

**BEDFORD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES**

May 8, 2018

The Bedford County Board of Commissioners held their regular meeting in Room 303 of the Bedford County Government Building, 200 South Juliana Street, Bedford, PA on Tuesday, May 8, 2018. Commissioner Lang called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Commissioner Lang gave the prayer of invocation and led the pledge to the flag.

**ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS:**

Present: Commissioner Josh Lang, Commissioner S. Paul Crooks, Commissioner Barry L. Dallara was absent. Others present: Debra Brown, Chief Clerk, Melissa Cottle, Treasurer, Donald Schwartz, Planning Commission, and the Honorable Judge Thomas S. Ling, county residents and the press.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The minutes of April 24, 2018, were approved as presented.

**EXPENDITURES:**

A motion was made by Commissioner Crooks and seconded by Commissioner Lang to approve the following expenditures:

Payroll	\$290,811.44	CK#:183236-183245
General	\$207,608.77	
General – Juror’s	\$1,057.28	
General – Juror’s	\$174.80	
Commissary	\$6,478.04	
CDBG	\$30,925.39	
Liquid Fuels	\$3,250.00	

Commissioner Crooks reported on the following large expenditures from the General Account: there was a Pass Through of \$17,065.00; another Pass Through for PSA of \$12,204.00; Wessel in the amount of \$12,690.32; and Penelec at \$12,192.13. The motion was approved as presented.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

There was nothing to report.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

A motion was made by Commissioner Crooks and seconded by Commissioner Lang to approve the hire of Marissa Graham as a part-time Correctional Officer effective May 14, 2018 at the Bedford County Correctional Facility. This is based upon the recommendation of Troy Nelson, Warden at the Bedford County Correctional Facility. The motion was approved as presented.

A motion was made by Commissioner Crooks and seconded by Commissioner Lang to approve the promotion of the following from part-time to full-time Correctional Officers effective May 7, 2018. This is based upon the recommendation of Troy Nelson, Warden at the Bedford County Correctional Facility. The motion was approved as presented.

1. Wayne Purnell
2. Bonnie Sweinhart

A motion was made by Commissioner Crooks and seconded by Commissioner Lang to approve the hire of the following as a full-time Deputy Sheriff’s effective May 14, 2018. This is based upon the recommendation of Charwin Reichelderfer, Sheriff. The motion was approved as presented.

1. Brian Fadrow, New Paris
2. Michael Jones, Ellerslie, MD

A motion was made by Commissioner Crooks and seconded by Commissioner Lang to approve the Change of Assessment Notice Control Report changes for the month of April 2018. This is based upon the recommendation of Joyce Hillegass, Director of Tax Assessment. Commissioner Crooks commented that some

of the changes were due to shed removal, new homes being constructed, parcel and trailers removed and property splits. The motion was approved as presented.

A motion was made by Commissioner Crooks and seconded by Commissioner Lang to approve the Purchase of Service Agreement between Bedford County Children & Youth Services and the following effective July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019. This is based upon the recommendation of Lisa Cairo, Administrator Bedford County Children and Youth Services. The motion was approved as presented.

1. Karen Hickey, Esquire
2. Dean Crabtree, Esquire
3. Barry R. Scatton, Esquire

A motion was made by Commissioner Crooks and seconded by Commissioner Lang to approve the proclamation for the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania celebration of their 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The motion was approved as presented. The Judge provided some history of the Western District Court System and when it was established. The Honorable Judge Thomas S. Ling read the proclamation.

*District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania  
June 2, 2018*

**PROCLAMATION CELEBRATING THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE UNITED STATES  
DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA**

**WHEREAS**, the Judiciary Act of 1789, adopted on September 24, 1789 in the first session of the First United States Congress, established the federal judiciary of the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, the Western District of Pennsylvania was established by the Act of April 20, 1818, which divided the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania into two judicial districts, with the Western District consisting of the counties of Fayette, Greene, Washington, Allegheny, Westmoreland, Somerset, Bedford, Huntingdon, Centre, Mifflin, Clearfield, McKean, Potter, Jefferson, Cambria, Indiana, Armstrong, Butler, Beaver, Mercer, Crawford, Venango, Erie and Warren; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania, in 1866, after having previously held sessions only in Pittsburgh, began holding sessions in Erie, Pennsylvania; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1978, Congress approved the creation of the United States Bankruptcy Court, as a unit of the District Court, including the establishment of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania; and

**WHEREAS**, the Court, in 1989 and acting upon a longstanding Congressional authorization, announced that it would hold sessions in Johnstown, Pennsylvania; and

**WHEREAS**, fifty-seven men and women have served the Court as a United States District Judge, fourteen have served as a United States Magistrate Judge and twelve have served as a United States Bankruptcy Judge; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania currently exercises jurisdiction over 25 counties with three divisional offices in Erie, Johnstown and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has ten authorized District Judgeships and is served by four District Judges, five Senior District Judges, six Magistrate Judges and four Bankruptcy Judges; and

