

BUSINESS SESSION: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2024, 1:00 P.M.

Location: Commissioners Meeting Room, Basement.

**Public meetings are being held both in-person and by Zoom. To participate in the meeting please dial 1-309-205-3325 or 1-646-876-9923, enter meeting number 975 2311 2159, and enter the meeting passcode 339014.*

Call to Order:

Commissioner Kessler called the meeting to order.

Moment of Silent Reflection:

Commissioner Kessler called for a moment of silent reflection.

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag:

Commissioner Kessler requested that those participating in the meeting please stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Roll Call:

Members Present:

Commissioner Kessler, Commissioner Webster, Commissioner Burke, Chief Clerk Hemminger, and Assistant County Administrator Senkevich.

Members Absent:

Solicitor Karn and Assistant Solicitor Muriceak.

Others Present:

Robert DuPont, Richard Sutter, James Patterson, Robert Benton, Jennifer Benton, Raymond Guzz, Ash Gallo, Randy Green, Doug Wolf, Emily Evey, Renetta Dermer, Pat Bakely, and Russell Reptogle (Public), Joe Hurd (Blair County Chamber of Commerce), Paul Simindinger (GLSC), Dave Hayes (National Side-by-Side Association), Clifford Kfirer and Caylin Lusk (CCCRA), Karl King, Jennifer Barefoot, Ed Donahoe, Tim Gildea, and Mark Davis (Rails to Trails), Patrick Schurr and Mark Iekes (Explore Altoona), Mayor Matt Pacifico, Joe Merrill, and Gary Lingafelt (City of Altoona), James Patterson (Logan Township Supervisor), Jane Sheffield (Allegheny Ridge Corporation), Christi Draves (Lakemont Park), Matt Fox (ABCD Corp), Lee Slusser (Southern Alleghenies), Dave Butterbaugh (P. Joseph Lehman), Chris Foster (Stiffler McGraw), Carol Dannenberg (Holidaysburg Watch Dog), Grant Wills (GIS), Devin Saylor (Assessment), Courtney Sable (Records Management), Glenn Nelson, Helen Jean Sinal, Jodie Wallace, and Jennifer Fleck (Fort Roberdeau), Sherry Socie, Rhonda Kelly, and Mackenzie Carch (Blair Planning Commission), Brian Valters (Human Resources), Lindsay Dempsey (Finance), Don Weakland (Information Technology), Chief Clerk Nicole Hemminger (Commissioners Office), Rebecca Robinson (Purchasing), Kay Stephens (Altoona Mirror), and Nate Taylor (Public Access Channel).

Executive Session Announcement:

Assistant County Administrator Senkevich confirmed there were no Executive Sessions since the announcement on Tuesday, February 13th.

Public Comment:

Commissioner Kessler called for public comment. **There were no comments.**

Unfinished Business:

Adoption of Resolutions:

Resolution 80-2024: Approving the submission of the Blair County Early Intervention Program Report to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Human Service for FY 2021-2022.

Motion by Commissioner Burke, seconded by Commissioner Webster and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 80-2024.

Resolution 81-2024: Approving the Commercial Alarm Article of Agreement between the County of Blair, Department of Emergency Services/911E and the various agencies, companies, and residential alarm monitoring customers, in the annual amount of \$300.00, for the period of 07/01/24 through 06/30/25.

Motion by Commissioner Webster, seconded by Commissioner Burke and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 81-2024.

Resolution 82-2024: Approving a contract between County of Blair and MetLife Legal Plans, Inc. to offer optional legal plan coverage to enrolled employees at the rate of \$18.00 per employee per month for the period of April 1, 2024 through March 31, 2027 at no cost to the County.

Motion by Commissioner Burke, seconded by Commissioner Kessler and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 82-2024.

Resolution 83-2024: Approving the revisions made to the existing Emergency Closure policy effective February 15, 2024.

Motion by Commissioner Burke, seconded by Commissioner Webster and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 83-2024.

Resolution 84-2024: Approving Change Order #3 received from Francis J. Palo, Inc. for additional work to Bridges 87, 88, 89, and 92 for the Box Culvert project in the total increased amount of \$20,258.11.

Motion by Commissioner Webster, seconded by Commissioner Burke and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 84-2024.

