

MOTION EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF COUNCIL OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY

Urging the Chief Executive to locate a suitable facility to permanently house the Allegheny County Crime Lab as soon as practicable.

WHEREAS, the Allegheny County Crime Lab analyzes evidence for each of the County's municipal police departments each year, most notably in the areas of toxicology, forensic serology, and drug chemistry; and

WHEREAS, the Toxicology Section analyzes approximately 1,500 Medical Examiner's cases each in order to ascertain causes of death, and approximately 2,500 driving under the influence cases each year in order to determine whether prosecution for DUI is warranted; and

WHEREAS, Forensic Serology Section examines physical evidence, including DNA samples, submitted in criminal cases, primarily homicides, sexual assaults, burglaries, robberies and hit and run accidents in order to identify and characterize such evidence and compare it to known standards; and

WHEREAS, the Forensic Chemistry Section analyzes physical evidence to determine whether controlled substances are present or not, with approximately 6,000 cases submitted for analysis each year; and

WHEREAS, due to the character of the work done by the Crime Lab, prosecutions cannot proceed in many cases without the results of the lab's testing, and this testing process is in many cases hampered by the unsuitability of the space in which the Crime Lab is currently located; and

WHEREAS, any significant backlog in the processing of the lab's results is potentially detrimental to the administration of justice, and can contribute to the difficulty experienced in bringing individuals to trial in accordance with their Constitutionally guaranteed right to a speedy trial; and

WHEREAS, as of February 2006, the Forensic Serology Section had a backlog of 89 cases awaiting results, the Toxicology Section had a backlog of 297 cases, the Drug Chemistry Section had a backlog of 447 cases, and the Firearms Section had a backlog of 2990 cases; and

WHEREAS, the Allegheny County Crime Lab is currently located in space that is inadequate for its needs in the basement of the County Office Building, and efforts have been underway to locate more suitable permanent space for the lab since at least 2000; and

WHEREAS, in early 2001, the County failed in an attempt to acquire suitable space for the Crime Lab in the Federal North development on the North Side; and

WHEREAS, in May 2005, the County announced that it had leased approximately 78,000 square feet at 1520 Penn Avenue in the Strip District in order to house the County's laboratory facilities; and

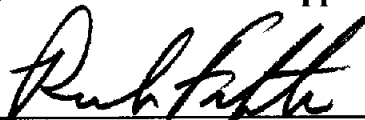
WHEREAS, the Crime Lab had originally been intended to move into this facility in Spring 2006, but this timeline has since been thrown into doubt by concerns about the facility's security and suitability for the Crime Lab's activities;

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS MOVED, AND IT IS THE SENSE OF THE COUNCIL OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY, that permanent, suitable space must be found for the Allegheny County Crime Lab as soon as possible in order to allow it to pursue its vital public safety functions. Council therefore urges the Chief Executive to secure such space and make any necessary modifications to render it suitable for use by the Crime Lab with all deliberate speed.

SPONSORED BY COUNCIL MEMBER GASTGEB

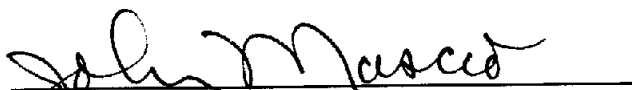
In Council March 21 2006.

Read and Approved.



Rich Fitzgerald
President of Council

Attest:


John Mascio
Chief Clerk of Council

Mascio, John

From: Mascio, John
Sent: Friday, March 24, 2006 10:48 AM
To: Onorato, Daniel
Cc: Flynn, James
Subject: Bill No. 2493-06 - Motion of Council

Dear Mr. Onorato,

At the Regular Meeting of Council held on March 23, 2006, Council unanimously approved the attached Motion (Bill No. 2493-06) sponsored by Council Member Gastgeb entitled, " A Motion Expressing the Sense of Council of Allegheny County urging the Chief Executive to locate a suitable facility to permanently house the Allegheny County Crime Lab as soon as practicable."

Your attention to this Motion is requested.

John Mascio
Chief Clerk

3/24/2006