

Minute No. 587

Washington County Commissioners

Washington, Pa., March 26, 1998

The Washington County Board of Commissioners met for a Special Meeting to discuss a Bond Issue in the Public Meeting Room, Courthouse Square, Washington, Pennsylvania, with the following members being present: Commissioners Diana L. Irey; J. Bracken Burns, Sr. and Joseph A. Ford, Sr. Also being present: Chief Clerk Michelle Miller; Linda Hands, Secretary; Solicitor Jim McCune; Assistant Solicitor Jill Devine; Bill McGowen, Director of Administration; Paul Belcastro, Controller; Francis King, Treasurer; Todd Hammond and John Rheel, Sheriff's Office; Roger Metcalfe, Budget Director; Marlene Luketich, Planning Commission Director; David Sweet, Bond Counsel Pepper, Hamilton and Scheetz; Rick Mancini, Financial Advisor, Milt Lopus Associates; Chuck Pollacci, Veterans Office; David Antion, interested citizen; Jim Jefferson, WJPA; Joe Smydo, Observer-Reporter; Kathy Thomas, Valley Independent; and Channel Four Action News.

Chairman Irey called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00 a.m.

SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

Commissioner Irey introduced Rick Mancini, Financial Advisor with Milt Lopus, who presented to the Board for their consideration and approval an Ordinance regarding a \$11.9 million bond issue.

Mr. Mancini explained that in the past the County has done bond issues on a negotiated basis. He further discussed that this bond issue was done competitively and presented at a time to best benefit the County's financial situation because of the low interest rates. He ended his discussion by briefly discussing the 1998 General Obligation Bond Sale Information and Debt Schedules with the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner Irey called upon David Sweet, Bond Counsel, to review the Bond Resolution Ordinance with the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Sweet discussed the Ordinance and the proposed time table for completion of the Bond Issue.

Moved by Mr. Burns, seconded by Mrs. Irey, approving the Ordinance as per above.

Roll call vote taken:

Mr. Ford - No; Mr. Burns- Yes; Mrs. Irey - Yes.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

David Antion of McGuffey area the county questioned documents that he received from the Budget Department related to the County's debt status. Commissioner Irey directed Roger Metcalfe, Budget Director, to explain the discrepancies that Mr. Antion cited between documents. Mr. Antion ended his discussion by stating that the Commissioners should not issue a bond because it will cause the County to be in further debt.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Chief Clerk announced that a News Release was available related to the Bond Issue. (Inserted and made part of the Minutes).

(March 26, 1998, Washington, PA) - - - - - Washington County Commissioners Diana L. Irey and J. Bracken Burns, Sr. today announced plans for several major initiatives that Commissioner Chairman Diana L. Irey called, "crucial to the future of Washington County."

Construction plans for a much needed fifty bed Alzheimer's Unit at the Washington County Health Center located near the Arden fairgrounds in Washington, PA were confirmed with the borrowing of \$2,500,000 for that project. The Health Center, home to approximately 250 residents, was originally constructed in 1977. Recent Pennsylvania Department of Health statistics reveal a shortage of subacute and Alzheimer's care services in the southwestern part of the State. With the addition of an Alzheimer's Unit, part of the County's continuing effort to develop and maintain programs to meet the needs of the aging population in the Washington County region will be met by providing more appropriate care to Alzheimer's patients. The addition of the 50 beds will also place the Health Center into a higher reimbursement rate bracket.

The former County Jail will be converted into office space for County departments currently renting space outside the County complex. Approximately \$4,000,000 of the bond issue will be used to renovate the former Jail. By converting this building, the County intends to maintain the historic significance of this near 100 year old structure. Savings will be realized as funds spent on leased property are redirected towards the jail renovation. Several offices will provide rental income to the County fund as they return to County premises and are housed in the renovated facility.

The County is currently spending \$350,000 year to maintain the computer system that tracks the business of the Washington County Court System. This annual cost will be significantly reduced with the installation of a new state-of-the-art system that will decrease annual costs to \$100,000 a year. To accomplish this transition, much needed renovations are necessary at the Courthouse. The 99 year old structure must be rewired to facilitate the new computer system and also to insure the safety of the public and the integrity of the building. The cost of these improvements will be \$600,000 for the rewiring and \$500,000 for the computer system. According to President Judge Thomas D. Gladden, "this plan will provide modern and updated electrical wiring for the courthouse which is vital to the preservation and safety of the historic building." Judge Gladden commented that the courts look forward to the installation of the new computer system that will greatly enhance the ability to manage various business and provide more and improved services to those who use the courts and the row offices. He further said that he is pleased that money from the bond issue will be applied to the renovation of the old jail, stating that there are many interesting and innovative ways that the building can be used to enhance county and court services for our citizens in a new century.

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Approximately \$600,000 has been allocated toward improvements to the Washington County Airport located in South Franklin Township. The County Airport, with 35,000 flights annually, is ranked as the fourth busiest airport in southwestern Pennsylvania. Funds generated by the bond issue will enable the County to leverage funds from federal and state sources to further modernize and market the Airport in terms of an economic generator and a benefit to the region.

Another \$750,000 has been set aside to purchase land for future industrial park development. The Commissioners intend to replicate the success of Southpointe, the mixed use industrial park along I-79 north of Canonsburg and the California Technology Park. With the completion of projects currently under construction at these two sites, employment will reach 2,531 at Southpointe and 53 at the California Technology Park.

Of this bond issue, \$1,400,000 has been reserved for the County to loan to the Washington County Authority to settle the jail construction litigation.

The law firm of Pepper, Hamilton, and Scheetz from Pittsburgh has been retained by the County to serve as bond counsel while Milt Lopus and Associates, Inc. of Pittsburgh and Harrisburg serve as the financial advisor to this bond issuance. Overall, with the current bond market rates, the County intends to better serve its citizens in a more efficient manner with the issuance of the general obligation bonds.

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There being no further business, Chairman Irey declared the meeting adjourned at approximately 10:25 a.m.

THE FOREGOING MINUTES SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL:

April 1, 1998

ATTEST: Michelle R Miller

CHIEF CLERK