

On the above date at 1:30 P.M, the Luzerne County Board of Commissioners convened a special meeting with the following present: Maryanne Petrilla, Chairman; Thomas P. Cooney, Commissioner; Stephen Urban, Commissioner; Douglas Pape, Chief Clerk/County Manager; Vito DeLuca, County Solicitor;

Maryanne Petrilla called the meeting to order and asked everyone to join in saying the Pledge of Allegiance.

It is noted that all meetings are electronically recorded.

**CALL TO ORDER.....Maryanne C. Petrilla, Chairman**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS.....Douglas A. Pape  
County Manager /Chief Clerk**

No Announcements

**PUBLIC COMMENT – AGENDA ITEMS ONLY**

**Walter Griffith**

Good afternoon, Commissioners. I want to talk about the Budget you are going to adopt today. In my Department, will there be positions eliminated? According to the Budget, my Department was reduced almost \$60,000. Does that mean a position has been eliminated?

**Commissioner Petrilla**

As we have always said, the individual Department Heads are ultimately responsible for their Departments. The Commissioners have distributed the money as able, but it is up to the Managers then to live within the Budget and if that means lay-offs, then it will mean lay-offs.

**Griffith**

So termination is different than a lay-off? So as Manager, it would be my responsibility to terminate someone in my office?

**Commissioner Petrilla**

It would be considered a lay-off because in 2013, if the money were to return, that person would be eligible to be called back. If it were a Union person, there would be an 18 month provision that they would be called back after 18 months.

**Griffith**

I have been able to increase revenue in my Department by \$20,000 by instituting at Commerce Bank and I think it is a great thing and I'm anticipating an additional \$20,000. Our Department was able to bring in \$20,000 but you cut my Budget by \$45,000 and in the Bureau of Election, his Budget has increased by \$6,500 but yet he lost revenue by \$340,000. There doesn't seem to be justification for that...

**Commissioner Petrilla**

I can give you that justification...The Election Bureau has something from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania called the Maintenance of Effort that in order to get the money into the County, it has to be spent...As for the Department raising revenue, there are some Department that can raise revenue and others that cannot raise money. As an example, the prison. So if an office can raise revenue, they are not entitled to have that revenue to spend, but that money goes into the pot to help those non-revenue creating departments like the Prison to operate.

**Griffith**

Well, thank you very much and I'm going to do as much as I can to generate more revenue. This economy is certainly not good and as a Department Head I am concerned about what positions will have to be eliminated.

**Commissioner Urban**

In my opinion, it's all up to you. You have a budget and you have to come back to us and tell us what positions you are going to fund and which ones you are not going to fund. We said months ago that we are not going to raise taxes, and we are not raising taxes. This is a tough economy, not only for people at the Courthouse, but for people throughout this County. We have a 10% unemployment rate. People are hurting all over. There is nothing in this Budget that is inflated. Valley Crest is not in the Budget, nor is the Baseball Stadium. You are not going to get any more in your Budget and it is up to you to live within it.

**Griffith**

Is the Homestead Exclusion still included...just want to make sure. With the economy the way it is, we have created jobs as recent as last week.

**Urban**

One of the positions we created was the in the Records Department from fees. That person is going to be paid from funds taken out of the Records Department.. That's not funded from the General Fund, so I take umbrage with you when you say we created a new position. And its going to take some pressure off the County, by providing a job for some people who do microfilm work and pay them from the Records Fund instead of the General Funds.

**Griffith**

But you have increased the Salary of the Deputy Warden...

**Edward Warkiewicz**

The only thing I want to talk about is insurance. I noticed it goes from \$1.4 to \$2.4 Million. What is that increase?

**Joan Pusateri**

In 2011, Budget the County did not need General Fund money for the Workers Compensation Fund whereas in 2012 there will be a 1.15 Million increase over last year. It's not payroll...it's claims and insurance for that coverage. Last year the fund was overfunded with a reserve account that we are required by law to have, but 2011 this will not occur.

**Tom Dombowski**

Thank you. I agree with the move of the Commissioners...if you people stick with the Budget, you will give the new Council a good start next year. I hope you stick to your guns. I also question if you have gotten any feedback from the Courts?

**Commissioner Petrilla**

We have had no feedback.

**Dombrowski**

Can we identify any excess funds in the Sheriff's, Treasurer's and obviously in the Courts? I was wondering if anyone can check on it. Before Skrep and Vonderheid came in, at least \$100,000 was stolen and it was not discovered before an Audit was done.

