



County of Lackawanna

Lackawanna County
Government Center
123 Wyoming Ave
Scranton, Pennsylvania
18503

Meeting Minutes

Board of Commissioners

Wednesday, July 2, 2025

10:00 AM

Blakely Borough Municipal Building

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10am.

Present 2 - Chris Chermak and Bill Gaughan

Reading and Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, seconded by Commissioner Chris Chermak, that this be Dispense with the Reading and Approve as Prepared. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

Opportunity for the Public to Address the Board (Agenda Items Only)

Rose Nick: 25162 the appointments. Um are they volunteer? It's appointed. But is there a salary attached with them?

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: No, these are these are volunteer positions. You're talking about the behavioral health intellectual disabilities board. Yeah, these are volunteer positions. So, earlier in the year and last year, we solicited resumes and letters of interest from anyone in the public who was interested in we have over 30 boards, authorities, and commissions. So, these people, two of them were already on the board so we're reappointing them. And then we're appointing Commissioner Chermak, who previously served on the board. And it was recommended to us by the head of behavioral health, Mickey Dutch, who's actually sitting next to you to appoint Kathleen Spencer.

Rose Nick: 2550163 that's also that's non salary?

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: Heritage Valley? They do not get paid. That's strictly volunteer. The only board that people draw any salary is from this the reassessment, the assessment appeals.

Commissioner Chris Chermak: on that note too, we've had a lot of applications. A lot of people inquired. So, you know, we try to pick the best ones that we can for now and there's always if there's openings in the future, we'll relook at those. So, anybody that applied that didn't get picked, you know, maybe for the next round if something opens up.

Resolutions

[25-0166](#)

Approving Current Payables

Attachments: [3H50LQN5.pdf](#)
 [3H50LQNV.pdf](#)
 [Res 25-0166.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

25-0158

Awarding the Municipal Electronic Recycling Collection Event Grant

Attachments: [20250617124054643.pdf](#)
 [Legislative Cover Sheet-e recycling 2025.docx](#)
 [Res 25-0158.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

25-0159

Ratifying CDBG Modifications and Revisions

Attachments: [Legislative Cover Sheet_Mod_06_18.docx](#)
 [Res 25-0159.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

25-0165

Authorizing the De-Accession of Materials in the Electric City Trolley Museum Collection

Attachments: [Res 25-0165.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

25-0167

Ratifying a Memorandum of Understanding

Attachments: [RX Benefits -](#)
 [Complete with Docusign MOU - Early Commitmen.pdf](#)
 [Res 25-0167.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

[25-0145](#)

Authorizing the Execution and Delivery of a Lease Purchase Agreement

Attachments: [Legislative Cover Sheet IT 06 11 2025.docx](#)
[signed MT Bank proposal IT.pdf](#)
[Amort County of Lackawanna 06-03-2025.pdf](#)
[Lessee Resolution Lackawanna County M&T Lease 2025\(3002993.2\).docx](#)
[Presidio Equipment List Signed.pdf](#)
[Res 25-0145.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

[25-0160](#)

Entering into a Fourth Amendment to the Food Service Management Agreement

Attachments: [Legislative Cover Sheet 06 26 2025 Aramark.docx](#)
[Amendment Memorandum Final.doc](#)
[signed Prison Food Service Agreement Aramark.pdf](#)
[Lackawanna County-PA-ACS-Food-2025-Amendment 4.docx](#)
[Res 25-0160.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

[25-0161](#)

Awarding the Broadband Assessment Plan

Attachments: [HRG County of Lackawanna Broadband Assessment Plan Proposal 20240910.pdf](#)
[Legislative Cover Sheet 06 26 2025 Wireless Survey RFQ.docx](#)
[Res 25-0161.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote.

