was asking for the \$100,000 and it was nothing they imposed on him.

In answer to Ms. Zrinski's question as to whether this was an arbitrary amount or was it negotiated, District Attorney Houck stated there was no negotiation nor did they request it, but it was the amount he felt was worthy of the services they received from them and the County had been underpaying for years.

In response to Ms. Zrinski's question as to why there was not a set amount that the participants had to pay, District Attorney Houck advised that would be up to them, but he knew \$100,000 would be acceptable to them. He further advised it would cost them approximately \$120,000 a year to just get police report information and they would also have to pay more for the expertise they received for trials.

In answer to Ms. Zrinski's question as to what would happen if he informed them he could only give them \$50,000, District Attorney Houck replied he did not know, but it could result in them not having access to their services and he would have to spend more money elsewhere.

Mrs. Ferraro stated she did not feel County Council should not procrastinate giving the District Attorney the amount he requested because the County received more than its money's worth out of the RIIC. She further stated County Council had the budget since October so she wanted to know why they did not request more information prior to this meeting. She added they should give him

the money now and in January have a meeting to get more information.

In response to Mr. Lott's question as to whether District Attorney Houck was comfortable with the idea of putting the \$50,000 in the County Council Contingency account and then bringing the representatives in, District Attorney Houck advised he wanted the \$100,000 now and then he would have them come in because he thought he made his position clear as to why it was necessary.

Mr. McGee stated he thought the RIIC was a good idea and that it was regional, but he would like to know what were its plans going forward.

District Attorney Houck advised it was not his intention to move from this amount.

In answer to Mr. McGee's question as to how soon would the \$50,000 be released, Mr. Heckman replied he did not know.

Mrs. Ferraro stated the use of money from the Drug Forfeiture Fund was not appropriate.

Mr. Cusick advised he would respectively disagree because he believed at least a portion would qualify. He further advised \$50,000 was irrelevant, but he would like to see transparency from District Attorney Houck with regard to the Drug Forfeiture Fund.

Mr. Heckman stated this amendment would take \$50,000 from the District Attorney's Operating budget as a reduction in the allocation for the RIIC and put it into the County Council Contingency Fund.

Mr. Heckman made a motion to put \$50,000 back into the District Attorney's Operating budget.

Mr. Myers seconded the motion.

Ms. Vargo Heffner advised it was her understanding that if people voted for her motion it would put \$50,000 into the County Council Contingency account and a no vote would give the District Attorney \$100,000.

Mr. Spadoni stated County Council could do anything it wanted to do with the current budget by voting on a motion after it was seconded.

Mr. Heckman's motion was amended to remove the \$50,000 from the County Council Contingency account per the previous amendment and increase the District Attorney's Operating budget by \$50,000.

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

The vote: Heckman, "yes"; Myers, "yes"; Vargo Heffner, "no"; Zrinski, "yes"; Ferraro, "yes"; Giovanni, "yes"; Lott, "yes"; McGee, "yes" and Cusick, "yes".

The motion passed by a vote of 8-1.

Mr. Heckman asked if there were any questions or comments regarding the Public Works - Administration or Parks and Recreation amendments.

There were no respondents.

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

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

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

Adoption of the 2021 Northampton County Budget, as Amended

Mr. Myers introduced the following resolution:

R. 154-2020 **RESOLVED**, By the Northampton County Council that the following 2021 Northampton County Budgets (incorporated by reference hereto) shall be adopted, as amended, this 3rd day of December 2020.

1. General Fund
2. Special Revenue Funds
3. Capital Project Funds

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

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

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

Adoption of the 2021 Northampton County Capital Improvements Plan

Ms. Zrinski introduced the following resolution:

R. 155-2020 **RESOLVED**, By the Northampton County Council that the proposed 2021 Northampton County Capital Improvements Plan shall be adopted this 3rd day of December 2020.

Mr. Cusick stated the Administration is clearing up the issues with Jail so he supported funding it, but the County had the ability to a bridge in his district and he would like to see them to it because it there was no indication it would be done any time soon.

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

The vote: Zrinski, "yes"; McGee, "yes"; Myers, "yes"; Vargo Heffner, "yes"; Cusick, "no"; Ferraro, "yes"; Giovanni, "yes"; Heckman, "yes" and Lott, "yes".

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

d. Adoption of the 2021 Real Estate Tax Millage Rate Ordinance

Mr. Heckman stated Mr. McGee and Ms. Vargo Heffner introduced the following ordinance at the November 19, 2020 meeting:

AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE REAL ESTATE TAX MILLAGE RATE IN THE COUNTY OF NORTHAMPTON FOR THE YEAR 2021

IT IS HEREBY ORDAINED AND ENACTED that the millage rate for real estate tax purposes for the year 2021 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. Heckman asked if there were any questions or comments from the public.

There were no respondents.

