



County of Lackawanna

Lackawanna County
Government Center
123 Wyoming Ave
Scranton, Pennsylvania
18503

Meeting Minutes

Board of Commissioners

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

10:00 AM

Commissioners' Conference Room

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10am.

Leading us in the Pledge is Michael A. Jones, Major, US Army, retired. Major Mike Jones enlisted in the military in 1980. He rose through the ranks, starting out as a private, attended Officer Candidate School in Fort Benning, Georgia, and was commissioned as a second lieutenant. He held various positions, including platoon leader, company commander, battle captain, and brigade adjutant. Mike retired as a major. He was called up for many state emergencies, including the Lake Cary tornado disaster in 1989. In 2002 and 2003, he was deployed to Europe for Operation Enduring Freedom, with task force Keystone in Germany, and supported the 109th Infantry serving in Bosnia. Mike retired in 2004 and continues to serve as a volunteer for the Pennsylvania Committee of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. He's also the president of the 109th Infantry Association, which keeps alive the legacy of the 109th and provides scholarships to students and veterans in the 109th Infantry. Additionally, the organization provides the support to the Pennsylvania Wounded Warriors Program, the Geno Murley Center, St. Francis Commons, the Carbondale Memorial Day Committee, and the Shade Tree Commission to maintain the Veterans Park in Carbondale. Mike recently retired as an application engineer with CIGNO, located in South Canaan, where he was employed for nearly 41 years. Major Jones resides with his wife Brenda in Blakely. They have five children and five grandchildren. Major Jones has the following awards. Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Award, Global War on Terror Medal, Overseas Service Medal, and numerous others.

Present 3 - Chris Chermak, Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

Reading and Approval of Minutes

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

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

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

No comments

Resolutions

[26-0063](#)

Approving Current Payables

Attachments: [Res 26-0063](#)
[3H50N43Q](#)
[3H50N43O](#)

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: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0056](#)

Entering into an Agreement for GED Classes at the County Prison

Attachments: [GED Legislative Cover Sheet Updated](#)
[LACKAWANNA COUNTY PRISON - Outreach GED Contract 2026-28](#)
[Res 26-0056](#)

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: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0058](#)

Entering into an Amendment to the Inmate Communications Services Agreement

Attachments: [Viapath contractcoversheet](#)
[Viapath](#)
[ViaPath Technologies Lackawanna County ITS VVS TAB PMT OMS Contract Amend 5 FCC 02.09.26 final](#)
[Res 26-0058](#)

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: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0057](#)

Approving an Agreement with ESRI

Attachments: [ESRI contract](#)
[ESRI](#)
[Esri Renewal Quote # 26325753](#)
[rES 26-0057](#)

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

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0059](#)

Approving the Office of Drug and Alcohol Treatment Agreements

Attachments: [Legislative Cover Sheet Commissioners Mtg 25-26 Contracts](#)
[FY25-26 Contract Signature Pages](#)
[FY25-26 Contracts Summary](#)
[Res 26-0059](#)

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: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0060](#)

Accepting a Quote from Presidio

Attachments: [Lackawanna County. Private Browser. 2.13.26](#)
[Prison Browser Legislative Cover Sheet 2026](#)
[Res 26-0060](#)

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: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0062](#)

Awarding Arts & Culture Grants

Attachments: [2026.02. 25 America250 grants cover sheet](#)
[2026America250MunicipalityGrants](#)
[Res 26-0062](#)

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: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0061](#)

Appointments to the Area Agency on Aging Advisory Board

Attachments: [Appt 26-0061](#)

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: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0064](#)

Appointments to the Workforce Development Board

Attachments: [Appt 26-0064](#)

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: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

Opportunity for the Public to Address the Board

Joan Hodowanitz, Scranton: Joan thanks Dave Bulzoni for the 2026 digital budget book, with emphasis on his contribution to helping Scranton out of its distressed status, rather than Mayor Cagnetti. Bulzoni's leadership and guidance from PEL were crucial for this progress. The speaker requests a list of properties not placed on tax rolls after a recent reassessment, proposing a "wall of shame" to highlight those delinquent in taxes, suggesting that these individuals are not typically poor. Joan also expresses frustration over accessing meetings for the literacy committee and library board, noting that meetings have been inaccessible with locked doors. Additionally, she criticizes outdated information on the county's website regarding board memberships and meeting details, demanding improvements and accountability.

