

Allegheny County Council

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Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 10, 2017

4:00 PM

Conference Room 1

Executive Committee

*DeWitt Walton, Chair;
Patrick Catena, John DeFazio, Nick Futules, Cindy Kirk, Ed Kress, Bob Macey and
John Palmiere, Members*

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:09.

Invited Guests:

Mr. Barker was present from the Office of County Council.

II. Roll Call

Members Present: 8 - DeWitt Walton, Patrick Catena, John DeFazio, Nick Futules, Cindy Kirk, Ed Kress, Bob Macey and John Palmiere

Members Absent: 0

Members Non-Members: 4 - Paul Klein, Sam DeMarco, Sue Means and Denise Ranalli-Russell

III. Approval of Minutes

IV. Agenda Items

Motions

[10065-17](#)

Motion of the Council of Allegheny County amending Article IV, Rule A.6 of the Rules of Council for Allegheny County Council, entitled "Proclamations & Certificates," in order to provide a uniform structure for the formulation and introduction of proclamations and certificates.

Sponsors: Council Member Macey

The bill was held in the absence of the primary sponsor.

At the reconvened session on Monday, May 15, Mr. Macey was present and the Chair afforded him the opportunity to explain the rationale behind his motion. Mr. Macey indicated that his desire was to provide some structure or guidance for proclamations in order to ensure that they are awarded for appropriate purposes and in an efficient fashion.

The Chair reviewed the provisions of the motion and asked whether the committee had any thoughts regarding the motion.

Mr. Futules suggested that various Council members' senses of significance may differ, but noted that he also recognizes that there is wisdom in reining in the amount of time that the body spends on this type of item. Mr. Palmiere, Ms. Ranalli-Russell and Mr. DeFazio expressed agreement with this sentiment.

Mr. Klein suggested that, when large numbers of individuals will be receiving proclamations, there may be wisdom in placing time limitations and/or requiring designated speakers for large groups.

Mr. Catena expressed concerns about the lengthy nature of some proclamations, particularly those that are awarded to groups, and Ms. Means expressed agreement with this notion.

The Chair and Mr. Macey agreed to take the suggestions offered under advisement and re-visit the proposed amendment at the Committee's next session.

Discussion Topic - Office of County Council Staffing and Personnel

The Chair indicated his desire is to wrap up the review of the job descriptions and then to define a title for the individual who will direct the day-to-day operations of the office, along with a process for posting the position.

Constituent Services Assistant

The Chair provided an opportunity for all present to read the existing job description.

Ms. Kirk, Mr. DeMarco and the Chair discussed listing the direct report for the position in the job summary. The Chair indicated that his preference would be to reflect whatever the hierarchy in the office turns out to be. Mr. DeMarco noted that altering an individual's position on the organizational chart might have other repercussions. The Chair suggested that there is likely wisdom in establishing the job descriptions and then working out the organizational chart.

The Chair indicated that his belief is that the experience requirement of 5 years may be high in his opinion. Ms. Kirk suggested phrasing the qualifications in terms of preferred achievements, rather than mandatory achievements.

The Chair and Mr. Palmiere discussed possible procedural avenues that might expedite the process of reviewing the descriptions. To this end, Mr. Palmiere suggested that there might be merit in including the Department of Human Resources in the process and Ms. Kirk suggested prioritizing the two vacant senior staff positions. The Chair suggested that it may be too early in the process to bring in personnel from the County's Department of Human Resources. Mr. DeFazio suggested that there may be wisdom in getting the top positions filled, and Mr. Kress noted that equity may dictate that the senior staff have input into the junior staff position delineations. All members present expressed agreement with this process.

Director of Government Relations and Constituent Services

The Chair and members reviewed the changes that had been made at the last session.

The Chair asked the members for their input regarding approaching Human Resources for their input regarding this job description prior to posting.

Mr. Klein suggested posting the vacancy beginning the week of May 15 and remain open through June 9, and Mr. DeMarco and Mr. Kress expressed agreement, as did the other members. The Chair, Mr. Klein, Mr. Demarco, Mr. Kress and the clerk discussed the possible places for the posting to run, all with the stated desire of reaching the broadest cross section of applicants first.