**WHEREAS**, the mission of the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania is to preserve and enhance the rule of law while providing an impartial and accessible forum for the just, timely and economical resolution of legal proceedings within the Court's jurisdiction, so as to protect individual rights and liberties, promote public trust and confidence in the judicial system, and to maintain judicial independence; and

**WHEREAS**, the judges of the District Court are called on to hear and decide cases covering a wide range of issues. Such disputes include cases involving the civil and criminal laws of the United States, cases that deal with the constitutionality of those laws, civil rights cases, cases that involve disputes which occur on our waterways, and cases that involve disputes between parties who reside in different states; and

**NOW THEREFORE**, we the Commissioners of the County of Bedford express their gratitude and admiration for the work of the Public Servants of the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania and wish them well on the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Court.

**COMMENTS/APPOINTMENTS:**

- a. Bette Slayton did a presentation on a Life Sciences Video. Bette gave an overview of how BCDA, the Bedford County Technical Center and various companies work together to provide education and jobs to students in the area. There is additional information on the Tech Center's website. Commissioner Lang provided statistics on the life sciences in Pennsylvania and the importance of the coordination between organizations such as the BCDA and the Tech Center. He emphasized that students can now receive 30 college credits from the Tech Center.
- b. Dennis Tice of the Bedford County Visitors Bureau provided an overview of the PA Act 18 laws and their board's recommendation of increasing the 2% hotel tax to 5%.
- c. Mr. Jim Wehling presented a list of questions and information regarding see attached document.
- d. Mr. Lloyd Roach spoke to everyone regarding his position about the Bedford County Visitors Bureau and what he has observed since he has been in the area and some recommendations to attract visitors to Bedford County. He would be in favor of eliminating the bureau all together.
- e. Various other business owners spoke on behalf of the Bedford County Visitors Bureau while others expressed their dismay over the spending of the monies elsewhere when there is talent within the agency to promote businesses. Kathy Monsour stated their family wouldn't have a business had it not been for BCVB and to eliminate it would be a detriment to the people coming into the county. Melinda Zongor echoed the same sentiments in favor of BCVB. She stated the county couldn't collect the tax because the law states it must go to the county's "recognized tourist promotion agency". Steve George recommended a trial basis be enacted on the hotel tax for two years. Commissioner Lang said that would not be an option that once it is passed it is final. Deb Dunkle stated that BCVB does not help the non-profits such as Tenley Park, as an example, and hopes there will be something done in respect to that area. Sanjiv Patel stated he can't support the increase, it makes hotels look less attractive to people visiting the area and he would lose business. Mr. Tice responded to Mr. Patel that letters were sent out inviting people to attend a meeting in February to discuss the hotel tax, where approximately a dozen people attended and seemed to be in favor of the increase. Mr. Tice then sent out letters to those that attended to make sure he interpreted the comments correctly.
- f. Commissioner Lang commented that he thought this was a good meeting, and that the dialogue was productive. He hopes that the media will offer to be a conduit for all areas of discussion moving forward for Bedford so that other can provide their input.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Commissioner Crooks made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Lang seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:14 a.m.

The next Commissioners Meeting will be on May 22, 2018 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 101 unless called sooner by the Board of Commissioners.

**ATTEST:**

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Debra Brown, Chief Clerk

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S. Paul Crooks, Secretary

**Expected Visitor Growth if Room Tax is Increased:**

1. BCCVB has emphasized the relative expenditures of other PA tourism promotion programs as a need to increase the room tax. Is the relative amount of money spent by other tourism promotion programs the only indicator you have regarding the relative effectiveness of our tourism program? If you have other measures, what are they?
2. BCCVB has requested a 250% increase in the tax rate. Obviously this increase will not result in a 250% increase in hotel room rentals. But, what percentage increase would you expect after 1 year; after 5 years? How will you measure that increase.
3. The winter months are a slow time for tourism in Bedford County, but also an opportunity to fill unrented hotel rooms. If the room tax is increased, how do you plan to increase the number of winter visitors? For example, how will you work with Blue Knob Ski Resort or Blue Knob State Park, and our lodging facilities to improve Bedford County as a winter recreation destination?