Jessica McGuigan: Jessica is a licensed counselor who focuses on relational therapy, exploring how relationships shape people's experiences in the world. She emphasizes the importance of observing people's actions, not just their words. McGuigan reflects on how personal connections can be affected by differing political views, emphasizing that actions reveal deeper truths. She points out serious issues with the actions of ICE, including the wrongful detention and deportation of legal residents and citizens. McGuigan believes the proposed ordinance matters because it helps create a safer environment for vulnerable populations, alleviating chronic fear that harms families and communities. She urges Commissioner Welby and Commissioner Chermak to think critically about the implications of silence versus action, advocating for support of the Protect Our Neighbors Ordinance to acknowledge the humanity of all constituents, especially marginalized groups.

Sarah Balmer, Covington Township: Sarah urges support for the Protect Our Neighbors Act. She shares a concerning story from the international adoption community about a girl detained by ICE due to a mistake on her immigration paperwork at her university. Her parents faced a frantic situation to help her. Balmer describes another incident involving ICE agents acting aggressively towards a woman, stressing the fear families face. She pleads for action, highlighting the urgent need for change.

Alejandra Marroquin, Los Angeles and Lackawanna County: Alejandra Marroquin, a resident of Los Angeles and Lackawanna County for over 20 years, shows support for the Protect Our Neighbors ordinance. Marroquin expresses concern about the Department of Homeland Security's actions since early 2025, especially regarding the detention of immigrants without due process. Marroquin highlights the fear among immigrants and the impact of family separation. She emphasizes that arrests often target immigrants doing

everyday activities. She reflects on the region's immigrant history and calls for compassion and justice, urging leaders to act courageously and learn from the past rather than repeat it, especially as we remember the Holocaust.

Father John Siblon, a Maryknoll priest and teacher at the University of Scranton, shares his background from Butte, Montana, a mining city like Scranton. Both cities have similar histories of immigration and diversity, where mines provided opportunities for many families. Siblon emphasizes that the education and success of people today come from the welcoming nature of these towns towards their ancestors. He presents a proposal asking for the same constitutional protections for today's migrants that were granted to previous immigrants. He believes that, like their ancestors, these migrants will improve the economy and contribute to the diverse culture of society, reminding everyone that miners share a common bond.

Cyrus Olson, Scranton: Cyrus reflects on his 20 years in Scranton, Pennsylvania, after moving from Oxford, England, where he studied. He has felt welcomed in the diverse community, living in various neighborhoods and working at the University of Scranton. Olson frequently takes students to Uganda and engages in international work while focusing on belonging in his research with Harvard Medical School. He speaks on behalf of neighbors in Pinebrook, who feel unsafe playing outside and are worried about their community. Olson encourages building networks of belonging, promoting good policing, and fostering friendship to create a safer and more connected environment in Scranton.

Dennis Miserol, Scranton: Dennis moved to Northeast Pennsylvania four years ago, viewing it as a climate haven with low heat indexes and sufficient rainfall. He believes the region will attract climate refugees and become a vital breadbasket as other areas struggle with climate issues. He emphasizes the importance of sustainable population growth to recover tax revenue, advocating against building data centers and enforcing harsh immigration policies that deter people from settling in the area. He highlights the potential influx of wealthy individuals escaping places like New York City and stresses the need to create a welcoming environment for both them and immigrants. He also notes the significance of a recent independent candidate's strong vote, suggesting a demand for a people-first approach in local policies.

Phil Yevicks from the Scranton Area Multifaith Ministerium spoke about the Welcoming Your Neighbors Act. At their February meeting, they decided to have Rabbi Daniel Swartz draft a statement, which has been signed by over 60 people. While they do not take a position on Commissioner Gaughan's proposed resolution, they emphasize a moral obligation to support immigrants and refugees. Yevicks shares a personal connection with the immigrant community, specifically mentioning the Moifu family from the Democratic Republic of Congo, who live next door. He highlights their positive contributions and urges support for all immigrants and refugees in Northeast Pennsylvania.

