

# **Allegheny County Council**

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## **Meeting Minutes - Approved**

**Wednesday, June 25, 2014**

**4:00 PM**

**Conference Room 1**

### **Committee on Budget and Finance**

*Michael Finnerty, Chair*

*Members:*

*Barbara Daly Danko*

*Amanda Green Hawkins*

*Heather Heidelbaugh*

*Bob Macey*

*Sue Means*

*Nicholas Futules, John Palmiere*

*Jan Rea*

## I. Call to Order

*The meeting was called to order at 4:05 PM.*

### Invited Guests:

**William D. McKain, CPA-County Manager, or Designee**

**Elliot C. Howsie, Esquire-Chief Public Defender**

**Warren Finkel-Director, Budget and Finance Department, or Designee**

*Chief Defender Eliot Howsie*

*William McKain, County Manager*

*Pete Schepis, Greg Casciato, Warren Finkel, and*

*Walter Szymanski, Erin Graney and Lori Sicard were present from the staff of County Council*

## II. Roll Call

**Members Present:** 7 - Finnerty, Barbara Danko, Heather Heidelbaugh, Bob Macey, Sue Means, John Palmiere and Nick Futules

**Members Absent:** 2 - Amanda Green Hawkins and Jan Rea

## III. Approval of Minutes

[8347-14](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the Budget and Finance committee meeting of Allegheny County Council held on June 18, 2014

**Passed**

## IV. Agenda Items

### Motions

[8280-14](#)

Asking that the Administration report to Council the expenditure of all monies authorized by the issuance of its' General Obligation Refunding Bonds, Series C-73, Series C-57, Series C-74, as well as any monies generated through the modification of the mandatory sinking fund redemption schedule for certain of the County's Adjustable Rate Demand General Obligation Refunding Bonds, Series C-50.

**Sponsors:** Council Member Robinson

*The Chair held the bill in the committee for the reason that Council Member Robinson, the sponsor of the motion was not present. Ms. Heidelbaugh asked to be recognized and inquired why the bill was to be held in committee for the absence of the sponsor and asked that there be uniformity in the requirement stated by the Chair that sponsors be present for the bill to be discussed.*

**Held in Committee**

## Resolutions

[8339-14](#) A Resolution of the County of Allegheny amending the Grants and Special Accounts Budget for 2014 (Submission #09-14).

**Sponsors:** Chief Executive

*The clerk read the title of the bill into the record and Mr. Szymanski summarized its provisions. Mr. Schepis approached the table to answer questions.*

*Ms. Danko inquired as to the nature of the Bob Casey program and Mr. Schepis stated that he would provide Council with that information at a later date.*

**Affirmatively Recommended**

**Members Yes:** 6 - Finnerty, Danko, Macey, Means, Palmiere and Futules

**Members No:** 1 - Heidelbaugh

**Members Absent:** 2 - Green Hawkins and Rea

Enactment No: 20-14-RE

[8340-14](#) A Resolution ratifying certain year-end transfers pursuant to Section 805.03 of the Administrative Code

**Sponsors:** Chief Executive

*Mr. Szymanski reviewed the provisions of the resolution at the request of the chair.*

*Ms. Heidelbaugh inquired as to where the sponsor of the bill was at present. The Chair asked Mr. McKain and Mr. Finkel to the table to answer questions.*

*Ms. Heidelbaugh asked Mr. McKain to explain the chart summarizing the departmental transfers. Mr. McKain summarized the nature of transfers done when "books close" end-of-year to balance and account for shortfalls in certain departments. Ms. Heidelbaugh inquired as to how the Manager budgets and accounts for excess expenditures.*

*Mr. Finkel stated that negative balances drive a need for budgetary transfers. Mr. Finkel read from the Administrative Code to summarize the procedure of end-of-year transfers.*

*Ms. Heidelbaugh inquired as to who makes the decisions to transfer the money from one department to another. Mr. Finkel replied that the transfers are decided by a committee including a representative of the Council, The Manager, the Controller and the Budget Department.*

*Ms. Heidelbaugh inquired about a transfer of money between the Parks Department and a debt service account. Mr. McKain stated that debt is issued due to services for the different departments and that the committee looks to different departments to conclude where appropriations are available and the decision to move the money is driven by the availability only.*

*Mr. Macey inquired as to if this kind of transfer is done in the private sector as well. Mr. Finkel stated that this kind of interdepartmental transfer to cover expenditures is not generally available to the private sector. Mr. Finkel explained how the County Controller oversees the appropriations and makes the decision to transfer and where.*

*Ms. Means asked for clarification on the nature of the appropriations subject to transfer and if grant money would be subject to transfer. Mr. McKain stated that grant money*

was not subject to transfers.

Ms. Danko asked for clarification on what would be the result if the end of year transfers were not approved. Mr. Finkel stated that there would be more negative balances.

Ms. Heidelbaugh stated that she believed it was the Council's duty to review the numbers for the budget that they are presented with.

**Affirmatively Recommended**

**Members Yes:** 7 - Finnerty, Danko, Heidelbaugh, Macey, Means, Palmiere and Futules

**Members Absent:** 2 - Green Hawkins and Rea

Enactment No: 21-14-RE

**Discussion Topic: State and Function of the Office of the Public Defender**

Eliot Howsie was invited to the table to give an overview of the Office of the Public Defender broken down by divisions along with his deputy director, Ms. Kennedy.

Mr. Howsie stated that there are 4 divisions within the Public Defender's office serving 2,000 people per month; 26,000 people were provided services last year. Full time training manager to all employees in the office all attorneys go through mandatory training allows for a more effective delivery of services and keeps training costs in-house

Mr. Howsie reviewed the programs done in conjunction with University of Pittsburgh and Duquesne Law School which allows for an increase in social work available to persons served.

Mr. Macey thanked Mr. Howsie for his service.

Ms. Heidelbaugh mentioned the former problems with the ACLU and commended Mr. Howsie for a lack of complaints since his employment. Ms. Heidelbaugh asked about the reasons for this positive change. Mr. Howsie stated that there was a lot of support from the County Manager and County Executive to make the Office more efficient. Video conferencing was utilized with persons served at the Jail which cut down on costs. a data base, Legal Edge is being utilized more diligently to keep track of files.

Mr. Howsie stated that all cases were reviewed for bail modifications so that more people were appropriately being kept out of jail while awaiting trial. Mr. Howsie also stated that the new management team was a large factor in turning things around. Ms. Heidelbaugh congratulated Mr. Howsie on his success so far with the Office.

Mr. Palmiere agreed that placing the right people in the right places was a positive influence in the Office of the PD.

Mr. Futules inquired about the guidelines for indigent defendants and how it was determined who gets an appointed attorney. Mr. Howsie stated that it was based on a poverty standard which was affected by number of dependents and was given to juveniles regardless of income level.

Ms. Means asked for clarification on number of attorneys; Mr. Howsie responded that there are currently 85 attorneys working for the PD and 9.3 million is the budget with no money from the State

Ms. Danko inquired if all the employees have established contracts with the unions. Mr.

*Howsie stated that there were merit raises given to exemplary employees. Ms. Danko asked about employee turnover. Mr. Howsie stated that attorneys are actively recruited from private firms and that they have many very qualified candidates for the positions available, they hire directly out of law school as well as experienced attorneys.*

## **V. Adjournment**

*A brief report was given by Mr. Finkel on the status of the bond issuance and the amount of money raised. The savings realized from the refinance was 15 million to be amortized over a period of years. The issuance was deemed a success for savings and for excellent interest rates.*

*The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 PM.*