

Allegheny County Council

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Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

4:00 PM

Conference Room 1

Committee on Budget and Finance

Paul Klein, Chair; Patrick Catena, Samuel DeMarco, Nick Futules, Ed Kress, Bob Macey, Charles Martoni, Sue Means and John Palmiere, Members.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:00.

Invited Guests:

Mr. McKain was present from the Office of the County Manager.

Ms. Soroka, Ms. Berbekec and Mr. Cox were present from the Department of Budget & Finance.

Mr. Biondo was present from the Kane Regional Centers.

Mr. Barker, Mr. Szymanski and Ms. Roka were present from the Office of County Council.

II. Roll Call

Members Present: 4 - Sam DeMarco ,Paul Klein,Sue Means andJohn Palmiere

Members Absent: 4 - Nick Futules,Ed Kress,Bob Macey andChuck Martoni

Members Phone: 1 - Patrick Catena

III. Approval of Minutes

[10068-17](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the Budget and Finance Committee Meeting held on February 15, 2017.

A motion was made by Palmiere, seconded by DeMarco , that this matter be Passed. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

IV. Agenda Items

Resolutions

[10062-17](#)

A Resolution of the County Council of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, authorizing participation in the 2016-2017 Nursing Home Intergovernmental Transfer Program proposed by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services; authorizing the transfer of funds as required by the said program and further granting authorization for any and all lawful actions necessary to effectuate Allegheny County's participation in said program.

Sponsors: Chief Executive

At the request of the Chair, the clerk read the title of the bill and Mr. McKain summarized its provisions, noting that the program had been revived by the Commonwealth and the County had participated in 2016, and indicating that the program essentially involves pooling certain revenues by the various counties in order to generate a surplus. Mr. McKain noted that the County would be contributing about \$13.8 million, and that the urplus would be roughly \$4.8 million. Ms. Soroka indicated that the entire transaction takes place within 21 days, and she and Mr. McKain noted that no additional debt would be issued in order to participate, and that the transaction would likely be taking place in

June. Mr. McKain and Mr. Biondo indicated that the surplus was closer to \$6 million last year, and that the fluctuation is due to the number of counties participating. Mr. McKain noted that the program is entirely consistent with applicable Commonwealth and federal law.

In response to questions from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain, Ms. Soroka and Mr. Biondo noted that the transaction would take place over 21 calendar days (rather than business days) and that the County's ability to undertake the transaction without issuing debt saves bond issuance, counsel, advertising and other costs. Mr. Biondo indicated that the only real downside of the program would be in the event of the federal government disallowing this type of transaction in future years.

A motion was made by DeMarco , seconded by Palmiere, that this matter be Affirmatively Recommended. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

[10063-17](#)

A Resolution of the County of Allegheny amending the Grants and Special Accounts Budget for 2017 (Submission #03-17).

Sponsors: Chief Executive

At the request of the Chair, the clerk read the title of the bill and Mr. McKain and Ms. Soroka summarized its provisions.

Mr. McKain noted that the first portion accounts for a grant from the MacArthur foundation in order to facilitate data collection and analysis in order to reduce unnecessary incarceration and racial disparity in the County Jail to the extent that doing so can be accomplished safely and within the bounds of applicable law and the Courts' sentencing prerogatives. Ms. Soroka indicated that the intent is to use the funding to offset existing personnel expenses in the County's statistical analysis program.

In response to questions from the Chair, Mr. McKain provided additional detail regarding the grant application process, noting that it was a competitive process that resulted in only 20 awards and also indicating that the County has received multiple grants from the MacArthur Foundation over the years.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain and Ms. Soroka discussed the impact of offsetting the existing expenses, noting that no additional staff would be hired with grant funding.

Mr. DeMarco expressed concerns regarding recent events and conditions at the County Jail, noting that they are peripheral to this particular grant funding, but expressing a desire to ensure that the conditions at the Jail are at a level that allows for the data mining conducted with the grant's funds to provide valuable results. Mr. McKain indicated that the Jail is a complex and challenging environment, and that there is inevitably both good and bad to discuss. Ms. Soroka indicated that she had toured the Jail and saw no disorder or chaos during her time there.

Mr. McKain offered to set up a tour of the Jail for the Chair and other Committee Members who wish to participate.

In response to questions from Mr. Palmiere, Mr. McKain described how statistical information regarding Jail population is presented to the warden and his staff, and Mr. McKain and Ms. Soroka discussed how the Allegheny Intermediate Unit undertakes the GED program in the Jail. Mr. Palmiere suggested that there may be wisdom in partnering with CCAC in order to facilitate continuing education for those individuals who wish to avail themselves of it.

Mr. Catena indicated that he is a proponent of data driven analytics and that he supports the endeavor.

Mr. McKain noted that the second portion of the amendment accomplishes a transfer of just over \$28,000 from the District Attorney's Forfeiture Fund to the County Police for use in improving internal operations, largely to upgrade telecommunications and aid the County's hostage negotiation team during hostage situations. Ms. Soroka noted that the District Attorney had opted to increase the transfer amount above the originally contemplated \$10,000. Mr. McKain noted that the District Attorney has great discretion over the uses of the forfeiture revenues, consistent with applicable law.

In response to questions from Ms. Means, Ms. Soroka noted that the \$28,000 is the amount of the increase, so the total line item for this purpose would become \$38,000, and she and Mr. McKain discussed the mechanics of how Forfeiture Fund budgets are derived each year.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain offered to obtain statistics regarding annual County Police calls.

Mr. DeMarco and Mr. McKain discussed the telephone system that is used in hostage type situations.

In response to a question from Mr. Palmiere, Mr. McKain indicated that no additional municipalities had requested that the County Police provide law enforcement services to their residents, but that the first three months of the current arrangement with Whitaker Borough had gone well.

Mr. DeMarco suggested that there may be wisdom in gathering data regarding the numbers and types of calls that had been fielded by the County Police in Whitaker, as opposed to the North Versailles Police when they were providing service there. Mr. McKain agreed to do so.

Ms. Soroka noted that the third portion of the bill would accomplish an increase of about \$15,000 for family reunification programming in order to stabilize more children aged 12-18 with a goal of permanent, stable reunification with family.

In response to question from the Chair and Ms. Means, Ms. Soroka provided additional program detail.

In response to a question from Mr. DeMarco, Ms. Soroka discussed how the County's Department of Human Services monitors the services provided and the extent to which those services achieve the desired goals in order to make informed decisions about what services do and do not yield positive results.

In response to a question from Mr. DeMarco, Ms. Soroka noted that the Department of Human Services would be able to provide information regarding how many children are in foster care at any given time in the County, but indicated that her belief is that the average is about 2,000 children in "mom & pop" foster care settings on any given day, with others in group homes and other similar settings. Ms. Means expressed a desire to determine how many are in kinship care settings, as well.

Mr. Palmiere indicated that he would want to have Mr. Cherna address the Committee on Health & Human Services in detail on this subject.

A motion was made by DeMarco , seconded by Palmiere, that this matter be Affirmatively Recommended. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40.