Resolution 85-2024: Approving the 2024 Fort Special Events schedule and a 50th Anniversary logo, celebrating Fort Roberdeau's registration as a National Historic Site, to be included in the Fort Roberdeau brochure.

Motion by Commissioner Webster, seconded by Commissioner Burke and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 85-2024.

Resolution 86-2024: Approving a contract between the County of Blair, on behalf of Fort Roberdeau and Barash Media for a ¼ page, 4-color advertisement, in the Blair County Chamber 2024 Membership Directory and Buyers' Guide, at the negotiated rate of \$695.00.

Motion by Commissioner Webster, seconded by Commissioner Kessling and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 86-2024.

Resolution 87-2024: Approving the Master Services Agreement and Statement of Work between the County of Blair and Momentum ECM, LLC for implementation of a new records management system, Laserfiche, and migration of legacy content from current system, OnBase, in the total amount of \$139,040.00. Payment will be made after each phase is complete per the breakdown below:

Phase	Payment
Pre-phase Software Costs*	\$40,290.00
Phase 1 – Kickoff	\$6,450.00
Phase 2 – Implementation	\$27,690
Phase 3 – Development	\$20,191
Phase 4 – Testing	\$16,152
Phase 5 – Production	\$16,152
Phase 6 – Acceptance	\$12,115

Total Project cost is \$139,040, of which \$40,290 are software costs (PA Co-staus Contract #900-E22-221).

*All pre-phase software costs are to be paid upon signing of this contract

Motion by Commissioner Webster, seconded by Commissioner Burke and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 87-2024.

Resolution 88-2024: Accepting the 2023-2024 PCoRP Loss Prevention Grant award in the total amount of \$22,596.00.

Motion by Commissioner Webster, seconded by Commissioner Burke and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 88-2024.

Resolution 89-2024: Approving a proposal received from Empire Communications for upgrading the access control system for the Adult Probation satellite office, in the total amount of \$16,326.00.

Motion by Commissioner Webster, seconded by Commissioner Kessling and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 89-2024.

Resolution 90-2024: Approving a proposal received from Empire Communications for adding a new access control system for the District Attorney's office, in the total amount of \$6,270.00.

Motion by Commissioner Webster, seconded by Commissioner Kessling and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 90-2024.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

OPEN DISCUSSION: TRAILS

i. In-person Public Discussion

- David Hayes, a member of the Side by Side Association, spoke about the importance of a multi-use trail system across the County.
- Eric Oliver, a resident of Snyder Township, stressed the need to connect trail systems and the role the different organizations would play in assisting Blair County with carrying out improvements.
- Jennifer Barefoot from Rails to Trails discussed the connectivity issue as well and the need to coordinate with surrounding towns and boroughs. She also mentioned the difficulty of applying for grants because Rails to Trails is a private organization and would need a municipality to apply for funding.
- Gary Lingafelt, a resident of Altoona, talked about his experiences on the trails, specifically Horseshoe Curve, as an active hunter and the safety concerns he has with the intersection of bike riders and hunters.