Will Cohen, a resident of Scranton and a faculty member at the University of Scranton, reads a statement from Deacon Ed Schoener regarding a proposed ordinance to welcome migrants and immigrants into the community. Deacon Schoener emphasizes that this is a moral issue, referencing Pope Leo XIV's call to recognize Christ in migrants. He expresses concerns about fear, family separation, and access to essential services while acknowledging the government's role in immigration regulation. He notes that the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops opposes mass deportation and stresses the importance of human dignity, family unity, and due process in immigration enforcement. Cohen adds that Catholic social teaching holds that people are

human beings before they are citizens, asserting their inherent rights to dignity and safety, which must be honored. He argues that the Protect Our Neighbors Act is a thoughtful response that allows local authorities to focus on violent crime while protecting peaceful immigrants. The act diminishes the injustices of deportation, which the Catholic Church deems intrinsically evil. He concludes that immigration is a fundamental human right, and the act aligns with moral law by recognizing the rights of those who have built lives in the community.

Judy Quinlan, Jefferson Township: Judy reflects on the history of communities being separate to preserve culture and religious beliefs, expressing concern over humanity's flaws. She points out that people have historically resisted unity, which has led to divisiveness. Quinlan warns of rising inhumanity, citing the treatment of Jews in Germany as a significant example. She urges people to speak out against injustices before they escalate, questioning the motivations behind local police collaborating with ICE agents. She poses concerns about what authorities might be offering small police departments to join, fearing a potential abuse of power. Quinlan emphasizes the danger of losing rights, reminding listeners that neglecting the rights of one group can lead to widespread oppression. She urges vigilance about who might be targeted next.

Julie Schumacher-Cohen, Scranton: Julie is inquiring about the Protect Our Neighbors Act and its progress since the last meeting. She emphasizes the importance of the ordinance, particularly in promoting human dignity and safety for all residents. Julie shares a troubling incident involving a local Latino family who faced harassment in a retail store, highlighting the racial profiling and bigotry present in the community. She emphasizes that the ordinance aims to limit local cooperation with ICE, especially as nearby counties are considering turning facilities into detention centers. Julie cites Bishop Cahill's concerns about the moral implications of holding families in such large facilities. She argues that local police should not engage in immigration enforcement, as this undermines trust within the community. Additionally, Julie challenges misconceptions about past immigrants, noting that many did not have proper documentation and that modern immigrants contribute significantly to the economy. She concludes that the Protect Our Neighbors Act is vital in upholding welcoming values in Scranton.

Sister Donna Korba, an IHM sister from Scranton: Sister Korba expresses gratitude to those present and highlights her congregation's recent statements in support of immigrants and refugees. She shares quotes from Marie Curie and President FDR about fear and understanding. Donna emphasizes the importance of faith, encouraging everyone to reflect on their beliefs about God—whether He represents love or war. She asks participants to take time away from distractions to consider their understanding of the divine and to embrace a God of love. She urges everyone to reconsider the Protect Our Neighbors Ordinance and to approach discussions with love for all neighbors.

Jenny Gonzalez, Scranton: Jenny is a long-term resident with family ties to Lackawanna County, expresses deep concern for her family and community, particularly regarding the impact of being Spanish speakers. She is eager to know when the Protect Our Neighbor Act will be voted on, as this act is crucial for protecting the rights and integrity of all residents, promoting public safety and trust in local officials. She highlights the misuse of taxpayer funds on aggressive enforcement programs that lead to racial profiling and community fear. Gonzalez stresses the need for a county policy to safeguard privacy, due process, and rights for all, especially immigrants, who are vital for the county's economy and cultural diversity. She urges that the Act be prioritized, as it is

essential for Lackawanna County's future.

Theresa Ripley: Theresa expresses her views on immigration, emphasizing the importance of legality in the process. She acknowledges her respect for different opinions but highlights that all immigrants should enter the U. S. legally. Ripley shares her family's immigrant background and notes that past immigrants underwent vetting, which she believes is essential for new arrivals. She criticizes the previous administration for allowing many undocumented immigrants into the country without proper checks. While she advocates for humane treatment of immigrants, she insists that law enforcement, including ICE and local police, should be respected and supported. She reflects on the dangers of anarchy and the need to adhere to the rule of law while recognizing her connection to South American culture. Ripley also mentions her disapproval of the Catholic Church's stance on immigration.

Elizabeth Aguilar, a resident of Lackawanna County for nearly 30 years, shares her experiences as the daughter of undocumented immigrants from El Salvador. Her parents fled civil war and lived in constant fear after arriving in the U. S. She describes how that fear affected her childhood, as she worried about being separated from her parents if they were detained by immigration authorities. Despite not having formal education, her parents worked hard, her mother in a freezer and her father in construction, providing their children with educational opportunities they didn't have. Elizabeth notes that many immigrants just want to live, work, and support their families despite facing challenges. In recent years, both her parents became U. S. citizens and were excited to vote. She expresses sadness about the ongoing fear children have of both immigration and law enforcement, highlighting that families should not live in such fear when all they seek is a better life. She believes children should feel safe going to school and families should not fear going to work.

