

Allegheny County Council

*County of Allegheny
436 Grant Street
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Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 3, 2015

5:00 PM

Gold Room

4th Floor, Allegheny County Courthouse

Special Committee on Marketing

*Edward Kress, Chair
Committee Of The Whole*

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:04.

Invited Guests:

William D. McKain, CPA, Allegheny County Manager, or Designee(s)
Kevin Evanto, Chief Marketing Officer

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

Mr. Tyskiewicz and Mr. Evanto were present from the Department of Administrative Services.

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

II. Roll Call

Members Present: 2 - Michael Finnerty and Sue Means

Members Absent: 12 - William Robinson, Tom Baker, John DeFazio, Jim Ellenbogen, Nick Futules, Amanda Green Hawkins, Heather Heidelbaugh, Terri Klein, Bob Macey, Chuck Martoni, John Palmiere and Jan Rea

III. Approval of Minutes

IV. Agenda Items

Ordinances

[9286-15](#)

An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, establishing rules, regulations and rates relating to the conduct of certain activities held on and about the Courthouse Grand Staircase, Gallery and Courtyard and the County Office Building lobby.

Sponsors: Chief Executive

At the request of the Chair, the clerk read the title of the bill and Mr. McKain discussed its provisions, noting that there is currently no charge for using County facilities for events. Mr. McKain noted that approximately one year of research was performed regarding what other venues charge for events held there, and noted that there are a number of potential cross promotional activities and possible uses of the Courthouse, provided that it is done in an appropriate fashion.

Mr. Evanto discussed a rehearsal dinner that took place at the Courthouse over Labor Day weekend, describing the process through which the event took place at the Courthouse, and suggested that it provides a template for how to undertake similar events going forward. Mr. Evanto noted that he and his staff undertook quite a bit of research regarding facility capacities, appropriate rate structures, and the like, and indicated that the desire was to establish a rate structure that was entirely reasonable in relation to other event venues. Mr. Evanto noted that Visit Pittsburgh had expressed an interest in including the Courthouse in the materials that it distributes to entities that are contemplating holding events within the City, as did the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership.

The Chair and Mr. Evanto discussed revenue, with Mr. Evanto noting that the County's costs would be covered, and that the new rental rates would generate revenue over and above these costs for the County.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. Evanto noted that Visit Pittsburgh expressed the belief that there should be a substantial amount of interest in holding events in a venue as unique as the Courthouse. Mr. Evanto also indicated that he had talked with the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, and that they had expressed a willingness to provide information about the Courthouse during events that take place here.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. Evanto noted that the lobby of the County Office Building was included in the rate schedule because a film production had looked at the space, and had expressed a desire to keep that location in mind for future projects.

The Chair and Mr. Evanto discussed the process through which scheduling for the spaces would be handled, and Mr. Evanto noted that four hour increments were chosen for scheduling because staff time has to be billed in those increments pursuant to certain collective bargaining agreements. The Chair and Mr. Evanto discussed the possibility of performing multiple marriage ceremonies in four hour increments within the building.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. Evanto and Mr. McKain noted that, on occasion, judges do perform very brief impromptu civil marriage ceremonies on the staircase on their own initiative.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain noted that demonstrations, protests and other exercises of free speech would not be subject to this fee structure.

In response to questions from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain noted that the County would attempt to avoid draconian application of the four hour time blocks, but that the policy does have to apply with some consistency. Mr. McKain also noted that Mr. Evanto and his staff would discuss the fee structure and how it would apply to prospective event organizers prior to their decision to reserve the space.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain noted that advertising and marketing are already budgeted expenses for every year, and that promotion and marketing for these sorts of events would be paid for in the same fashion. Mr. Evanto noted that the 2016 appropriation for advertising and the like is in the neighborhood of \$200,000.

Mr. Finnerty expressed support for giving the program a try. Mr. McKain indicated that he would return to Council in order to provide updates regarding how the program is working next year.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. Evanto discussed some of the unique issues that apply to events in a building like the Courthouse, noting that there are specialized rules relating to things like having knives in the building, and that this may impact how caterers go about performing their functions here.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. McKain provided a list of the other venues that were used for comparison purposes as the rate structure was formulated.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain noted that the ordinance as drafted would remain in effect perpetually.

Ms. Means and the Chair discussed the rules governing public comment.

The Chair released the bill to the full Council with an affirmative recommendation.

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:34.