- He mentioned that the Army Corp of Engineers enacted a two-week shutdown of trails during hunting season that proved successful in keeping bikers and hunters safe during that time.
- Randy Green, a member of the Glendale Lake Snowmobile Club, discussed how this volunteer organization worked with Prince Gallitzin State Park to connect the northern and southern parts of the park during Covid to enhance the use of the multimodal trails. He also spoke of the Authority's responsibility to seek out funding not only through grant opportunities, but also soliciting local and private businesses for assistance.
- James Patterson, Logan Township Supervisor, expressed his support of the creation of an Authority. He even expressed that he feels the trail systems can connect across state lines with the right people and resources in place and offered his assistance.
- Carol Dannenberg, member of the Hollidaysburg Community Watch Dog group, touched on the positive mental health benefits trails and recreational activities can offer to veterans and those with mental health issues. She would like to see the trail systems develop further to assist veterans with psychological and sociological needs.
- Sherri Socie from the Blair County Planning Commission expressed her support to form an Authority and the role it could have in assisting with grant applications and seeking funding opportunities, specifically through DCNR.
- Rao D., a resident of Altoona, discussed the issue with existing trails is the lack of safety between traffic and bike riders as they both share state routes.
- Jane Sheffield from Allegheny Ridge Corporation thanked the Commissioners for their involvement in the Trail Town study. She also highlighted Cambria County in recognizing the need to improve their trails and felt that they have been able to turn ideas into action because of their leadership and feels Blair County can do the same.
- Mark Ickes from Explore Altoona spoke in favor of an Authority and mentioned the funding that his organization has provided for trail improvements in the County.
- Ed Donahoe, a volunteer at Rails to Trails, felt that Lower Trail could be extended to Hollidaysburg with the right resources. He also talked about a plot of land that can possibly connect Canoe Creek and Canal Basin.
- Emily Evey, a resident of Blair County, talked about her participation in building the comprehensive plan in Altoona through taking surveys with the public that lead to strong interest in trail development. She also mentioned her support of creating an Authority to bring these ideas to fruition.
- Karl King, a Board member of Rails to Trails, highlighted the positive effects trails have on the economy and outdoor recreation as a whole, but stressed the need for a central, formal organization to coordinate the efforts of all the organizations in the County. He also mentioned that Blair County needs to get up to speed in comparison to surrounding counties.
- Doug Wolf, a resident of Blair County and a member of the Glen Lake Snowmobile Club, spoke about the need for an Authority, but one that is not County-run and focuses on facilitating groups with carrying out their projects. He also mentioned the importance of improving our trails so that residents and travelers can stay in Blair County and not need to travel to other trail systems.
- Joe Hurd, President of the Blair County Chamber of Commerce, challenged the Commissioners to think of where "new money" would come from to create additional revenue in the County. He felt that it was imperative to fund the trail improvement projects and felt like raising taxes to do so might be impossible to avoid in the future.
- Glenn Nelson, Director of Fort Roberdeau, spoke about the underutilization of the waterways trails and that they were "already there". He also mentioned the Boat Commission would be a great partner to work with the Authority.
- Pat Bakely, a resident of Hollidaysburg, spoke about his experience on the 911 Trail and the comradery that is formed between trail users. He reiterated the issue of safety and connectivity around traffic and that Blair County was far behind other counties when it came to addressing these problems.
- Jodie Wallace, Vice President of the Fort Roberdeau Advisory Board, talked about the unique and varied trail systems we have in Blair County. She stressed that, although the improvements to these systems cost money, the benefits to the people that use them outweigh the cost. She mentioned that these trails are where people learn, connect, and bring people together.
- Renetta Dermer, a former Math teacher, spoke of her grandchildren and their love of the trails in the county. She reminisced on her time spent on the trails during Covid and how important it was that they were handicap accessible, especially for her brother who is wheelchair-bound. She said she would also like to see an increase in fishing access so more people can enjoy both.

- Ashley Gavil, a resident of Logan Township, talked about her desire to see biking and pedestrian trails connect to more urban areas in the city which she feels would boost the economy of local shops. She also highlighted the mental health benefits of trail systems, having created her own when she previously lived in Huntingdon County.

ii. Commissioner Discussion

Commissioner Kessling emphasized the need to create an Authority with people who are passionate about the improvement projects. He reiterated that the Commissioners will not be raising taxes to develop and improve trails, but rather the “new money” would come from possibly reallocating hotel bed tax and establishing rental fees for outdoor recreation.

Commissioner Webster also felt it was extremely important that the Authority be built from representatives from each group that could positively influence local tourism by making Blair County a destination.

Commissioner Burke expressed her thanks to those in attendance for their support of the trail system and also for an Authority to have proper representation of these interested groups. Her only concern was to ensure the Authority would have each group represented appropriately.

iii. Written Public Comment

Commissioner Kessling read several Public Comments that were submitted to publiccomment@blairco.org in response to the article in the Altoona Mirror. The majority of the responses received were supportive of trails in Blair County and highlighted many important topics such as: safety, connectivity, multi-use (hunting, snow mobile, off-road vehicles, horseback riding, hiking, cycling, biking, pedestrian, etc.), funding, urban trails, positive economic impact, mental health benefits, etc.

ADJOURN:

Meeting Adjourned,


Allison G. Senkevich, Assistant County Administrator