DAUPHIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

WORKSHOP MEETING

SEPTEMBER 2, 2015
10:00 A.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeff Haste, Chairman
Mike Pries, Vice Chairman
George P. Hartwick, III, Secretary

STAFF PRESENT

Chad Saylor, Chief Clerk; Marie E. Rebuck, Controller; Janis Creason, Treasurer; Joseph A. Curcillo, III, Esq., Solicitor; Ed Marsico, District Attorney; Randy Baratucci, Director of Purchasing; Fred Lighty, Esq., Solicitor's Office; Joe Dougher, Interim Children & Youth Administrator; Randie Yeager, Human Services Director's Office; Amy Harinath, Press Secretary; Kay Lengle, Human Resources; George Connor, Community & Economic Development; Gerald Feaser, Jr., Director of Registration & Elections; Jessica Croft, Solicitor's Office; Jennifer Simpson, Court Administration; Keith Kepler, Director of Solid Waste & Recycling; Tom Guenther, Director of IT; J. Scott Burford, Deputy Chief Clerk; Bruce Foreman, Esq., Solicitor's Office; Melody Osborn, Commissioners’ Office and Richie-Ann Martz, Assistant Chief Clerk

GUESTS PRESENT

Barb Miller, James Roxbury, Karl Singleton, WGAL, WHP, WHTM, WITF, and FOX

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Haste, Chairman of the Board, called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.
MOMENT OF SILENCE

Everyone observed a moment of silence.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There are three sets of Meeting Minutes that will be considered at next week’s Legislative Meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSIONS HELD BETWEEN MEETINGS

Mr. Saylor reported that an Executive Session was held this morning to discuss matters of litigation and personnel.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was none.

DEPARTMENT DIRECTORS/GUESTS

A. George Connor, Community & Economic Development (Not part of Agenda)

Mr. Connor is here to discuss two Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Subrecipient Agreements for Steelton Borough. This is 2012 Funding that was not spent. The Borough wants to reallocate the funding for two projects: Midget Baseball Field and a Beautification Project (enhance Front Street – repair some structures). It was allocated back in 2012.

Mr. Haste asked if it was approved by the Borough.

Mr. Connor indicated that it has been.

   It was moved by Mr. Pries and seconded by Mr. Haste that the Board approve two Subrecipient Agreements between Dauphin County and Steelton Borough for (1) Midget Baseball Field Renovation Project and (2) Beautification Project.

   Question: Mr. Haste – Aye and Mr. Pries – Aye; motion carried.

B. Joe Dougher, CYS Interim Administrator

1. Children & Youth Status Report
Mr. Dougher indicated that he is the Interim Administrator for Children & Youth and as his time as the Interim Administrator comes to a close he wanted to report on the many significant and positive changes within the Agency. Many of the serious issues identified by the Grand Jury in the wake of Jarrod Tutko’s tragic death have been addressed. Many of these same issues were identified by the State, leading to the Agency receiving a provisional license. The changes that have occurred have made the children and families of Dauphin County safer. He commended the caseworkers, supervisors, directors and support staff of Children & Youth who give 110% every day. These employees have done a remarkable job under the trying circumstances that they are operating. He can think of few other jobs that are as heartbreaking and stressful as that of a Children & Youth caseworker. Dauphin County’s caseworkers see the very worst in human behavior, and it is especially hard when the victims are young children. Every single employee at Children & Youth is committed to protecting the children in Dauphin County.

He thanked the District Attorney’s Office for working with Children & Youth as they reformed the Child Protective Services (CPS) Intake Team tasked with investigating the most serious cases. He also thanked the Commissioners for giving the Agency the support that was needed.