Mr. DeMarco suggested changing the first item in the duties section from "monitoring" staff to "managing" staff, and the members expressed agreement.

Mr. Klein suggested that, if the goal is to seek a manager, there may be wisdom in changing the degree to a masters in a field relevant to management.

Mr. DeMarco suggested that there might be wisdom in including a supervisory experience requirement in the Training & Experience section.

The members agreed that they want to reinstate the Chief of Staff position.

The Chair and the clerk discussed the comparative merits of amending the Administrative Code to include the Chief of Staff position once again, and the Chair asked the clerk to provide some historical context to him as soon as practicable.

The committee entered executive session to discuss salaries for the Chief of Staff position.

Upon returning from the executive session, the meeting recessed until Monday, May 15 at 5:00.

The meeting re-convened on May 15 at 5:04, and began with a discussion of Bill No. 10065-17.

The Chair proposed entering an executive session to discuss a particular staff member's pay rate and completion of thier probationary period.

Upon returning from executive session, Mr. Futules moved to deem Ms. Roka's probationary period successfully completed and that she receive the agreed-upon salary increase retroactive to the date on which her probationary period ended. The motion passed unanimously.

The Chair suggested that the committee should completely finalize the title, job description, training and qualifications, and posting details for what was proposed as the overall office supervisory position.

The Chair, Mr. Futules and the clerk discussed the changes to various documents that would have to be undertaken, depending upon what the committee opts to do.

Mr. Futules suggested that designating a Chief of Staff may have implications for the other position titles in the office.

Mr. Macey indicated that he believes that one individual should be designated as in charge and that his preference is for the title to be "Chief of Staff," and no other committee member expressed opposition to the notion.

The Chair noted that semantics are important to an extent, but that each entity designates its organizational structure, job descriptions, and position titles as it sees fit, and that all of these factors play into how those entities function. The Chair suggested that these considerations may well play into applicants' salary and other expectations, as well.

Ms. Means noted that restoring the Chief of Staff title to the Administrative Code would necessarily create a delay in the process in order to accomodate the amendment of the Code.

Mr. Klein suggested that there may be merit in using the "Chief of Staff" title.

The Chair and Mr. Futules discussed procedural matters.

The clerk and Mr. Klein discussed the parameters of a potential Administrative Code amendment to restore the Chief of Staff title to §5-305.01.

The Chair indicated that Mr. Klein had suggested adding a master's degree requirement or a preference for a master's degree in public administration or a similar field. Mr. Klein summarized his reasoning for creating a preference for a master's degree, and no committee members expressed disagreement.

The Chair and the clerk discussed the potential wisdom in delineating with some precision the parameters within which the Chief of Staff would operate.

The Chair summarized the bullet points that would be added to major duties. Mr. Palmiere and Mr. Catena noted that their recollection was that the language was to include management of staff.

Ms. Means and the Chair discussed the potential wisdom of adjusting the job description if and when it becomes necessary going forward, specifically within the context of staff evaluations.

Mr. Klein suggested that one of the tasks for whomever is hired for the position to develop a staff evaluation protocol. The Chair and Mr. Macey discussed possible roles that the Chief of Staff might fill in staff evaluation or reviews of other staff members. The Chair indicated that his belief is that Council members should and must be active in reviewing and interacting with staff, and Mr. Catena suggested a change to the language to expressly reference staff governance as a responsibility. The committee agreed to this addition.

The Chair, Mr. Catena and Mr. Futules discussed the comparative merits of various degrees of specificity in the duties, and the Chair reiterated his preference that specificity be added as the position and office evolve.

The clerk highlighted the inherent tension between specificity in the rules by which the office will run versus a desire for flexibility, and noted that, just as with drafting legislative or regulatory materials, some degree of specificity is required to enable the involved parties to know what rules apply.

In response to a question from Mr. Futules, Mr. Catena indicated that the prior conversations had been undertaken under the assumption that there would be a Chief of Staff with budgetary, constituent, and legislative personnel in addition.

The Chair expressed a preference for meeting with the County Department of Human Resources within the next week to finalize the job description no later than the end of the current week for posting beginning on Tuesday, May 24 for a period of 21 days (through June 14). The Chair suggested that initial review of the applications on June 19 and interviews tentatively scheduled for the week of June 26 and the goal of hiring someone by mid-July.