Commissioners' Other Business

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: Thank you. Before I get into my comments, I just want to wish the family of Anne Marie Regan great sorrow. Anne Marie Regan, as some of you may know, was a trailblazer in politics in Lackawanna County, a lifelong resident of the Bellevue section of Scranton, and she recently passed away. She was the first woman elected to a Lackawanna County row office, and then she was reelected a then record four times, serving as recorder of deeds from 1974 to 1994 when she decided to retire. So I just wanted to send my condolences to her family. I want to thank everybody for getting up and speaking again today on the Protect Our Neighbors Ordinance. It has been, as some of you noted, exactly one month since I introduced the Protect Our Neighbors Ordinance. In that time, as all of you have seen, we've had packed public meetings. We've heard emotional, powerful testimony from residents. We have received formal guidance from Governor Shapiro's administration reinforcing the need for clear local procedures regarding immigration enforcement. Some of you got up this morning and asked what the status was. At 8.30 this morning, the commissioners received a legal memorandum from the solicitor's office analyzing the proposed Protect Our Neighbors Ordinance. The memo was labeled as confidential, which I don't really agree with. I question why a policy analysis affecting the public should be treated as confidential when the policy itself will be and has been debated publicly. I disagree with the suggestion that counties lack authority to establish policies governing how our own resources are used. The memo also, in my brief review, has an extremely aggressive section that raises the specter of criminal prosecution for local officials. I am not aware currently of a single elected

official in this country who has ever been criminally prosecuted simply for letting local policy boundaries or setting local policy boundaries on ICE cooperation. And I don't believe that legal risk should stop policy debate, and I believe even the solicitor acknowledges that ICE cooperation is voluntary under federal law. I do think that this memo is important, but I don't agree that it should be confidential. So at this time, I'd like to make a motion that the board waive attorney-client privilege for the legal memo provided to the commissioners this morning regarding the Protect Our Neighbors Ordinance so the public can review the legal analysis that is informing this discussion.

Solicitor Paul Walker: I would advise that we have internal discussions on that rather than take up a vote on that particular issue now.

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: I've made the motion.

Commissioner Thom Welby: Hearing no second, nice for lack of a second, okay.

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: We have additional cause for urgency, and it's why I've been pushing this ordinance over the last month. Yesterday, we learned through reporting from the Scranton Times that the Dixon City Police Department entered into what's known as a 287G agreement with ICE, granting local officers authority to act in a limited federal immigration enforcement capacity before it was paused after public scrutiny, scrutiny, I should say, from the Scranton Times, and now apparently it's in limbo. That agreement reportedly authorized trained local officers to arrest individuals on suspected immigration violations and transfer them to ICE custody. Let me be clear. Under the current leadership and operational posture of ICE, I am unequivocally opposed to any police department in Lackawanna County entangling itself in federal civil immigration enforcement, also with the understanding that the commissioners have no jurisdiction over any police department in Lackawanna County, but it's just my personal opinion and personal feeling that this is outrageous. ICE today, as many of you mentioned this morning and over the last month, is not operating as a neutral public safety agency. It has become politicized, aggressive, and in many cases reckless in its tactics. Families have testified in this very room over the last month and even this morning about massed agents in residential neighborhoods throughout Lackawanna County. The governor of this commonwealth has issued advisories because federal agents are now appearing in healthcare and social service settings. A little over a week ago, I sent the advisory from the governor to all of the commissioners and our solicitor staff here, because I've said this before, county government is essentially one big social service agency, and now ICE is operating as if they can just walk into these facilities without asking for permission. I've heard this before. Well, it hasn't happened yet, but what's to say that it won't happen? We've seen how extreme these people are. Are we supposed to believe that expanding local participation in the corrupt apparatus that is ICE somehow makes us safer? It does not. It erodes trust between local law enforcement and the communities that they serve. It turns municipal police officers, in the case of Dickson City, into extensions of a federal civil enforcement system that is currently operating in ways that many residents, including myself, find deeply alarming, and it places local taxpayers and local governments in the middle of federal political battles. The Dickson City episode is not an isolated procedural issue. It is proof of exactly why the Protect Our Neighbors Ordinance is necessary, and it's why all of these people keep showing up at 10 o'clock in the morning, and I'm sure most of you are taking time off of work, I've heard from some of you, showing up here and passionately speaking on this issue. The thing that concerns me about Dickson City is somebody asks what they're

