

CAMBRIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Minutes

February 23, 2022

Ebensburg, PA
February 10, 2022

Commissioners Thomas C. Chernisky, B.J. Smith, and Scott W. Hunt present.

Ebensburg, PA
February 11, 2022

Commissioners Thomas C. Chernisky, B.J. Smith, and Scott W. Hunt present.

Ebensburg, PA
February 14, 2022

Commissioners Thomas C. Chernisky, B.J. Smith, and Scott W. Hunt present.

Ebensburg, PA
February 15, 2022

Commissioners Thomas C. Chernisky, B.J. Smith, and Scott W. Hunt present.

Ebensburg, PA
February 16, 2022

Commissioners Thomas C. Chernisky, B.J. Smith, and Scott W. Hunt present.

Ebensburg, PA
February 17, 2022

Commissioners Thomas C. Chernisky, B.J. Smith, and Scott W. Hunt present.

Ebensburg, PA
February 18, 2022

Commissioners Thomas C. Chernisky, B.J. Smith, and Scott W. Hunt present.

Ebensburg, PA
February 21, 2022

Commissioners Thomas C. Chernisky, B.J. Smith, and Scott W. Hunt present.

Ebensburg, PA
February 22, 2022

Commissioners Thomas C. Chernisky, B.J. Smith, and Scott W. Hunt present.

Commissioners in Session. Commissioners Thomas C. Chernisky, William J. Smith, and Scott W. Hunt were present.

The Commissioners' Meeting was called to Order by President Commissioner Chernisky, at the Northern Cambria Community Development Corporation, 4200 Crawford Avenue, Suite 200, Northern Cambria, at 6:07 p.m.

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith to waive the reading of the Minutes of the meeting held February 10, 2022, but to approve them and place them on file.

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and passed unanimously.

Public Comment:

Lynn Popovich, a Casework Supervisor with Cambria County Children & Youth Service, stated that the Agency received 5 employment applications but that only 3 individuals showed up for interviews. She thanked the Commissioners for being prompt with the hiring of these 3 people; however, she stated that they need over 12 new workers within the next month. New hires are not staying after they are trained due to the low wages, stress, and overtime. There is a need to be able to retain these people, especially when a local business is currently hiring approximately 400 people, at a starting salary of between \$16.00 and \$19.00 per hour, with no degree necessary. Children & Youth employees have a lower

starting wage, \$14.83 per hour, for a job that requires a college degree. She also stated that it's been a month since Children & Youth employees first attended a Commissioners' Meeting to bring these issues to the attention of the Commissioners, and employees feel that the Commissioners are not responding. It is important that the Agency keeps the current staff that it has.

Brittany Coffman, a former Cambria County Children & Youth employee, stated that she worked for the County for 5 1/2 years but that she couldn't support herself on the low wages, even as a single person. She stated that there could have been 7 to 9 vacancies at the Agency while she was there and that, while that made her job challenging, she was still able to be an advocate for the children of her caseload. If there were 16 vacancies while she was at the Agency, like there are now, she would not have been able to give the time and attention needed in order to provide families with the necessary help. With the current staff shortages, she said that coworkers would be unable to assist each other. Quality casework takes time. Caseworkers should not be rushed and overwhelmed while making important decisions regarding people's lives. She stated that caseworkers are sacrificing personally, financially, and emotionally to protect the children in the community.

John Ringler, a Fiscal Technician with Cambria County Children & Youth Service, has been with the County for 6 1/2 years. He stated that the current vacancies are having a serious impact on the Agency. CYS support staff is there to assist the caseworkers so that children end up in a safe and stable environment. With the uptick in placements and the increased need for services, he said that support staff is feeling the pressure from the lack of workers needed to meet the demands, and support staff only makes \$10.00 to \$12.00 per hour. Current employees are doing their best, but he said no one is supporting them.

Dan Gehlmann has been a Caseworker with Cambria County Children & Youth Service since 2018. He formerly held various positions with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, which he believes gives him the ability to handle stressful situations. However, he stated that the stress of the current Children & Youth situation is unending, long lasting, and there is no additional staff to call for help. He stated that the Agency is working without 41% of its staff, which compounds the stress and makes it unmanageable. He said there is no downtime and that every day is a struggle to manage one's own work and to try to fill the gaps left by the vacancies. He stated that caseworkers need a college education with specific courses of study, as well as hours of training, but have a starting salary of \$28,914.00 annually, which is not enough money to pay for the credentials necessary for the job, while a Cambria County Correctional Officer needs a high school diploma and 5 weeks of training and has a starting salary of \$43,576.00 annually. In all exit interviews, since 2016, low wages, the stress level, and increased workloads have been cited as the reasons for leaving the Agency. He would like the Commissioners to act on these concerns and help the Agency recruit and retain a workforce that can serve the children of the County.

John DeBartola stated that there were 46 people present at the meeting asking for the Commissioners' help; praying for help in a candlelight vigil. He stated that he once worked for Somerset County Children and Youth and that the concerns raised by the speakers existed then and still exist today. He asked why the Commissioners have not yet taken action, and he asked the Commissioners to take action for the benefit of the children and the community. He asked that the Commissioners change what they personally put on social media and instead post things calling for change. He further stated that he doesn't think it's right for staff to have to drive to Northern Cambria to be heard, when gas is \$4.00 per gallon and they have no money. He feels that Children & Youth workers aren't getting appropriate wages, when compared to the Sheriff's Office and that there is a wage disparity. Mr. DeBartola also asked what was going on with the investigation in the Election Office that was initiated last year. He sent an email to the Commissioners and the District Attorney regarding same.