They are very close to filling the 83 Full-Time caseworker positions. They now have, for the first time, the ability to hire six (6) part-time caseworkers. These part-time caseworkers will help them reach out to parents who can only meet with them after normal work hours. This additional staffing comes in the face of the Agency receiving a $1.8 million cut. This cut does not even reflect the uncertainty of the budget impasse, which could lead to even further reductions. The rationale for this reduction was based on previous Children & Youth spending. The State did not take into account significant changes to Pennsylvania’s Child Protective Services (CPS) laws. These changes have resulted in a 119% increase in child protective services cases in the first seven months of 2015. CPS cases involve allegations of physical, sexual or emotional/mental abuse and must be acted upon immediately to ensure the safety of the child. They have also seen a 46% increase in General Protective Services (GPS) that typically deal with issues including conditions of the home, school attendance and substance abuse. He went over a few of the changes that the Agency has made in wake of the Grand Jury report. The Agency now has 11 caseworkers split into two units dedicated to investigating Child Protective Services cases. Five of these caseworkers, selected with the approval of the District Attorney’s Office, are part of a special team that investigates the most serious cases, including those involving the death or near-death of a child. Since the creation of these teams, they have reestablished good working relationships with local law enforcement. The Agency is also conducting child welfare safety inspections for all cases. As part of the inspection, caseworkers are checking the entire residence. During the State’s review of the Agency, there were issues with inadequate training and failing to properly document how cases were handled. Over the past year, all Children & Youth managers and caseworkers have gone through a home safety assessment course at HACC. The Agency is also working closely with the Hershey
Medical Center and Pinnacle Health’s Children Resource Center, which have and are providing ongoing child development training and child trauma training to all staff. He commended the CRS and the Hershey Medical Center for their dedicated work with the Agency over the past six months.

A process is in place, including weekly reviews of CPS cases, to ensure nothing is being overlooked and that all reports are filed with the State on time, which was an issue in the past. Under State law, the Agency has 60 days to determine whether a case is founded or unfounded and report that conclusion to the Department of Human Services. In addition to the weekly reviews of all cases, on or about day 45 a thorough legal review of cases will identify if additional evidence needs to be collected before a decision is made. At day 55, the entire case is reviewed, which gives them 5 days to address any other issues before reported to the State.

A new quality assurance team will begin to review cases hopefully in September 2015. This will be random cases to ensure continuing compliance with regulations and promote best practices. They have established a system of internal checks and controls to ensure that nothing is missed and that caseworkers have a clear idea of what needs to be done. All of these measures have been included in their plan of correction that was submitted to the State. During the six months they are under provisional license, the Agency will receive frequent State inspections to make sure they are meeting the goals. He is confident that the Agency will meet and exceed expectations.

When he addressed the media following the Grand Jury report, he said that we all mourn Jarrod Tutko’s death, but that this short life should not be without meaning. He still believes that. The changes that have been made following this top to bottom review have made all Dauphin County’s children safer. The fundamental truth, however, is that parents must still be responsible and accountable for the care of their children. He can say with certainty that when an allegation of child endangerment comes to the Agency, Children & Youth will do a thorough investigation and take steps necessary to ensure that child’s well-being.

Ms. Yeager indicated that she is very appreciative of Mr. Dougher’s assistance throughout this process over the past six months. The focus continues to be on continuing to fill vacancies. As soon as one posting is complete, they are reposting again, because they will always have turnover. The Agency is very close to being at full staff. She believes that the Agency will be at full staff by the end of the year. Folks are being trained in a very comprehensive manner, but in a shorter timeline than originally was available to them. Many entities, including the ones that Mr. Dougher mentioned, have enabled the Agency to do that. The Child Welfare Resource Center has also provided training in-house and it is meeting all of the requirements for the social work certification. The directors and supervisors are going to be participating in ongoing supervisory training for the next six months, which can only add to their abilities and skills to ensure that the work is done in the highest quality.
Mr. Marsico thanked Mr. Dougher for his service to the citizens of Dauphin County, specifically to the children. Joe had a long distinguished career here and to come out of retirement and to take on this challenge was not something he had to do or wanted to do. He did it because it was the right thing to do. The County owes a debt of gratitude to Mr. Dougher for his work.