offering, a resident asks what they're offering, \$100,000 for vehicles, \$7,500, I think, sign-on bonus, money for training, they're throwing money at them. I don't know if any other borough police department in Lackawanna County has been approached, but if they have, I would urge the mayors and the council presidents to walk the other way. This is bad news. Again, we have no jurisdiction over it, but I would hope to God that they would listen to the people in this community that have spoken so passionately over the last month and do the right thing. Don't enter into a deal with the devil. You might get a new police car, but you will not have the respect of the people who live here in this community. The ordinance, again, does not obstruct federal law enforcement. It does not prevent ICE from enforcing federal immigration law. It simply draws a clear boundary. County resources and personnel will not be used for federal civil immigration enforcement absent a valid judicial warrant signed by a judge. That's constitutional, that's responsible, and that's consistent with long-established principles of federalism. Last meeting, we heard the suggestion from Commissioner Welby that sometimes it's best to keep your mouth shut and your head down. With respect to him, that philosophy may keep you comfortable, but it does not keep residents protected. It may be good advice for a surviving middle school, but I don't believe it's an actual governing philosophy. And I mean this when I say it, that the people that got up this morning, I give you a lot of credit. I know how hard it is to get up at that podium and speak in front of people, especially with some of the stories that you told. And we need to listen to you because this is a small subsection of what's happening throughout Lackawanna County. These are the people that are showing up at 10 o'clock in the morning on a Wednesday. How many other people would show up if they had the opportunity or if they weren't scared? Leadership is not about laying low and hoping the controversy passes. It's about setting clear policies so frontline employees are not left guessing when federal agents show up at a facility, shelter, or a county office. And I'll go back to the point I've made over the last month and where this all began. Our 911 director, an ICE agent reached out to him informally, hey, do you have information on this person? We don't have a policy to deal with that. We need a policy to deal with that. So I would hope that over the course of the next two weeks before the next commissioner's meeting that the confidential memo will be released publicly so that people can discuss it and take a look at it and be informed on it. I don't believe that we should hide behind confidentiality. I think that this is such a public issue that people deserve to know what the concerns are from the solicitor's office and what the issues are. Today, the last month, have made it abundantly clear. If we do not establish clear county policy as other counties are doing, I just read an article this morning, Allegheny County is considering a very similar ordinance. These decisions will be made elsewhere, quietly and without public input. And that is unacceptable. So I can continue to stand firmly in support of the Protect Our Neighbors ordinance and I urge this board and my colleagues respectfully to move it forward without further delay and put it on the agenda. And put it on the agenda so we can discuss it. And if there are issues legally that we can make changes to it. And I've been in a legislative role now for over 10 years. I've introduced things before, they change, you make additions, you take things out. I'm open to suggestions, but I think it has to be done in the light of day. Switching tracks for a moment on data centers, which is another issue that is facing every resident in Lackawanna County. I sent a letter to the governor on February 17th calling for a three-year moratorium on data center development. I have not gotten a response yet, but there have been some positive developments. Senator Rosemary Brown has expressed her support