**Trends in Tourism and Tourism Promotion:**

1. Joe Pine and Jim Gilmore have written for the Harvard Business Review and are authors of two books: **Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want**, and the best-selling book **The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage**. Their thesis is that the “experience” is an important factor for many business and particularly important to the tourism business.
  - a. One can legitimately argue that the entire amount of new monies ought to support new partnerships between tourism attractions and BCCVB to improve the tourism experience. Before the room tax rate is increased, are you willing to propose a 5 year plan detailing what percentage of new funds will support the Bedford County visitor’s experience? Also how would you use that increase to improve the visitor’s experience?
  - b. Other tourism promotion bureaus have made improving the tourism experience the major thrust for the use of increased funds. They propose working with their tourism promotion partners to develop and improve tourism entities and facilities. Have you reviewed what other tourism entities are doing with increases, and what ideas have you found that we could bring to Bedford County?
  - c. PA Act 18 of 2016 specifically authorizes programs, expenditures or grants for tourism promotion, or any other promotion program approved by the Board. How does BCCVB propose to work with the County Commissioners on the implementation of tourism promotion programs that go beyond narrowly defined marketing and advertising efforts of the past, and begin new and innovative programs that benefit BCCVB’s tourism promotion partners and the visitor’s experience?
2. The BCCVB programs focus on billboards, print media (brochures and visitor’s guide), and web site development.
  - a. What evidence do you have that billboards are effective? What data can you provide?
  - b. How do you measure the effectiveness of your print media and what data can you provide regarding the effectiveness?
  - c. How do you measure the effectiveness of your web site?
  - d. What information do you capture when a visitor comes into your information center? What do these data show? What trends are evident?
3. Social media is increasingly important to attract tourists and gauge their experience.
  - a. BCCVB has a limited social media presence. For example, the number of friends BCCVB’s has on its Facebook page are less than the Chamber’s and DBI’s numbers. Why?
  - b. How does BCCVB use Twitter?
  - c. How does BCCVB use YouTube?
  - d. How does BCCVB use Pinterest?
  - e. Does BCCVB have a blog?

- f. Is LinkedIn of any value to BCCVB?
- g. Are there other social media instruments that BCCVB uses?
- h. How does BCCVB gage the effectiveness of any or all of these?
- i. How does BCCVB's use of social media compare to that of other tourism promotion agencies?
- j. What tourism promotion initiatives are aimed at 20 to 40 year age range. Are they effective? How do you know?
- k. Would BCCVB consider hiring a social media coordinator to build this aspect of BCCVB's tourism promotion program?

### **Tourism Promotion Priorities**

1. As proposed by BCCVB, the top priority (based on dollar amount) is a large advertising contract. Doesn't this approach take money out of the County and prevent its use within the County to build its tourism promotion capabilities?
2. The most successful form of advertising is word of mouth based on positive experiences. Doesn't it make more sense to find ways to use these funds within the County to improve the visitor's experience?

### **Tourism Promotion Programs**

1. Would BCCVB consider the following programs and how much would BCCVB allocate to them?
  - a. provide local cash matches for grants;
  - b. develop tourism attractions like new or expanded hiking and biking trails;
  - c. create better maps and signage for hiking, mountain biking, road biking, trail biking, kayak/canoe activities;
  - d. develop innovative agriculture experiences focused on locally grown produce, sheep farming, vineyards, fruits and grains;
  - e. maintain covered bridge and trails;
  - f. support special events like wooden bat tournaments for little leaguers; soft ball tournaments for girls, river floats or races, different historic reenactments, and a host of others that have not been explored to date.
2. To improve the visitor's experience, would BCCVB could hire a special events coordinator to support local groups in carrying out events around the County like the Chamber does for the County, DBI and the Fall Foliage does for Bedford.

### **Outcome Data**

1. Room tax receipts are increasing slowly. Does BCCVB see room tax receipts as an indicator of the success of its programs and, if so, what rate of increase would indicate success?
2. Facebook and other multimedia advertising offer greater opportunities for outcome measures than billboards, or print media, or mass advertising. How does BCCVB use fact to determine how to spend its advertising dollars?
3. The best advertising is a satisfied customer. Do we know how visitors to Bedford County feel positively about their visit?
4. There are other possible outcome measures, some of which are possible now. Does BCCVB have or you willing to gather the following data:
  - a. room tax revenue amounts and trends;
  - b. number of members by year;
  - c. website usage metrics and data by quarter
  - d. number of video downloads by video by quarter
  - e. number of bike map downloads by map and by quarter
  - f. number of tourism related businesses in the county by year
  - g. conduct and report visitors survey results
  - h. conduct and report on tourism related business owner surveys?

My name is Lloyd Roach. I live at 120 W. Watson Street, Bedford.

Before you is the matter of increasing the Bedford County Hotel Occupancy tax by 150%. As the governing body of Bedford County, the Board of Commissioners is the only entity who has the authority to levy hotel taxes. Under the rules of the enabling legislation, the tourist bureau operates at the pleasure of the county.

I wish to go on record as being against this proposal. For several years, the Bedford County Visitors Bureau has made much of its promotion of Bedford County, which efforts seem to include only the publication of a tourist guide and occasional matching grants provided to local entities.