The committee entered executive session to discuss salary ranges for the prospective Chief of Staff.

The committee returned from executive session.

Mr. Futules expressed concerns that the committee prioritized a position that is not vital to the function of the office above the hiring of a budgetary staff.

The meeting was recessed until the call of the Chair, with the intent to convene for

another session the week of May 22, most likely on Wednesday the 24th at 5:00.

The Committee re-convened on May 24 at 5:00 and entered an executive session to discuss staffing.

The Committee returned from executive session at 5:05.

The Chair provided a brief update regarding the Chief of Staff position, noting that he had met with the Department of Human Resources, and that they had created a process for posting the vacancy, with it to be posted on the County website beginning on May 26 and remaining open through June 16, and with the HR Department to collect and pre-screen applications within a week of the closing date and the Executive Committee to select candidates for interviews to begin the last week of June and a target date of July 11 for making an offer. The Chair also noted that the vacancy would be posted in the Post Gazette and New Courier, with copies also distributed to all of the County and City Council members.

Mr. Catena suggested that there might be wisdom in having a plan in place for the contingency of the initial round of resume reviews and interviews not yielding a suitable candidate who accepts the position.

Ms. Kirk and the Chair discussed and confirmed the timeline and discussed background checks for the final pool of candidates to be conducted by HR.

The Chair distributed the Budget Director job description, noting that four of the last five bullet points having been stricken and moved to the Chief of Staff description; the only remaining bullet point is the final one relating to performing additional tasks as required.

Mr. Catena asked that the description be amended to include requirements for a monthly P&L statement and a quarterly report on the County's fiscal position. The Clerk suggested that the better terminology may be actual vs. forecasted expenditures rather than P&L, and that there may be wisdom in specifically delineating what information the Council wishes to see in the quarterly reports. The Chair suggested that the same goals could be reached without adding these items to the job description. Ms. Kirk noted that the other bullet points seem to be worded generally, so there may be wisdom in keeping to that template. The Chair indicated that his preference would be to process these types of information gathering activities through the Budget & Finance Committee, and the members agreed.

The clerk provided a brief overview of some of the prior budgetary practices of the Council, the Council's budgetary authority under the Charter, and some of the Administrative Code provisions that bear on the budget process.

The Chair and members expressed agreement with the existing job summary.

Ms. Means suggested that there may be merit in eliminating the managerial experience requirement, as managerial functions have been re-assigned to the Chief of Staff. The Chair indicated that he would prefer to retain the managerial requirement, as he or she will still be supervising staff, and Mr. Klein expressed agreement.

Mr. Futules noted that it is not uncommon for accounting majors to have managerial minors, and Mr. Klein noted that any type of business degree often requires at least some coursework in management.

The Chair suggested lowering the government management experience requirement from 10 years to 5-7 years and the requirement from 7 years to 3-5 years of private sector experience, and the members expressed agreement with these concepts.

The Chair, Ms. Kirk, Ms. Means, Mr. Futules and Mr. DeFazio discussed the possibility of making management experience a preferred qualification.

Mr. Palmiere indicated that his personal feeling is that the most important qualification is budgetary, not managerial, and Ms. Means agreed.

Mr. Futules indicated that he is fine with having the preferred language included, as there is no guarantee that the Chief of Staff will be present at all times.

The Chair, Ms. Kirk and Mr. Palmiere discussed the relevance of the "demonstrated ability" language in the final paragraph of the training and experience section within the context of phrasing requirements in the present or past tense. Mr. Klein made a suggestion that resolved the grammar question and the members agreed.

Mr. Palmiere suggested substituting "examines" for "monitoring" where possible. Ms. Kirk suggested simply eliminating the word "monitors" and the members agreed.

The Chair and members discussed sentence structure in the second to last remaining bullet point, and agreed to let the clerk revise the structure.

Mr. Catena suggested changing the title to Budget Manager, and Ms. Means, Ms. Kirk and the clerk discussed the need for Administrative Code and Rule amendments to accommodate the title change. The Chair asked the clerk to compile a list of the necessary legislative actions.