for a three-year moratorium. State Representative Kyle Donahue and State Representative Kyle Mullins have expressed support. A state senator out of Southern Pennsylvania, Katie Muth, is going to propose a bill calling for a three-year moratorium. And I think we all need to do everything we can to get on board with that because it's so important. I would like to briefly, though, address an issue that has become one of the most substantial and sustained concerns raised by members of the public and in some of these meetings that I've been at throughout Lackawanna County in terms of data centers. And that is air quality impacts associated with data centers and their backup generator emissions. Recent reporting from other states has illustrated very real public health concerns tied to large clusters of diesel-powered generators, the kind that can release very fine particles and pollutants into the air that can contribute to asthma, breathing problems, heart issues, and long-term health risks. I cite a study that was done from the Community and Environmental Defense Services, and this is reporting out of Ohio, that they found a single data center could pose negative health risks for people living at least a little bit over half a mile away, sometimes further. This gentleman in the report said that risks increase when a home is near multiple data centers. If anybody's been paying attention to what's going on in the Up Valley, I mean, if everything goes through, we're talking dozens and dozens of data centers. This report raises serious red flags about that. Air pollution risks come from data centers emitting nitrogen dioxide and tiny inhalable particles that can harm people's lungs. According to the National Institutes of Health, the tiny inhalable particles cause between 100,000 to 200,000 premature deaths each year. So the facilities we're talking about in Lackawanna County operate dozens, sometimes hundreds of large combustion engines for backup power, and when they test them or run them simultaneously, the impact isn't theoretical, it's cumulative. And when you place those facilities near neighborhoods, schools, parks, or senior housing, that cumulative impact matters. I just recently received a copy of an air quality ordinance that was pushed by a group of concerned residents in Archibald, and it was recently passed in Archibald. And that ordinance represents a local step beyond state minimums requiring cumulative air impact modeling, independent environmental review, operational safeguards for generator testing, and financial assurances for long-term impacts. Importantly, it's my understanding that the Federal Clean Air Act does not prevent local governments from adopting additional protections so long as they do not directly conflict with federal standards. States and local governments across the country are permitted, according to my understanding, to adopt air quality standards that are more protective than federal and state minimums. And in Pennsylvania, the Air Pollution Control Act specifically allows for local air pollution control programs that meet or exceed state and federal requirements, provided that they are consistent with state law. In other words, we are not automatically limited to doing the bare minimum. If public health demands stronger safeguards, which in this case, I believe it does, the law allows us to explore that. Which brings me to my specific questions for our solicitor, and Solicitor Walker, I'll give you a copy of this ordinance if you could please review it. Once you review the ordinance, I would like you to provide a written legal opinion on whether Lackawanna County may adopt a countywide air quality ordinance that is more protective than current state and federal minimum standards, including cumulative impact analysis and emission safeguards consistent with both state law and the Clean Air Act. Can we require developers of large facilities with multiple combustion-based generators to provide cumulative air impact studies to the county planning department before approval? Are we legally permitted to

regulate or limit how and when large diesel generators are tested or operated to reduce concentrated air impacts? Do we have the authority to establish enhanced setbacks or protections for sensitive areas like schools, childcare facilities, hospitals, and residential neighborhoods? And I would ask that you work directly with our planning director, Mary Liz Donato, to evaluate model ordinance language and return to this board with a formal review and recommendation. That leads to an additional and very serious concern. One of the proposed data center developments directly abuts a Lackawanna County Housing Authority property in German. So I would also ask you, Solicitor Walker, given that this development, specifically the data center development, specifically Project Gravity, directly borders a county housing authority development, does that proximity provide the county with additional standing, authority, or legal basis to intervene, comment formally, or assert protections on behalf of those residents who live within the housing authority? Can the county enter the matter in a more direct way because a county housing authority property is affected? Do we have any fiduciary or statutory responsibility to ensure that county-affiliated housing developments are not subjected to avoidable environmental or air quality impacts? If a large-scale industrial facility is being placed immediately adjacent to housing supported by this county, I believe we have an obligation to fully understand what legal tools are available to us to join in the fight with the other residents in Archibald against data center development. Again, in closing, this is not about being anti-development. This is about being pro-health. It's not about waiting until after facilities are built and residents are complaining about air quality and noise to ask whether we could have done more. Economic development should not mean asking families to accept lower air quality as the cost of progress. I believe we owe residents our due diligence, we owe them our transparency, and we owe them the confidence that before anything is approved, any massive industrial infrastructure is approved, we as county commissioners have examined every lawful tool available to protect their air, their neighborhoods, and their children. Again, I've been researching this and reading these reports and it is very, very concerning, especially, you know, it's not like we're talking about one data center development. We're talking about dozens and dozens and dozens and dozens and it's extremely concerning. So I look forward to a written legal review and a public discussion on how we possibly can move forward in that respect. And thank you very much.