From a law enforcement perspective, the reconstitution of the Child Protective Services Unit is a huge step -- getting that Agency to where it needs to be in the investigation of child abuse allegations, especially with the now mandated reporting. It has already mended some of the frayed relationships that had existed between Children & Youth and local police departments. The DA’s Office is hearing from the detectives that it is much better and that everyone is working together. The multi-disciplinary investigative team, that concept of everyone working together, is now clicking. Mr. Dougher referenced the child death investigative team – Children & Youth has been supportive of that. They work with local law enforcement, police and the Coroner’s Office. The Agency’s collaboration with Penn State Hershey is going to bear a lot of fruit. The money that Penn State is putting behind it and the Agency using them is another great step. They still share some concerns about the caseload of these workers. It is a tough job. It is hard to attract workers. It is almost a calling for individuals like Randie and Joe. He is pleased with the training that has been undertaken by Children & Youth. That remains a concern to have hands-on training for the workers. That was a deficiency identified by the Grand Jury. That is not just a Dauphin County problem, it is a Commonwealth of Pennsylvania issue. He met with Senator Gorman’s staff last week about trying to look at some different things -- Child First or some other things that the County could be doing if there is proper funding from the State and proper support to make sure that the training that the workers get is adequate. Coordination with the local school district – better coordination needs to happen there when there are allegations made in the schools. Great strides have been made by the Agency in a very short period of time. He thanked the Commissioners for giving their support to Children & Youth, letting them do what they needed to do to get to this point. The caseworkers, Joe and Randie have done a good job at restoring morale to an agency that was hard hit publicly despite the day-to-day efforts of the majority of workers there. They hope to continue that.

Mr. Haste thanked Mr. Marsico, Sean and the staff for handling this whole difficult situation in a very professional manner, and for Ed’s advice and input. He also thanked Randie for stepping up in the interim in doing what she could do in helping out with the process and being the glue to keep everything together. Joe is another example of the many fine County employees. Sometimes it is difficult to hire good folks when competing with the private sector. It shows that Joe did it because it is a passion and calling. He came back at a time of need. He gave a special thank you to Joe for this. With Commissioner Hartwick’s role at CCAP on this issue, it is unfortunate that Dauphin County had to go through this, but maybe it is good if the folks and friends in the media heed this – times are not good across the Commonwealth when it comes to these services. The State and the counties are probably to some degree loggerheads, because the counties are the ones that have to carry this work out and have employees
that are passionate about doing it and the State has the policymakers that determine what can and cannot be done. It has made the job very difficult. With the Sandusky situation, 23 new laws have been put into place that not only the Children & Youth workers have to be aware of, but so do the police departments. This is all done with no additional funding, but a lot more scrutiny and stress placed upon these folks. The State budget cuts on top of that have made this even more difficult. With the complete inability of the State to be able to get a budget in place is starting to affect certain smaller counties across the Commonwealth already. Dauphin County is not there yet, but it won’t be too much longer. Discussions have been held with the folks at the State on the budget issues. When it comes to the funding system and what they are putting in place, and what they are expecting counties to do in their different formulas, shows that they have zero understanding of what the caseworkers and folks like Mr. Dougher and Ms. Yeager do on a daily basis. Therein lines a big part of the problem – folks at the State level making decisions and telling the counties what they have to do, have no clue what is going on. On top of that, the hiring of staff – who would want to take a position like this when you get little pay and you get additional scrutiny. He asked Mr. Dougher to make sure the staff understands that the Board appreciates what they are doing. They do understand what they are going through. The Board will continue to do what they can to make sure their colleagues at the State understand a little bit better. He thanked Ed again for handling this in a very professional way. Mr. Dougher mentioned that in September 2015 the County would have quality assurance teams in place. He asked for an update.

Ms. Yeager indicated that there are two quality assurance caseworkers that have moved into their positions. They are interviewing for a statistician to join that team. They did have some movement of that supervisor. The team is not full yet, but they will be interviewing as soon as possible.

Mr. Haste asked if it is still on track to have that in place.

Ms. Yeager indicated that they are. They are already reviewing cases, but it is not to full capacity yet.

Mr. Pries commended Ms. Yeager, Mr. Dougher, Children & Youth Agency and the District Attorney for taking the appropriate steps and working together as a team, law enforcement, schools and the medical profession to find an answer to this ongoing epidemic. What the Agency has done to date shows that things are moving in the right direction. He thanked the media for putting this front and center. Most of the time, the public is not aware of what is going on in their neighborhoods. A lot more needs to be done. He thanked Commissioner Hartwick for his leadership. They have the full support of the Board.

