

PIKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

PIKE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

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} COMMISSIONERS



GARY R. ORBEN
CHIEF CLERK

THOMAS F. FARLEY, ESQUIRE
COUNTY SOLICITOR

June 12, 2017


Senate Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee
Room 168, Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Sirs:

Attached please find a copy of the verbal testimony given by the Pike County Commissioners to the Senate Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee on June 13, 2017 at the After Action Assessment Hearing on the Eric Frein Manhunt.

Very truly yours,


Matthew M. Osterberg, Chairman


Richard A. Caridi, Vice Chairman


Steven R. Guccini, Commissioner

PCC/jd

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Members of the Senate Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee, Ladies and Gentlemen; Good morning and welcome to Pike County.

On September 12, 2014, Pike County became the site of one of Pennsylvania's most heinous crimes. On that day, two Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) Troopers were shot, one fatally, and one seriously injured.

For forty-eight (48) days, the citizens, Law Enforcement Agencies, and Emergency Personnel of Pike County and the Poconos were in a heightened state of emergency. Every resource that Pike County had was willingly shared with PSP. Our 911 Center became the headquarters in the search for Eric Frein. Our staff at the 911 Emergency Center were placed on high alert. The Warden, Assistant Wardens, and the Correctional Officers were used for Security both at the Command Post, and on the Property that we meet in today. The local emergency services' personnel were placed on duty to man the Road Blocks for the PSP. For the next 48 days our residents and business Community came together and donated food, water, and meals for the hundreds of Law Enforcement needed for this enormous search of the Pocono Mountains.

Pike County Stood TALL. We gave every ounce of effort towards the goal of capturing Eric Frein. Our efforts didn't end until this past April when justice was finally served by Eric Frein's conviction of murder and this horrific chapter of our County History ended. But during that search in 2014, the stress level was high.

On the evening of September 12, 2014 the County offered the use of our Communications Interop Trailer and staff, and also the Training Center to the PSP for the Press Release Area. On September 16, 2014, when it was determined who they were looking for, the Pennsylvania State Police asked for the use of our buildings followed by other assets. They were given every resource they asked for and in return we were told that all expenses would be covered by the state. We provided personnel, supplies, computer IT staff, GIS resources, transportation, food and anything else that law enforcement needed. We had corrections and public safety personnel transport law enforcement into and out of the search area. Pike County never said "No", if our personnel were asked for something. All that was needed was to call the Commissioners; myself, Rich Caridi and Karl Wagner, and the answer was always "Yes" no matter what the request was and with no mind for the expense. The Commissioners thoughts were that we needed to help with the capture of Eric Frein who was terrifying our Community. Our 911 Center, Waste Water

Treatment Facility, and the Area Agency on Aging Office were taken over, and we were guaranteed payment for all expenses. We were told countless times that we just needed to keep track and we would be reimbursed. We tracked our expenses as instructed, but after the capture we were asked "Where is your written contract?" After some long hard discussions and with the efforts of Senator Lisa Baker, we ultimately were reimbursed \$140,000 and for that we say thank you to Senator Baker.

But now for our thoughts on how we can alleviate these issues if ever there is a future event:

1. Standing Contracts

The State needs to develop a standing contract or MOU with the local governing agencies in which an incident occurs that defines obligations, expectations, and reimbursement for the out of pocket expenses incurred throughout the duration of the event. This contract should include supplies, labor costs, and increased utility costs.

2. Security

The Law Enforcement agency assigned as lead agency should appoint a screening officer to assist local efforts to clear individuals requesting access to the facility involved and to assign levels of security clearance to those requesting it. There should be a decision on who provides security in and around the Command Facility and the reimbursement thereof. It should be made clear if this is to fall on the Correctional Facility, local law enforcement or the Sheriff's Office.

3. Personal Protection

Personal protection equipment needs to be supplied to local personnel. In the Frein case, local fire companies were asked to block roads, but those individuals had no protection.

By having an MOU or standard document for reimbursement, there will be no confusion. This document could either be issued by the Command of the PSP or the Governor's Office.

Security Details need to be assisted by PSP when they request areas to be secured entrances. The FBI, PSP, Homeland Security needs to assist local personnel at times when they are overwhelmed. The security of this facility was crucial, but so also was that of the Pike County Correctional Facility. This duty needs to be a shared effort.

Personal Protection, i.e. Bullet Proof Vests should be issued by PSP to local personnel that they will be placing in the field, or PEMA should issue a grant to all County EMA's to purchase bullet proof vests and personal protection gear for all Emergency Service Personnel. This equipment could be stored in local EOC's until needed.

In closing, we in Pike County stand in support of our Blooming Grove Barracks. This attack on PSP and Law Enforcement was an attack on every Pike County Resident and Resident of the Commonwealth. While we testify here today, we only want to make the system work better. There is no attack here: only support. If this situation ever happens again, we would stand united and help in every way as we did on that horrific September day.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts of this horrible time in 2014. But let it be known that regardless of the outcome of this hearing, if such events as on September 12, 2014 were to occur again in Pike County, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the people of Pike County can be assured that Pike County would again stand tall and support and defend the PSP and all Law Enforcement.

Matthew M. Osterberg, Chairman

Richard A. Caridi, Vice Chairman

Steven R. Guccini, Commissioner

PCC/jd