The only visible external effort that I have witnessed is a turnpike billboard devoted to "Gravity Hill," which is neither an attraction nor a revenue-producing entity for itself or the county. It sells no food, provides no service, collects no sales tax and creates no hotel stays. As the bureau receives 100% of its revenue from hotel stays, I have been under the impression that the *primary* purpose of a visitor's bureau was to put heads on beds, not drive backwards on a country road.

Prior to my retirement to Bedford in 2014, I owned and operated community radio stations. In that role, I was active with several Visitor and Tourist Bureaus in Delaware, Cumberland, Philadelphia, Lakawanna and Chester Counties in Pennsylvania and Steuben and Chemung Counties in New York. Almost all of these Visitors Bureaus were engaged in local and out-of-market promotion on behalf of their host counties. Some of them were larger than Bedford and some were smaller.

One of most effective efforts that I observed was a bi-annual visitor trade show which invited out-of-town event planners to see what was available to them in terms of activities, restaurants and accommodations.

This trade show enabled local hotels, restaurants, transportation providers, caterers, florists, wedding planners, bakeries, taverns, wineries, rental agencies, tent vendors, landscapers, advertising companies and party planners to show their wares to out-of-town prospects. In addition, many of these county bureaus staged annual musical and entertainment events that attracted out-of-town visitors to their region.

For example, Delaware County hosted the annual "Riverfront Ramble," which drew thousands to an event of food and music. In Chester County "Longwood Gardens" had a day set aside for its local residents and their families.

In Steuben County, there was an annual tour of the Corning Glass Works which drew thousands of people to downtown Corning. In almost every case, the concerts and promotions were partially financed with promotional, in-kind and advertising dollars provided by local and national firms who wished to be recognized.

During my four years in Bedford County, I have not seen any promotion of this type provided by our Visitors Bureau, other than a weekly guided tour of downtown Bedford and the never-ending construction of war memorials.

It seems to me that Bedford County has much more to offer. In addition to its World-Class Omni Bedford Springs Resort and Spa, we offer an exceptional overnight camping facility at Shawnee State Park, the National Museum of the American Coverlet, The Broad Top Coal Miner's Museum, Tenly Park in Everett and a rare and fully restored town called "Old Bedford Village," which demonstrates what "Real Life" was like during colonial times.

We also host an exciting examination of rural life at the Commonwealth's oldest continuously operating Farm Show, the Bedford Fair, the Southern Cove Power Reunion, a Bison Farm, Stock Car Racing, the Historic Lincoln Highway, the Coffee Pot, and the Fall Foliage Festival, which has brought tens of thousands to downtown Bedford for over a half a century.

In addition we are only minutes from a major Ski Resort at Blue Knob and a Casino at Rocky Gap.

Each of these events and destinations has its own constituency, which could be invited here with the present budget and the right approach.

Many of the aforementioned receive only a casual mention in the printed visitor guide, which is at best a passive printed catalog advertising device operating in a digital world.

A 150% increase in the occupancy tax is unnecessary. Much more can be done with the funds available. Bedford County has excellent restaurants such as the Spring's Crystal Dining Room or Tillies, The Golden Eagle, Ten Oh Nine, Jean Bonnet, Horn of Plenty and Birds Nest Café.

Bedford County has dozens of hotels ranging from \$50.00 a night to \$500.00 a night. "Bed and Breakfast" establishments are scattered throughout the county, both urban and rural.

By the Visitors Bureau's own admission, most of their efforts are directed at visitors who are already here. Will that methodology change with additional funds? Isn't a visitor defined as someone from away?

The proposal by the Visitors Bureau includes retaining an advertising agency to assist the bureau with outside promotion and media placement. With the occupancy tax generating over \$450,000 per annum, why is this notion of promoting outside a new idea?

As the commissioners are well-aware, the bureau has spent a considerable sum purchasing high definition television equipment and accessories, and asserted that an outside advertising firm would be unnecessary as the work could be performed by an advertising expert already in-house.

Despite this claim, AD-Tracker or other TV measurement firms we examined have no evidence of TV presence or "KPI" - (Key Performance Indicators) of Bedford County in any of its primary feeder markets of Washington, Baltimore, Hagerstown, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh or Philadelphia. (This is an advertising measurement metric.)

I recommend the commissioners deny this 150% tax increase and examine how the present budget may be used more effectively. From what I know of advertising and promotional budgets, the county could hire an outside tourist promotional firm with the present tax budget of two percent, eliminate the local bureau entirely and realize measurable results.

Thank You.

(Under PA Act 2018, any county may elect to use a professional visitor promotion agency in lieu of a county based office. These specialized agencies provide all of the services outlined in Mr. Tice's presentation.)  
*(REVPAR) is a Tourist Industry term of art that measures "Revenue per average room rate." Metrics such as this are not currently provided to Bedford County.)*

*(Delivered to the Bedford County Board of Commissioners on 8 May 2018)*