Commissioner Chris Chermak: Good morning, everyone. And I do want to thank everybody for coming and for their getting up and speaking. Especially want to thank Major Jones for being here today and leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance. And I want to thank him for his service and for all our service members and active service members, retired veterans, all. Thank you very much for your service. And we did, we received a pretty lengthy memorandum this morning, which I haven't had a chance to really even dive into myself. So, you know, we are looking forward to sitting with our solicitors and with the other commissioners, all three commissioners and discuss this process. So, you know, it has to be done right the first time as far as I'm concerned. And we need to look at what we can legally do, what we legally can't do, and what kind of ordinance or whatever we can do, we will discuss it and figure that out. And I know, just to remind people that are wondering when they can start their appeal process, I know a lot of the tax bills have gone out. I know some people have some concerns with what their taxes are reflecting in their assessment. So as of April 1st, that will be on the website. You can get your appeal form and file for your first appeal hearing. So look for that on April 1st, and we can get that process started. Couple of good things. I would like to

welcome back Joe D'Arienzo as our communications director. I don't know if he's still in the room, but Joe is back and look forward to working with him and getting information out. Another person that I'm excited to work with is our new economic development director, Tom Carlucci. He's gonna do a great job. Looking forward to working with him. See Lackawanna County grow. And there's two other individuals. We don't always do this. We don't always recognize them because we get into so many other things, but we have a person that works down in our Veterans Affairs office, Anissa Bacalunas. She's been, I think this week is her 20th year serving in the Veterans Affairs office. So I wanna thank Anissa and everybody that works in our Veterans Affairs office for all the great work that they do. They take really good care of our veterans here in Lackawanna County and other counties that don't have the good folks and the talent that we have. So they do a great job. And another remarkable person here that I guess is retiring on Friday. In our tax claim office, we have someone named Lynn Kubeski. Lynn started here 48 years ago in the office, in the tax claim office. She started right out of high school in the CETA program. So she's retiring as of Friday. So I wanna thank Lynn for her many years of service. She did a great job. The wealth of knowledge that is gonna be going with her is gonna be missed, but I wish her all the best in her future. And just thank you for so many, so many years of service. So thank you.

Commissioner Thom Welby: Thank you. Congratulations to those two employees. And our Veterans Affairs office is one of the finest, most efficient governor affairs offices with the per capita work that they do across the Commonwealth. They're one of the leading Veterans Affairs offices in the Commonwealth. And when you go in there, if you do not reside in Lackawanna County, it's not an issue. If you need help, they're there to help you. And Major Tim Booth is here in the doorway. Oop, he's ducking out of the doorway. But Major, thank you, and you and your team for all that you do. And also, I wanna join Commissioner Gaughan and Chermak in extending prayers and blessings and condolences to Anne Marie Regan's family. She certainly is a standout leader in our community and will always be remembered for the path that she plowed through to make forward motion for so many people in our community, particularly for women. It's greatly appreciated. As Commissioner Chermak said about the reassessments, appeals on reassessments, you have to wait until April 1st. By state law, the window for appeals doesn't open until April 1st. And the office and everybody here in the county is here to help you if you do need help. The Communications Department has been working on putting together some pieces to help you understand and help you go through the reassessment process should you need that. And we are here to help you with that. I also wanna thank everyone who is here today. Your comments and your passion is felt. It's not an easy decision. I worked for almost 14 years in the House of Representatives. And there is time in passing legislation that we have to go through processes, that we have to go through the legislation first, enters into the, before it even gets to the committee, the group that writes the language does it together and presents it to a committee. And that committee then, it's changed, it possibly changed and then moves to the floor of the House or Senate and moves on. Rarely does it take less than six months, but we're gonna be hopefully a lot quicker than that. I was concerned about our not being able to come to an agreement with that. There are issues with the ordinance as it was submitted that are serious and we do have to look at them. We can't just say, hey, we're not gonna worry about that and maybe it won't happen. But some of the opinions that we have received back from both the justice and law enforcement community are issues regarding potential criminal prosecution to

employees, duplicating existing laws, creating conflicts, lack enforceability in it due to absent penalties and could expose the county should some of those decisions, rather the language in that be held to be not in compliance with federal law. It could expose us to legal challenges, financial burdens and operational inefficiencies. And we are, I believe, today gonna meet with council and discuss this and hopefully work it out. I was ready to make a motion to adopt the governor's guidelines as our guidelines, but we may be able to establish our own starting today and I know you've heard it and you want to hear an answer to it, but it's difficult for you to hear, I understand. But we're moving pretty quickly, even though a month is dragging on forever for many of you. But I appreciate the concerns that you expressed and the stories that you shared. Hopefully, hopefully, when we meet again, we'll have something here to discuss. And I believe that is all, meeting adjourned. Thank you for being here.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak and seconded by Commissioner Thom Welby. This meetin was Adjourned at 11:39am.