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: On the question, just a couple comments on this. So today we're, as you heard from our CFO and Mike Brown, we're taking a very important step forward in shaping the future of Lackawanna County, a future that's more connected, more inclusive, and better prepared to compete in the economy today, which is a digital economy. So by awarding this contract to HRG, we are launching a comprehensive broadband assessment plan that's going to help us identify where the gaps are in Lackawanna County, especially

in unserved and underserved communities and develop real actionable solutions to close them. This is a lot more than just about internet access. It's about economic opportunity. It's also about educational uh equity. It's about ensuring that every resident, whether you're in downtown Scranton, whether you're here in Blakeley, whether you're in our most rural townships in the county, you have access to the infrastructure that you need to live, learn, and work in the 21st century. So, this assessment plan is going to lay the foundation for expanding wireless and wired internet access throughout our county and enhancing everything that we currently have. So, we're focused on ensuring that all residents in this county, regardless of your income or regardless of where you live, you can participate in, uh, the digital economy that we live in.

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

[25-0162](#)

Appointments to the Lackawanna- Susquehanna Behavioral Health/Intellectual Disabilities/Early Intervention Advisory Board

Attachments: [Appt 25-0162.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Appointment be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

[25-0163](#)

Appointments to the Lackawanna County Disability Action Committee

Attachments: [Appt 25-0163.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Appointment be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

[25-0164](#)

Appointment to the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority

Attachments: [Appt 25-0164.pdf](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Appointment be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

Opportunity for the Public to Address the Board

Rose Nick: Let's go back to the HRG contract. What is the cost going to be of that?

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: The contract is for two years and the cost is 156,300. And that money was budgeted. It is in this year's budget. That's for the total two years.

Not sure if there are any comments or I have several questions in regards to the new assessment numbers. Chris, I believe from Monday night, it was determined that Tyler had no certified appraisers studying the any of the assessments?

Commissioner Chris Chermak: Well, so Tyler Technologies did the all the values, all the reassessed values. Now they're compiling that information. They well they compiled it. They sent it out to the residents. Now the residents have their new assessed values. Now your opportunity is to go to the assessor's hearings, apply for a hearing if you so see fit. The assessor's boards will have certified people on the boards to go over the values.

Rose Nick: Okay. But none of the people that they had were certified?

Solicitor Paul LaBelle: I was at the town hall. I recall and I remember that attorney Patrick Lavell, I believe he represented that there are no certified appraisers as uh employed by Tyler Technologies that so that he did say that.

Rose Nick: Okay. And also that evening it was stated that they did no vacant land. They had no vacant land to do a comparison.

Commissioner Chris Chermak: Well, vacant land turned out to be is turning out to be some issues there because they have no comparables to that. So, you know, we have to look at the values and again that's a place for the appeal process to take a look and come up with a determination on what you feel and what the assessor's boards are going to feel the properties are worth.

Rose Nick: Okay. So, now presently on our tax bills we have an assessed value. Do you know in the future tax bills are they going to put an assessed value or are they going with market value?

Commissioner Chris Chermak: So your new assessed value is basically market value.

Rose Nick: Okay. Because in because if you use the common level ratio from the state like right now if you had on your bill 20,000 and you did the division by 0.62, you would be valued at 322,000. So, how is the common level ratio going to factor into any of this? Or isn't it?

Solicitor Paul LaBelle: It's my understanding that they're using the fair market value as determined by Tyler Technologies based on properties that sold from the time period of January 1st, 2022 until June 30th, 2024. So the common level ratio will be one there it won't affect this is the base year so your value is your assessed value, same thing fair market value assessed value. Going forward the state will determine if there's a new common level ratio factor in future years.

Rose Nick: Okay because isn't the common level ratio actually set as of yesterday because it was up until June 30th. Yeah. From last year to now the six.

Solicitor Paul LaBelle: I believe it's set July 1st of every year. This assessment, the new reassessment, the new values won't take effect till January 1st of 2026. So if the if the state is going to set a new common level ratio, it would be July 1st of 2026. That's my understanding.

Solicitor Don Frederickson: PJ once January 1st hits the common level ratio will reset to zero for Lackawanna County because we have a new assessment and then it will adjust going forward depending on values of sales and so.

Commissioner Chris Chermak: yeah this the whole the whole problem with this is we've waited 60 years that's the first problem, so once we get through the

hearings and get everybody on hopefully we get everybody in agreement I mean not everybody but as many people as possible, residents and property owners, then we can we can move that forward. It's so convoluted. You're based on 1968 values and then you throw in common level ratio and then the millages, you know, the values of the houses are here, the millages are here. Well, now they're going to be this way. And so, it's very confusing right now. And once we get these numbers finalized and totaled, we'll be able to look at what the millage is going to be and then we can give everybody what their tax bill is going to be.