Alex Ciotti, a former employee of Cambria County Children & Youth Service, described the job as a challenging but rewarding experience. He stated that the current staffing crisis is not a surprise and that pleas for help were not heard in 2016. Instead, he said that enhancements were taken away from the employees at that time. These enhancements were incentives based on years of experience. He stated that the concern of being unable to retain employees was brought up during contract negotiations in 2019 but that little was done to make the position more attractive. He asked the Commissioners to let the workforce know that they aren't just listening to their concerns but that they are hearing them and helping them.

COMMISSIONERS

Agreement:

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith to approve the Agreement with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, No. EMPG C950002946, for the Emergency Management Performance Grant, in the amount of \$65,515.00, beginning October 1, 2020, and ending December 29, 2023.

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and passed unanimously.

Easement:

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith to approve the Perpetual Easement with Robert Shulick, for property located in West Carroll Township, Tax Map No. 09-007.-225.000, in the amount of \$3,000.00, in order to provide access to a communication tower.

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and passed unanimously.

Contracts (Provided Funding is Available):

Motion was made by Commissioner Hunt to approve one (1) Service Contract Amendment for Cambria County BH/ID & EI Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Budget:

<u>Vendor</u>	<u>Description of Services</u>	<u>Rate</u>
Cambria County Association for the Blind and Handicapped	Community, residential, and social rehabilitation for Cambria County Intellectual Disabilities consumers.	\$ 51,237.00

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Smith and passed unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Hunt to approve one (1) Service Contract Amendment for Cambria County Drug & Alcohol Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Budget:

<u>Vendor</u>	<u>Description of Services</u>	<u>Rate</u>
Twin Lakes Center for Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation	Revised drug screen and test rates.	\$ 55.00/10-drug screen 40.00/test-single drug definitive test

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Smith and passed unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Hunt to approve one (1) Service Contract for Cambria County Drug & Alcohol Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Budget:

<u>Vendor</u>	<u>Description of Services</u>	<u>Rate</u>
Sinclair Television of Fresno, LLC, d/b/a WJAC-TV	Broadcast commercial and sponsorship ads.	\$ 3,000.00

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Smith and passed unanimously.

Resignations:

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith to approve the resignation of Reverend Sylvia King from the Cambria County Drug & Alcohol Advisory Board, effective immediately.

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and passed unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith to approve the resignation of Reverend Sylvia King from the Cambria County Planning Commission Board, effective immediately.

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and passed unanimously.

Tax Exoneration:

Motion was made by Commissioner Hunt to authorize and direct the Tax Claim Bureau Director to strike, from the records in her office, taxes plus penalty, interest, and fees assessed against:

CONTROL NO.	MAP NO.	ASSESSED NAME	MUNICIPALITY	EXONERATE
14-114246	14-005--000.093	Blough, David	Conemaugh Township	2010 through 2021 taxes. Strike off – trailer removed.

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Smith and passed unanimously.

PERSONNEL ACTIONS

New Hires:

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith to hire Bryan Smith, Part-Time Van Driver for the Area Agency on Aging, (Paygrade 9-J/\$10.44 per hour), effective March 14, 2022. (Employment is contingent upon successful completion of pre-employment health screening).

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and passed unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith to hire Kayla Ohler, Full-Time Caseworker I for Children & Youth Service, (Paygrade 41-E/\$28,914.30 annually), effective March 14, 2022. (Employment is contingent upon successful completion of pre-employment health screening).

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and passed unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith to hire Rachael Reed, Full-Time Caseworker I for Children & Youth Service, (Paygrade 41-E/\$28,914.30 annually), effective March 14, 2022. (Employment is contingent upon successful completion of pre-employment health screening).

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and passed unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith to hire Brennen Stiffler, Full-Time Caseworker I for Children & Youth Service, (Paygrade 41-E/\$28,914.30 annually), effective March 14, 2022. (Employment is contingent upon successful completion of pre-employment health screening).

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and passed unanimously.

Remove from Payroll:

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith to remove Thomas Dellaquila, Full-Time Fiscal Technician for BH/ID & EI, (Paygrade 30-F/\$23,459.02 annually), effective March 5, 2022.

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and passed unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith to remove David Behe, Full-Time Correctional Officer I for the Prison, (Paygrade 26-A/\$21.98 per hour), effective February 22, 2022.

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and passed unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith to remove Matthew Rhodes, Full-Time Network Administrator/Operations Manager for Technology, (Paygrade 58-C/\$60,000.00 annually), effective February 25, 2022.

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and passed unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith to remove Mary Gmitter, Full-Time Department Clerk IV for the Prothonotary's Office, (Paygrade 21-B/\$15.78 per hour), effective March 19, 2022.

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and passed unanimously.

Commissioner Chernisky stated that the next Commissioners' Meeting would be held on Wednesday, March 16, 2022, at the Conemaugh East Hills Community Room, 1st Floor, 1450 Scalp Avenue, Johnstown, at 6:05 p.m.

Adjournment:

Motion was made by Commissioner Smith to adjourn the meeting.

Motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunt and passed unanimously.

Michael Gelles, IV, Chief Clerk