Mr. Haste thanked the staff at EMA for getting key people notified and involved.

Mr. Pries asked how many current vacancies exist within the department.
Ms. Yeager stated that there are 10 caseworker vacancies. They have already begun the interview process. They are about half way through the interviews. Based on the number of candidates that have applied, they believe they can fill those 10.

Mr. Pries asked if there has been a high turnover.

Ms. Yeager indicated that they have had a very high turnover. She believes that back in March 30% of their staff complement was vacant. Ten is a lot of vacancies, but it is much better than 30% of the staff.

Mr. Pries asked if the 119% increase in cases is county or statewide.

Mr. Dougher stated just Dauphin County.

Mr. Pries asked if he knows what it is statewide.

Mr. Dougher indicated that he is hearing similar numbers from other counties.

Mr. Haste stated that the frustration is that laws are in place, requirements are placed on counties and funds get cut.

Mr. Dougher indicated that the reality is that more resources need to be allocated to the local levels. The Legislature missed that with regard to the 23 amendments that they made to the CPSL. It impacted the local level in a bad way.

Mr. Hartwick stated that there is no more important job than protecting and ensuring the safety of the kids. These kids didn’t ask to be put in this position. They have not done anything to be placed in a position of significant abuse. Dauphin County will continue to get better. Dauphin County has been part of a transition. He thanked Mr. Dougher. What Mr. Dougher has done in this County has made a significant difference in a short amount of time. The County is indebted to Mr. Dougher’s service, and his leadership has allowed a negative situation to begin to turn the corner. Dauphin County has always taken pride in being first. Being first having a Child Resource Center, figuring out a way to make sure that the kids are progressively protected beyond what the guidelines were. They were figuring out ways to do above and beyond. It is about time Dauphin County is back in that position. He feels confident that based upon that level of exposure that it is time for the Agency to turn the corner. The Agency is moving forward. They want to take responsibility for what happens here in Dauphin County, but this is a systemic issue that is happening statewide. A 119% increase in caseload at the very same time there is a parallel path for a reduction of $400 million out of the Child Welfare budget that has been proposed in the actual House proposed budget. There are caseworkers who are doing some great work – they are committed and it gets lost in this entire discussion. There are people who are out there around the clock attempting to do their job above and beyond what they are getting paid for, the ability for them to serve and protect kids in a way that puts themselves in harms way. Right now, there are caseworkers who are overburdened. They have criminal liability and additional...
scrutiny from media. They are looking for somebody to blame. The County needs to find a way to enhance the opportunity to protect and serve kids. It is an honorable career. It is an opportunity for folks to really make a difference. Follow a caseworker through a caseload that has a significant amount of cases that are all ones that will rip your heart out. Understand the stress and challenges that they deal with in making decisions, because there is a fine line here. The most important thing is the safety of the children, but it is also not good to rip a child from a home and place them from foster home to foster home. To try to balance and understand that safety is first, but also try to figure out what the long term best interest of a child and how the Agency can get them close to family members. It is not government’s role to raise children. To find that balance is one that every day is a significant struggle for the caseworkers. Some real changes have been made. Home assessments: to make sure that they see every room in a house, the ability to lay eyes on every child every time they are in that residence and the ability to make sure they are doing everything they can in complicated medical cases to consult with physicians, nurses, etc. Every day he goes to bed he is concerned about cases, things that he hears, kids that are put at risk through no fault of their own and it is going to continue. We need to redefine that this is an honorable job; one that is really worthwhile and one that has significant meaning. It makes more of a difference in kids’ lives than any other job that you could do. The County needs to be proactive, identify training needs and other concerns to put them in the best position and give the Agency the tools to make the appropriate decision. He has not seen one article in the newspaper about a $400 million reduction in the Child Welfare budget. It is not time to play politics or rebalance. It is time to accept responsibility and move forward. He is grateful to Mr. Dougher for his leadership and Ms. Yeager for stepping up in a role that she has been asked to do far beyond what her job description requires. He looks forward to recruiting more talent in leadership positions and human service positions. The County needs to be able to attract talent. The Agency has taken it from external quality assurance to taking a look at the internal processes – to make sure that they are meeting timelines and deadlines. Today is the indication that the Agency is starting to turn the corner. He thanked everyone again.