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

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

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

Consideration of an Upgrade to the Deputy Clerk to Council Position

Mr. Heckman introduced the following resolution:

R. 156-2020 **IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** that one (1) full time position of Deputy Clerk to Council, pay grade CE-1-3C, salary \$51,180, shall be upgraded to pay grade CE-1-4D, salary \$53,482, in the Office of Northampton County Council.

Mr. Heckman advised he was recommending this upgrade due to the technology and increased responsibilities she would handle next year.

Mrs. Vargo Heffner stated she had done an admiral job and deserved the increase.

Mr. Myers advised she was instrumental in keeping everyone on point.

Mr. McGee stated he felt she was doing a good job and should be recognized.

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

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

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

Introduction of an Ordinance Entitled, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE NORTHAMPTON COUNTY COUNCIL AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY OF NORTHAMPTON, EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA, TO LEASE APPROXIMATELY 2,650 RENTABLE SQUARE FEET OF SPACE AT 1700 NORTHAMPTON STREET, EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA FROM HELEN GAROFALO AND HELENBETH G. VILCEK"

Ms. Vargo Heffner and Mr. Giovanni introduced the following ordinance:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE NORTHAMPTON COUNTY COUNCIL AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY OF NORTHAMPTON, EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA, TO LEASE APPROXIMATELY 2,650 RENTABLE SQUARE FEET OF SPACE AT 1710 BUTLER STREET, EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA FROM HELEN GAROFALO AND HELENBETH G. VILCEK

WHEREAS, Northampton County Administrative Code Article XIII, Section 13.14 Purchase, Sale and Lease of Real Estate Section b. Sealed Appraisals, provides, "The County shall not purchase, sell, or lease real estate without first obtaining sealed appraisals from two (2) professional real estate appraisers."; and

WHEREAS, Northampton County Administrative Code Article XIII, Section 13.14 Purchase, Sale and Lease of Real Estate Section c. (1) Purchase/Sale/Lease of Real Estate, provides, "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."; and

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

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY ORDAINED AND ENACTED by Northampton County Council that it authorizes the County of Northampton, Easton, Pennsylvania, to enter into a one (1) year lease agreement with Helen Garofalo and Helenbeth G. Vilcek for approximately 2,650 rentable square feet of space at 1710 Butler Street, Easton, Pennsylvania, for \$3,120.00 per month from the commencement of the term of this lease and continuing throughout the original lease term beginning January 1, 2021 and ending on December 31, 2021. The terms and conditions of the lease shall be in accordance with the lease agreement, a copy of which is attached

hereto and made a part hereof as Exhibit "A".

Effective Date - This ordinance shall become effective thirty days after the date of enactment.

Mr. Heckman advised the public hearing, debate and possible vote will be held at the December 10, 2020 meeting.

Consideration of a Donation from Post 611 American Legion and Pennsylvania Chapter of State Guard Association of the United States Resolution

Mr. Myers introduced the following resolution:

R. 157-2020 **WHEREAS**, Northampton County Home Rule Charter Section 202 (10) provides that the 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

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that Northampton County Council authorizes the County Executive to accept a donation of a wall monument to recognize those who served in the global war on terrorism, estimated value \$100.00, from Post 611 American Legion and the Pennsylvania Chapter of the State Guard Association of the United States, as a token of their appreciation for the many years of service from the Veterans Affairs Office that has been very instrumental in helping veterans and veteran services and support.

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

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

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

Consideration of the 2021 Northampton County Council Meeting Schedule Resolution

Mr. Heckman introduced the following resolution:

R. 158-2020 **RESOLVED**, by the Northampton County Council that: (1) In accordance with Northampton County Home Rule Charter Section 206(a), the Northampton County Council organizational meeting will be held on Monday, January 4, 2021, and will begin at 4:30 p.m., prevailing time, in the third floor meeting room, room #3116, Northampton County Government Center, 669 Washington Street, Easton, Pennsylvania; and (2) The regular schedule of meetings for the year 2021, shall be conducted on the first and third Thursday of each respective month, beginning at 6:30 p.m., prevailing time, in the third floor meeting room, room #3116, Northampton County Government Center, 669 Washington Street, Easton, Pennsylvania, with the following exceptions: the meeting scheduled for Thursday, December 16, 2021 is cancelled and rescheduled for Thursday, December 9, 2021 and will begin at 4:30 p.m., prevailing time and will be held in the third floor meeting room, room #3116, Northampton County Government Center, 669 Washington Street, Easton, Pennsylvania.

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

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

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

Public Hearing on the District Justice Lease

Mr. Cusick asked if this lease had to be approved at the end of the year because he did not think the public hearing could be advertised in time.

Mr. McClure stated it had to be signed by the end of the year.

In response to Mr. Heckman's question as to what the procedure was, Mr. Spadoni indicated that it had to be held no less than seven days after the advertisement.

Mr. Heckman advised he would contact Mrs. Zembo to set up a meeting to hold the public hearing and then notify County Council.

Adjournment

Mr. Giovanni made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Myers seconded the motion.

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously by acclamation.

Linda M. Zembo
Clerk to Council