

Allegheny County Council

*County of Allegheny
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Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

5:00 PM

Conference Room 1

Committee on Government Reform

***Rich Fitzgerald, Chair; Jim Burn, Jim Ellenbogen, Nick Futules, Vince Gastgeb,
Amanda Green, Bob Macey, and Chuck McCullough - Members***

I. Call to Order

Summary: *The meeting was called to order at 5:15 PM*

Invited Guests:

Jim Flynn, County Manger or Designee
Joe Olczak, Director, Public Works or Designee
Steve Bland, CEO, Allegheny County Port Authority
Andrew Amhrein
Bob Gary

Summary: *Invited guests in attendance: Mr. Flynn; Mr. Olczak; Mr. Bland; and Mr. Amhrein and Mr. Gary - Amish Forestry Advocates*

Recognized attendees: Dan DeBone, Port Authority Transit

Council staff in attendance: John Mascio, Jennifer Liptak, Jared Barker, and Joe Catanese

II. Roll Call

Roll Call: Present: Nick Futules, Vince Gastgeb, Amanda Green, Chuck McCullough, Rich Fitzgerald, Council Member Michael Finnerty, and Council Member Jan Rea
Absent: Jim Burn, Jim Ellenbogen, and Bob Macey

III. Approval of Minutes

3950-08 Motion to approve the Minutes of the March 12, 2008 Government Reform Committee meeting.

Action: **A motion was made by Gastgeb, seconded by Futules, that this matter be Passed.**
The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Agenda Items**Ordinances**

3677-08 An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, establishing "Roberto Clemente Day" throughout Allegheny County on an annual basis.

Sponsors: Chuck McCullough

Summary: *The Chair asked Mr. Barker to relate to the committee his discussions with the Pirates organization regarding this. Mr. Barker said that he is trying to schedule representatives from the Pirates to attend a committee meeting to discuss this. He said that they did remind him that Major League Baseball already has a Roberto Clemente day, but that they would be willing to discuss this matter with the committee.*

Mr. McCullough read an article about Roberto Clemente that appeared in Sports Illustrated. He said that Clemente as a man and humanitarian is bigger than the Pirates

and Major League Baseball. He said he is an American hero and that this would put Pittsburgh on the map.

The Chair reminded the committee that the area has a bridge and a road named after Clemente. He said that if the Pirate organization is reluctant to do this then he would have a problem pursuing this.

Action: **Held in Committee**

3856-08 An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, amending and supplementing the Allegheny County Code of Ordinances, Division 2, entitled "County Government Operations," through the creation of a new Chapter 263, entitled "County Vehicle Usage," in order to clarify the appropriate use of County owned vehicles by County employees and elected officials.

Sponsors: Matt Drozd

Summary: *The Chair held the bill because the sponsor was not present at the meeting.*

Action: **Held in Committee**

Discussion Topic:

State of the Port Authority

Summary: *Mr. Bland provided the committee with a presentation on the State of the Port Authority Transit (PAT) of Allegheny County. He explained the reason for the change in their financial position from a deficit to a surplus. He said it was a combination of revenues generated through Act 44, increased operating revenues, advertising sales revenue, and service and staff reductions. He provided detailed financial information regarding the operation of the Authority. He also addressed the Authority's collective bargaining discussions with Authority employees.*

Mr. McCullough asked Mr. Bland to describe the borrowing practices of the authority. Mr. Bland did so. He said it was necessary to meet the cash flow projections of the authority. Mr. McCullough asked him why they needed drink tax revenue if they borrow money. Mr. Bland said that it was mandated by the State.

The Chair asked him what his thoughts were on the possibility of privatizing the Authority. Mr. Bland said that approximately 24 percent of the Authority is already privatized, including ACCESS. He said that he did not believe that total privatization was a cure all. He said that some things they do in house would be better contracted out but other things are better done in house. He said that he would not be opposed to participating in a study on privatization.

Mr. Futules said that they should promote Park & Ride programs more. Mr. Bland said that some of the most successful programs they have are the Park & Rides. He said they have successful partnerships with various churches and municipalities.

Alternative Methods of Harvesting Timber on County Property

Summary: *Mr. Gastgeb described the idea of selective harvesting of trees. He said that it opens up the areas and aesthetically beautifies the land. Mr. Gary and Mr. Amhrein provided an overview of the process and methodology of having the Amish lumber the parks. He said that they operate quietly as they use no heavy machinery in harvesting the trees. They also said that they do not work on Fridays, Saturdays, or Sundays.*

The Chair asked them about the financial rewards to the County if this were permitted. They said that in South Park alone the county stands to gain 3 to 4 million dollars in revenue.

Mr. Gastgeb said that this discussion was only a first step in pursuing this. He said that he would like to get the Chief Executive and Parks Director involved in these discussions. He said that he would like to formerly send a letter from the committee to the Chief Executive asking him to study this. Mr. Gastgeb made a Motion to do this. The Motion was seconded by Council Member Green and was unanimously approved.

V. Adjournment

Summary: *The meeting adjourned at 6:30 PM*