Mr. Saylor stated that it has been the Board’s practice not to comment on personnel matters, but for the record, the Agency has completed weeks of interviews for a new Children & Youth Administrator. There were more than two dozen applicants. They are hopeful that in the very near future to have someone new for the Board to consider.

**HUMAN RESOURCES**

Ms. Lengle asked if there were any questions on the Salary Board Packet and/or the Personnel Packet. (There was none.)

Mr. Haste asked if the items that were pulled from the Sheriff’s Office will be added to the Packet.

Ms. Lengle indicated that she will add those in.
Ms. Rebuck stated that she did have a conference call this morning with Mr. Burford, Kay Lengle and Faye Fisher regarding the items that are listed. She will not be at next week’s meeting, but wanted the Board to know that she is in full support to move forward with those positions.

The Salary Board Packet and the Personnel Packet will be considered at next week’s Legislative Meeting.

PURCHASE ORDERS

Mr. Baratucci stated that in addition to the Packet, he was contacted by the Judicial Center and they would like to have an item added. It is for a video camera that they are going to use to implement a new policy. With the Board’s okay, he would like to add it to the Packet for next week. (The Board was in agreement to include the Judicial Center item in the Packet.) He asked if there were any questions. (There was none.)

The Purchase Order Packet will be considered at next week’s Legislative Meeting.

TRAINING PACKET

The Training Packet will be considered at next week’s Legislative Meeting.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A. Transfer of Solid Waste Truck to Schuylkill County for 4 recycling bins. (DEP approved transfer.) (**A Vote is Requested 9/2/15**)

B. Appointment of Chad Saylor and J. Scott Burford (Alternate) to serve on the Phase 2 South Central Consolidation Study. (**A Vote is Requested 9/2/15**)

It was moved by Mr. Hartwick and seconded by Mr. Pries that the Board approve Items A and B, listed above under Items for Discussion.

Question: Mr. Haste – Aye; Mr. Pries – Aye and Mr. Hartwick – Aye; motion carried.

SOLICITOR’S REPORT – FRED LIGHTY, ESQ,

Mr. Lighty reported that the Solicitor’s Report is in the Board’s Packet and all items will be ready for the Board’s consideration next week. He asked if there were any questions. (There was none.)

CHIEF CLERK’S REPORT – CHAD SAYLOR

Mr. Saylor stated that the Transit issue that was voted on earlier, the folks at Berks and Lancaster have extended an invitation to the Board to visit/tour their site. Commissioner Pries helped host an event where folks from that Transit Agency came here and offered
a presentation to Commissioners throughout this region about what they went through. Other than that he asked if there are questions of him. (There was none.)

Mr. Haste stated that he had a long conversation with Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt of Berks on this issue prior to this being set up. As he has said before, he supports a regional approach as long as it is a full regional approach and not a piecemeal attempt. In talking to Mr. Barnhardt and the folks from Lancaster, he was lead to believe that they were not interested in seeking a merger at this time, which is not true. They are very interested in that merger. His full boat includes Lancaster, Gettysburg, Harrisburg/Hershey so you connect the true tourism economic development drivers of this region a transit system that encompasses all of those. In short of that it is just piecemeal. He does not need to visit the site. He is more interested in the concept.

COMMISSIONERS’ COMMENTS

There was none.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Singleton stated that people are aware of his position, but he asked to be taken off the clock after hearing the presentation from Children & Youth. He is a man first and an educator second. His heart went out to some of the assault victims over the years in Dauphin County, especially as an educator and a human services advocate.

RECESS

The Board of Commissioners recessed the Meeting for the Election Board to meet.

ELECTION BOARD MEETING

A complete set of Election Board Meeting Minutes are on file in the Commissioners’ Office.

RECONVENE

The Board reconvened.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, it was moved by Mr. Hartwick and seconded by Mr. Haste that the Board adjourn; motion carried.