Rose Nick: But the millage is different than what's going to be on your tax bill. And where and when is all of that?

Commissioner Chris Chermak: The millage will be figured out once they get the total assessed value, which they won't be able to do until after all the hearings are done.

Rose Nick: Yeah. But millages are all set differently whether it's school board, etc.

Commissioner Chris Chermak: They're based off the your budget. So the school budget, the municipal budget, or the county budget. So, but you can't do anything until you get the total assessed value. So, that's what we're working on.

Rose Nick: But the bills then are generated the tax bills which are going to show not the assessed value. It's going to show the far fair market value. Well, that right. But that is your assessed value.

Rose Nick: All right. Well, I know. But in the past, it showed a difference because if you went by the common level ratio and that it comes out to a different figure. Now, I know you say you didn't do an assessment for 50 some years, but also the properties that were from 50 years ago are now 50 years older. And I know that my home that when I got it was already 60 years old before I bought it and was in there for 50 years.

Commissioner Chris Chermak: And it's supposed to be based on what the value what you could sell your house for today. That's what they're going to base values on. So, we're going to let's see how it goes once we get through these hearings.

Rose Nick: Okay. Well, now going back to this fee notice and everything are up. Will it said like if they send an appointment and no exceptions, well, what happens if you have a vacation planned or you have a medical procedure planned or you end up with an emergency? So now what?

Commissioner Chris Chermak: We'll talk to the assessor's office and I'm sure they can accommodate whoever.

Joseph Rabin: I just want to express my thanks and gratitude to Commissioner Chermak for the town hall. Very informative. Learned a lot and I indebted and really appreciate

Commissioner Chris Chermak: That's what it was intended for, to get information. Yeah, people are confused and it gives you an idea how to follow process, what you need to do.

Lou Perry, Blakely Borough: I have a question on the construction of Main Street and the and the paving project. Has there been any update on as to when they're going to resurface that road?

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: Yes. I just talked to Larry Lukasik, our director of roads and bridges the other day. They're looking at the end of July tentative right now. They're up at Montage now paving that area, but the end of July is when they're shooting for at this point. But we'll keep you up to date as soon as we know a definitive date, we will absolutely be in touch with you to let you know because of course it's going to affect the borough of Blakely and

Archbald.

Commissioner Chris Chermak: Lou, has the um utilities have they did they I haven't been up the road in a week or so. Have they wrapped up their work? Yeah. So we're waiting for them. They have to finish before I don't know if they're finished or not. Larry's been watching them and talk with them. So as soon as the utilities are done because none of us want them to dig up our new roads. So as soon as they're done, we're ready to go in.

Lou Perry: But when they're going in and doing their cut their pave cuts and they're like patching them in, I mean, they're doing a horrible job. Just wanted to bring that to your attention.

Jennifer Mercer, Penn State Extension: I had a meeting with your office yesterday to introduce a few new bits that we have coming out. So, the one I'm most excited about, I'll share. It's a welcome to the real world curriculum. It's going to be designed to teach 8th to 12th graders how to manage money. And just some examples I gave yesterday. They'll be assigned a career. They'll be assigned a salary. And then through the curriculum, they work on like life expectant unexpected situations such as a maybe a broken car or an illness. and they have to manage their money. They're taught to use Venmo, credit cards responsibly, write checks, etc. So, in the meeting yesterday, it was suggested for me to contact the Lackawanna County Library, which I did do. She's very excited and she's already scanned the QR code to get her name in to be trained. I do want to get out there that we're offering ACT 48 credits to this for teachers. We'll train them, then they can teach it in the classroom. They'll receive act 48 credits. We're hoping to get something in that's convenient for the teachers, maybe possibly on an inservice day or I'm not sure. That's Chrissy Pullman's area, but I did just want to get that out there and we always thank you all for your support.

