

# The Docket

March/April 2021

## Unclaimed Bail



A bail bond allows a defendant to be released from incarceration with conditions and a promise to return for court appearances. Bail is determined by a Magisterial District Judge or a Common Pleas Judge. Bail can be posted by the defendant on their own behalf, by a surety or bail bondsman. If a surety or bail bondsman post the bail, it is their responsibility to ensure the accused appears for their court appointments. During this process bail can be revoked or adjusted. Failure to appear can result in the full amount of the bail to be forfeited to the county.

If the offender appears in court and the case has been concluded, the bail will be returned, minus a fee.

After a case has been completed, our office is required to wait 30 days before the refund process can begin. We send a letter to the appropriate person, asking how they would like their refund directed. Collected bail money can be applied directly to court costs or returned. The office will attempt to reach out three times to the current address on file. If a defendant does not change their address with the Clerk of Courts office, or does not authorize distribution of the refund, the money will remain in escrow. Over the last four decades a significant amount of bail has been unclaimed even though this money still belongs to the defendant or surety. Currently, there is a total of 2,455 unclaimed "Legacy Bails" dating back to 1985, totaling \$891,746.65.

Upon taking office, Brian Munroe said "bail money should never be in our hands for such a long period of time. I was surprised when I was told during my first week in office that we had almost a million dollars in our Legacy Bail Bank account. The money should not be sitting in the bank, it needs to be refunded, forfeited, applied to court costs, or escheated to the state. Going forward we will have better procedures in place." Our office has begun the process of tracking down the defendants and sureties with unclaimed funds. This undertaking is tedious and time consuming. Many are now deceased or cannot be located. Notices are being sent to the best address we can find for each person, who can then request to receive a check or apply the money to court costs. We started sending out notices on cases with no warrants or balances. So far 268 notices have been mailed out, and a total of 29 checks have been issued. This is an ongoing project to make the office as efficient as possible and serve the community.

### TYPES OF BAIL

**ROR**— Released on recognizance. No payment but signs a bond assuring future appearances.

**10% Bail**—Percentage of bail paid for release. If fail to appear full amount is due.

**Unsecured Bail**—Bail that is not secured by cash or an asset.

**Nominal Bail**— Small amount such as a dollar to be released.

A serious discussion about criminal justice reform is taking place within and outside the criminal justice system throughout the United States. Part of that conversation includes the proper use of bail. Advocates for bail reform believe our system over uses bail to keep defendants incarcerated. Some are advocating for the complete elimination of cash bail. Others point to crimes committed by defendants out on bail as a reason to be cautious with reform. Five years ago New Jersey eliminated cash bail and created a new pretrial services program. Incarcerating defendants costs taxpayers money which is another motivation for looking at reforms. Our office welcomes its seat at the table as a member of the Bucks County Criminal Justice Advisory Board and we look forward to conversations by all stakeholders in the criminal justice process.

### **Bail Reform**





# FIRST MILLIONAIRE GAME DESIGNER IN HISTORY LIVED IN BUCKS COUNTY



Charles Darrow, known for his modification of the original designed Monopoly board game, lived in Ottsville, Bucks County, from 1941 until his death in 1967. "The Landlord's Game" was invented by Lizzie Magie. Darrow improved it using property names from Atlantic City and round pieces of oilcloth instead of rigid carton. He drew the properties with drafting pens and his wife and son filled in the colors and made the title deed cards and Chance and Community Chest cards. He secured a copyright for the game in 1933.



Initial hand made games were sold for \$4 each and he made one or two a day. He could not keep up with demand and a friend printed the board and cards which resulted in completing six games a day. Next, he contracted for a complete version to be printed and packaged and when sales reached 20,000 he sold the game to Parker Brothers. His first check was for \$7,000 in 1935. At the time of his funeral, held in Doylestown, 45 million sets were sold. From 1935 until his death in 1967 he devoted his time to leisure pursuits.

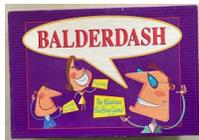


**Top Selling Board Games of All-Time:** 1. Chess 2. Checkers 3. Backgammon 4. Monopoly 5. Scrabble 6. Clue 7. Trivial Pursuit 8. Battleship 9. Candy Land 10. The Game of Life

## TRIVIA

Why was the original Bucks County much larger than it is today?

- Alison— Candy Land
- Amanda— Monopoly
- Arianna— Clue
- Aubrey—Yahtzee
- Brian— Balderdash
- Cathy— Backgammon
- Deanna— Life
- Eileen— Clue
- Frank— Trivial Pursuit
- Jackie— Monopoly
- Jason— Clue



- Jeannette— Sorry
- Kim— Candy Land
- Lauren—Candy Land
- Liz— Monopoly
- Lizzy— Parcheesi
- Marcia— Tip-It
- Marissa—Trouble
- Megan— Candy Land
- Michele—Scrabble
- Mike— Monopoly
- Shannon—Trouble
- Sharon—Scrabble



On January 20, 2021 Brian presented a status report on the Delinquency Program (DRiP) to the Commissioners. View it here:

<https://app.sharebase.com/#/document/2855484/share/129-HP--qfeny7MbUa5EntMY1hVEdwTQ>

<http://buckscounty.org/government/RowOfficers/ClerkofCourts>

May/June Newsletter— Document scanning project is underway.



Answer to Trivia Question: In 1752 Northampton County was formed from part of Bucks County.