The Chair expressed a desire to discuss the internship guidelines with the members, and discussed the rationale underlying the guidelines. Ms. Kirk and Ms. Means expressed reservations regarding having the interns perform only constituent services functions. The Chair, members and clerk discussed potential projects and implications of supervisory responsibility residing in specific areas.

The committee recessed to the call of the Chair, most likely to reconvene on June 7 at 5:00.

The meeting re-convened on June 7th at 5:00 p.m. and the Chair indicated his desire to wrap up the review of the job descriptions.

All members agreed to posting the position of Budget Manager through the Human Resources Department with a salary range of \$65,000-80,000.

Administrative Assistant

Mr. Catena and the Chair discussed adding language to the KSAs section. The members agreed to use Microsoft Office Suite under this section and to delete Word, Excel and Access. The members agreed to remove the word products and replace it with Suite, in reference to Microsoft under Training and Experience section.

All members agreed to adding the word "preferred" after professional experience under the Training and Experience section and replacing the word "imperative" with "preferred."

Members agreed to add "reports to Chief of Staff or his designee" in the Job Summary.

Budget Assistant

Members agreed to add to the Job Summary "reports to Budget Manager, Chief of Staff or their assigned designee."

Members agreed to make the following change after Bachelor's Degree "in Finance or Accounting, Communications, Public Administration, or related field" and adding the word "preferred" after professional experience. The members agreed to strike the following: "OR five (5) years of experience in administrative support services" from the Training and Experience section. Members agreed to replace the word "imperative" with "preferred."

Constituent Services Assistant

Members agreed to change the Job Summary to have the assistant support the "Manager" of Constituent Services and striking "Director." Members agreed to add "reports to Constituent Services Manager, Chief of Staff or their assigned designee."

Members agreed to add the word "preferred" after professional experience and to replace the word "imperative" with "preferred" under the Training and Experience section.

Councilman Klein requested a change in language to reduce redundancy, and members agreed to the following: "Strong communication and writing skills is required. Proficiency in Microsoft Office Suite is required. Applicant must demonstrate the ability to maintain effective working relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders." Per all members present, the following will be stricken from the Training and Experience section: "Applicant must be able to communicate a variety of concepts and problems associated with the County government and process, and demonstrate the ability to relate to a wide variety of people, including elected and appointed officials, in addition to the public at large."

Constituent Services Coordinator was changed to a title of Constituent Services Manager

Job Summary will now state, "The Constituent Services Manager will direct the coordination of constituent relations on behalf of County Council." Members agreed to add "reports to President of Council and Chief of Staff or their designee."

Members agreed to add the word "preferred" after professional experience and to replace the word "imperative" with "preferred" under the Training and Experience section.

Under the major duties section, members agreed to replace the word "clerical" with "administrative."

Senior Legislative Researcher

Under Job Summary "The Senior Legislative Researcher will support the Legislative Services Manager in the review and advocacy of legislative initiatives for Council." Members agreed to add under Job Summary the following, "In accordance with Article 305 sec. 5-305.01 and sec. 5-305.02 of the Administrative Code, this confidential position shall serve as an at-will employee and shall perform such duties as assigned by the President of Council and Council Members, the Legislative Services Manager, Chief of Staff or their designee."

Under the Training and Exp. section the word "Writing" will be stricken. Members agreed

to add the word "preferred" after professional experience. The following will be stricken "OR five (5) years of progressive experience in legislative and/or policy analysis." Members agreed to the following change: "An understanding of the legislative process and knowledge of legislative research sources, such as Westlaw and Lexis Nexis, is required." Another change agreed upon, "Applicant must be able to understand and communicate a variety of concepts and problems associated with the legislative process."

This sentence will be stricken "Applicant must demonstrate exceptional ability in written and oral communication and maintain open working relationships with a wide variety of personnel having varying levels of perception as to the responsibilities, goals and functions of the County Council."

Members discussed the Administrative Code and the changes that would be necessary.

The Chair recessed the meeting at 6:51 p.m. and the committee will reconvene on Monday, June 19, 2017 at 4:00 p.m. to discuss the organizational redesign and salaries.

The meeting was reconvened at 4:00 on June 19.