**Commissioner Petrilla**

Everyone submits their revenues and projected revenues and we assume they are accurate.

**Dombrowski**

It's been going around that there is money hiding in the Treasurer's Office.

**Commissioner Urban**

Not that I know of...

**Edward Chesnovitch**

I haven't seen the budget yet but all of a sudden we are in good shape. It looks to me like head count has to be reduced. And you're telling Walter it's up to him. If it turns out in this budget that there is a lot of head cut to be done, why wasn't it done years ago? Why don't you do it this year? You're putting it off for the Home Rule next year. And everything there next year, there's hardly millions of dollars we don't need now, we didn't need then. You're going to dump it off on them to do it. And by holding it off on your watch as you all said "we're in charge until the end of the year". So if you're in charge why don't you step up to the plate and do this? Waiting until the first of the year people will get more. There are union contracts, raises, retirements, everything they got coming will cost more next year. I think it's all smoke and mirrors here. You're dumping it on them and it could have been done before. Also you mentioned the other night you have enough, probably \$1 million dollars left over this year. Have you structured into that the debt payment? Is that going to be paid this year?

**Commissioner Petrilla**

Yes Sir.

**Edward Chesnovitch**

How can you do that if you have \$1 million there and you have three payrolls to make? And what's the debt service?

**Joan Pusateri**

The debt service for the month of December is minimal. The bulk of our debt service, we pay different issues throughout the whole year. It's a little over \$3 million for the month of December.

**Edward Chesnovitch**

You have \$3 million, and what's your payroll?

**Commissioner Petrilla**

Each payroll is \$2, 200,000.

**Joan Pusateri**

The General Fund part of it.

**Edward Chesnovitch**

Then you're beyond what you have in reserve now.

**Commissioner Urban**

No we're not. We made the payroll already. We have two more for the year.

**Commissioner Petrilla**

We have anticipated revenues coming in.

**Edward Chesnovitch**

It was anticipated last time you were going to sell Valley Crest for \$3 million.

**Commissioner Petrilla**

This is money that is owed to us from the Commonwealth of Pa. It comes in on a weekly basis that will be used to get us through the end of the year.

**Edward Chesnovitch**

I think your going to have a short fall and you're playing games with it. A lot of people are sitting up there to sabotage Home Rule. It will be dumped on them for the next year.

**Commissioner Urban**

I take offense of your remarks. In 2004 the budget was \$140 million and there were about 2100 people employed by this county. Today there are about 1700 people employed. There has been a significant effort to reduce people in this county. The budget passed last year \$125 million, that's a \$15 million reduction since 2004 to 2011. I think that's significant. I take offense to remarks that are not based on fact but on things you pull out of the air. I wish you would come here with the facts. Get the prior budgets, everything is available under the Right to Know.

**Edward Chesnovitch**

Within the last month you were \$10 million short.

**Commissioner Urban**

When the people come in to brief the budget we said hold the line, don't bring anything more. Then they bring in another \$15-\$16 million. They did it last year. It was over \$140 million and it was reduced to \$125 million and we got through the year. That's the importance of working in this county day to day. And that's something under Home Rule that will be lacking. Council will not be here on a day to day basis. Many have jobs in the daytime and they will simply come to the meeting at night and vote on what somebody shoves in front of them. So if they want to vote on a \$144 million budget because that's what everyone says they need next year without really justifying what everyone needs. Then I feel sorry for this county in the future.

**Edward Chesnovitch**

I feel sorry for you because you made the statement at meetings that this is the worst charter in the state of PA. Why did you run for it?

**Commissioner Petrilla**

I would like to comment on you saying we are dumping this budget in the lap of the new council. That's beyond our control. The new council is coming in. I'm very worried about this budget. It is lean as lean can be. But the taxpayers cannot afford another tax increase so therefore our only alternative is to present a lean budget. I'm not going to be a Commissioner next year but if I was I would be sitting here today adopting this same budget knowing that I would have to live within the confines of the budget. So I'm not dropping anything in anyone's lap. This is fact. This is what we have to spend. This is where we are. It's going to be tough. It's a lean budget. The head count will have to reduce.

**Edward Chesnovitch**

But you said you would pass it the same, you wouldn't go forward and say this is what we have to do and let's do it now. You'll leave it for the Home Rule to worry about.

**Commissioner Urban**

We have Valley Crest which is not in there and if that sold that's a windfall for the new counsel. Secondly if there is a settlement with baseball that's a windfall for the new counsel.