Commissioners' Other Business

Commissioner Chris Chermak: I want to thank everybody for coming and thanks for having us here at the Blakely Borough Building. I want to recognize Chief Salerno in the back. Appreciate you being here and thanks for what you do and also Chief is heavily involved and keeps our SWAT team in intact and on the cutting edge. But, Chief and I have something to do this afternoon that probably neither one of us would ever I know we don't want to have to be there and want to have to go through what we're going to go through later, but just veteran suicide. Veteran suicide. I don't have the numbers in front of me, but they're thousands and thousands every year along with nonveteran suicides. If you know anybody in this particular case, I wouldn't have called it not the other day, but, you just never know. But if you if you have any idea or you have thinks that you if you think that somebody's having a problem we have the 988 number, which is the national suicide hotline number, certainly 911. The local police departments can get help, but there is help out there. One is too many. And you know, we put together when I first became a commissioner, we put together the Lackawanna County Suicide Prevention Alliance, which we got meetings that we get together almost every other month. The last I knew, we had about 150 different organizations and folks that are involved. We just discuss different things every every meeting. We have guests that come in and give pro talks and things to just keep everybody on the same page on what's going on throughout the area, what of help is available. We have NAMI of northeastern Pennsylvania. There's a bunch of different places here. But again, if you notice anybody you think might be having an issue, talk to them and the question that we're told to ask is, are you thinking about hurting yourself? Are you thinking about taking your own life? So, you know, you have to ask these

questions. And again, 988 is the national number. 911 certainly can get you the help that is needed. So I urge people to really pay attention to what's going on and so again, one's too many.

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: You have heard me probably speak frequently at these meetings and elsewhere about the urgent need to improve the financial management and operations in the county to avoid the sort of financial calamity that I encountered upon taking office last year and it's been well documented the financial disaster that that I inherited. To that end, we have implemented an array of management reforms that have finally begun to produce results as reflected in a recent credit rating that characterized the county government's outlook as stable rather than negative for the first time in a very long time. Now, one of the most bewildering situations that we discovered last year was that the county every year had earned very little money from its cash flow. Scores of millions of collected tax dollars sat in the bank earning interest for the financial institutions rather than for county taxpayers. So to correct that, we worked closely with our county treasurer, Angela Rempe Jones, and our CFO, Dave Bulzoni, and we approved the Cashvest cash management program last summer. And you may remember that we announced this and talked about the benefits of it or the potential benefits of it. Today, I'm happy to report that the program has begun to produce really unbelievable results. A big part of the problem was that there was no comprehensive system in place to monitor the county's accounts. More than 90 accounts in seven different financial institutions. The Cashvest program changed that by creating a comprehensive system and the results have been really dramatic. For example, several accounts at Fidelity Bank earned an average 2.36% interest for the county in the last quarter. Now, due to the changes that we've made, the accounts will earn roughly 3.5% creating an additional \$400,000 in interest earnings for the county over the next 12 months. That's by basically doing nothing except actually being aggressive uh with these banks and going back and forth with them. The same is true for county accounts at other institutions. For example, the county will receive an estimated \$190,000 in additional interest over the next 12 months on its accounts at PNC and an estimated \$220,000 in additional interest on its accounts at People's Bank. So that's almost a million dollars a million dollars because of the program that we implemented last year. Now the revenue is estimated because it's based on interest rates going forward and they could change. But even if the rates do decline, the interest rate increases ensure that county revenue will still increase. This is another indication that the financial management reforms that I pushed for and instituted last year are working. Now, as I mentioned at the beginning of this meeting, we are still in a very tight financial situation, but I assure you that we're going to continue to look for ways to reduce costs and find creative ways to increase revenue. And if you take the million dollars that we generated here, just based on the program I just talked about, the \$1.1 million in savings next year based on what our HR director Joanne Decker did with the RX benefits program. We are slowly but surely moving in the right direction. The only other thing I wanted to mention was we have our Scrantastic event which is tomorrow. It starts at 4 pm down at Courthouse Square. Fireworks and at 7:30 we have for the first time in a long time the full Philharmonic. The entire band, the entire orchestra will be there. So we're really excited about that and we hope that you'll come out to that. And once again, as Commissioner Chermak did, I want to thank all of the elected officials from Blakely for all the work that you do and we're happy to be up here today. And of course, if you need anything from us, just make sure you reach out.

Adjournment