The Chair provided a brief overview of the prior proceedings, and noted that President DeFazio could not be present. The Chair noted that he would defer some of his planned discussion until President DeFazio could be present, but that he would be willing to discuss potential timelines for the Chief of Staff and Budget Manager positions.

The Chair noted that the Chief of Staff posting closed on June 16, with 36 applications received as of the morning of the 16th. The Chair indicated that the Department of Human Resources is in the process of reviewing the applications for qualifications, and that the Chair would be forwarding all applications to all members of Council no later than close of business on Wednesday, June 21. The Chair, Mr. Futules, Mr. Macey and Ms. Means discussed the matter, and reached a consensus that all of the applications received would be provided to all Council members, with HR's notations regarding whether each applicant meets the posted qualifications.

The Chair noted that he had asked HR to provide a list of potential interview questions that abide by applicable employment law, together with a system for ranking candidates' answers in order to make the process as uniform and objective as possible. In response to a question from Mr. Catena, the Chair indicated that his hope is to provide the members with copies of the questions at the same time as the applications. The Chair, Mr. Catena, Mr. DeMarco, Mr. Futules, Mr. Klein, Mr. Macey and Ms. Means discussed the concept of altering or adding to the questions provided by HR, and the Chair suggested erring on the side of caution when doing so.

The Committee discussed interview length, with a general consensus of a maximum of 30 minutes for first interviews.

The Chair suggested that there is probably wisdom in reducing the applications to a field of 8-10 for first interviews. Mr. DeMarco suggested having an additional Committee session to undertake that process. Mr. Futules suggested that there may be wisdom in each Council member picking his or her top 10 candidates, and offering first interviews to those candidates that appear on the most lists.

The Chair, Mr. Futules, Mr. Klein and the clerk discussed whether HR has notified candidates of whether they meet the minimum posted qualifications or not in previous

similar situations.

The Chair and the clerk discussed statutory and/or rule-based restrictions that may apply to interview times or days, with the clerk indicating that the rules do not place any restrictions, but that Mr. Cambest's opinion probably should be sought regarding whether there are any Sunshine Act considerations that should be contemplated.

The Chair and Mr. Palmiere discussed process, with Mr. Palmiere suggesting that a handful of members be delegated to narrow the field to 8-10 first interview candidates. The Chair noted that, whatever process is followed, it should in his eyes be something that a majority of the Committee or Council agrees to in advance. Ms. Ranalli Russell and the Chair briefly discussed the possibility of scheduling the interviews in a fashion that they can be attended by Council members who have nontraditional schedules.

Ms. Means and Mr. Baker indicated that they like the idea of having each Council member select their 10 preferred candidates for first interviews. Mr. Futules and Mr. Palmiere suggested that, once those 10 people are interviewed, the final 5 or so could be ranked based on their interview performance.

Mr. Catena suggested awaiting the HR determinations regarding qualification prior to settling on an interview methodology.

The Chair asked the Committee to choose between the Palmiere and Futules methodologies. Mr. Macey moved to include all members of Council in the process for filling the Chief of Staff and Budget Manager positions, and Mr. Catena seconded.

Mr. Palmiere expressed reservations regarding whether all Council members would take part in all phases of the interview process. Ms. Means indicated that she does not share that concern, but does understand it. The Chair noted that he regards both positions as equally valid, and suggested that participation should be uniform through the interview sessions, but that having additional members present for the resume review might be more palatable. Mr. Macey and Mr. Futules discussed the Chair's suggestion. Mr. Macey and Mr. Palmiere discussed attendance issues that have arisen in the past in various committees.

Ms. Means suggested that Mr. Catena had a point in suggesting that the field of interviewees be set prior to discussing interview scheduling.

The committee unanimously approved Mr. Macey's motion.

In response to a question from Mr. Futules, the Chair noted that the desire is to have a Chief of Staff hired no later than July 11, with the Budget Manager position to be posted on Friday, June 23 and remaining open for three weeks (until July 14). The clerk noted that the Council's recess does not prohibit the Committee from reviewing resumes, conducting interviews, etc. during the recess.

The members agreed to allow members who cannot be present at the Committee's next session to submit e-mailed lists of 10 preferred candidates for first Chief of Staff interviews to the Chair with Mr. Catena copied in order to allow him to compile the results.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:19 on June 19.