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**COMMUNICATIONS- DOUGLAS A. PAPE, COUNTY MANAGER/CHIEF CLERK**

**MOTION**

**Proposed 2012 General Fund Budget**

Request a motion to accept the first reading of the Proposed 2012 General Fund Budget.

Commissioner Cooney **Abstained** stating a family member and/or I are associated with A+E Group, Inc. (A+E). A+E has agreements to perform design services with the Luzerne County Community College

It was moved by Commissioner Urban, seconded by Commissioner Petrilla  
**“AYES” PETRILLA, URBAN “ABSTAIN” COONEY**

**Request a Motion to adopt the following RESOLUTION NO. 12022011A:**

**RESOLUTION  
NO. 12022011A**

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the proposed General Fund budget for the year 2012 be and the same is hereby adopted as submitted, said budget indicating revenues in the amount of \$121,698,078 and disbursements in the amount of \$121,698,078.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that December 29, 2011, be and the same is hereby set, as the date for the final adoption of the budget for the year 2012. The Chief Clerk is hereby directed to make the proposed budget available for public inspection in the Office of the Luzerne County Commissioners, the Hazleton Public Library, and the Luzerne County Law Library at any time during regular business hours from this date until final adoption. You may also refer to the County website ([www.luzernecounty.org](http://www.luzernecounty.org)).

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Chief Clerk be and is hereby directed and authorized to give such public notice as required by law.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that there will be a tax levied on all real estate property and for the general County purpose, including the payment of interest and principal of the funded debt, in the total amount of 5.215 mills.

**CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted by the Luzerne County Board of Commissioners on the 2nd day of December, 2011.

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Douglas A. Pape  
County Manager/Chief Clerk

Commissioner Cooney **Abstained** stating a family member and/or I are associated with A+E Group, Inc. (A+E). A+E has agreements to perform design services with the Luzerne County Community College

It was moved by Commissioner Urban, seconded by Commissioner Petrilla  
**“AYES” PETRILLA, URBAN “ABSTAIN” COONEY**

MOTION

**Proposed 2012 Liquid Fuels/Bridge Account Budgets**

Request a motion to accept the first reading of the Proposed 2012 Liquid Fuels/Bridge Account Budgets.

Commissioner Cooney **Abstained** stating a family member and/or I are associated with A+E Group, Inc. (A+E). A+E has agreements to perform design services with the Luzerne County Road & Bridge Department.

It was moved by Commissioner Urban, seconded by Commissioner Petrilla  
**“AYES” PETRILLA, URBAN “ABSTAIN” COONEY**

**Request a Motion to adopt the following RESOLUTION NO. 12022011B:**

**RESOLUTION  
NO. 12022011B**

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the proposed Liquid Fuels/Bridge Account tentative budget for the year 2012 be and the same, is hereby adopted as submitted, said Liquid Fuels budget indicating revenues in the amount of \$1,218,541 and disbursements in the amount of \$2,513,842 and the Bridge Account indicating revenues in the amount of \$150,020 and disbursements in the amount of \$583,202.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that December 29, 2011, be and the same, is hereby set as the date for the final adoption of the budget for the year 2012. The Chief Clerk is hereby directed to make the proposed budget available for public inspection in the Office of the Luzerne County Commissioners, the Hazleton Public Library, and the Luzerne County Law Library at any time during regular business hours from this date until final adoption. You may also refer to the County website ([www.luzernecounty.org](http://www.luzernecounty.org)).

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Chief Clerk be and is hereby directed and authorized to give such public notice as required by law.

**CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted by the Luzerne County Board of Commissioners on the 2nd day of December, 2011.

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Douglas A. Pape  
County Manager/Chief Clerk

Commissioner Cooney **Abstained** stating a family member and/or I are associated with A+E Group, Inc. (A+E). A+E has agreements to perform design services with the Luzerne County Road & Bridge Department.

It was moved by Commissioner Urban, seconded by Commissioner Petrilla  
**“AYES” PETRILLA, URBAN “ABSTAIN” COONEY**

**END OF COMMUNICATIONS**

**PUBLIC COMMENT – NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

No Public Comment

**Request a motion to adjourn.**

It was moved by Commissioner Urban, seconded by Commissioner Cooney  
**“AYES” PETRILLA, COONEY, URBAN**

**Respectfully submitted,**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Thomas".

**Jennifer Thomas, Recording Secretary**