

# **Allegheny County Council**

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## **Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, September 1, 2005**

**5:00 PM**

**Conference Room 1**

### **Committee on Public Safety**

*Charles Martoni, Chair; John DeFazio, Vince Gastgeb, Jay Jabbour,  
and Edward Kress*

**I. Call to Order**

**Summary:** *The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM*

**Invited Guests:**

**Designee for Chief Executive Office**

**Stephen Zappala, District Attorney or Designee**

**Pete DeFazio, Sheriff of Designee**

**Jim Flynn, County Manager or Designee**

**Charles Moffatt, Superintendent**

**Mike Wojcik, County Solicitor or Designee**

**Jack Cambest, County Council's Legal Counsel**

**Summary:** *Invited Guests in attendance: Commander Joe Rizzo, Sheriff's Office; Dan Fitzimmons, District Attorney's Office; Deron Gabriel, County Solicitor's Office; Charles Moffatt, Superintendent, Allegheny County Police.*

*Recognized attendees - Joseph Chester, Sheriff's Office rank and file.*

*Recognized Council Staff in attendance: Joe Catanese, John Mascio, Jennifer Liptak, Jared Barker*

**II. Roll Call**

**Summary:** *Non Committee Council Members Present: Council Members Cleary, Watt, and Frazier*

**Roll Call:** Present: Chair Chuck Martoni, and Edward Kress  
Absent: John DeFazio, Vince Gastgeb, and C.L. Jabbour

**III. Approval of Minutes**

**2123-05** Motion to approve the Minutes of the May 12, 2005 Public Safety Committee Meeting.

**Action:** **A motion was made by Kress, seconded by Chair Martoni, that this matter be Passed. The motion carried unanimously.**

**IV. Agenda Items****Motion**

**2101-05** Motion expressing the Sense of Council of Allegheny County urging the Allegheny County Police, Sheriff, and District Attorney to investigate establishing a street level drug and firearm interdiction unit based upon the City of Pittsburgh Police Department's Impact Squad to cooperate with existing and planned law enforcement initiatives within the County, and to endeavor to increase their level of assistance to local municipal police departments throughout the County.

**Sponsors:** Edward Kress, C.L. Jabbour, Vince Gastgeb, Eileen Watt and Doug Price

**Summary:** *The Chair deferred to Mr. Kress, the sponsor of the bill. Mr. Kress provided a summary of the bill. He said that Bill No. 2101-05 urges the creation of a street level drug and firearm interdiction squad, similar to the City of Pittsburgh's Impact Squad, within the County Police. He also said that this suggestion is being made because available figures from the Pennsylvania State Police indicate that the County Police may be underutilized and, therefore, may be able to offer assistance to municipalities throughout the County that are experiencing difficulties in providing effective police services.*

*He said that the City's Impact Squad consists of fewer than 20 detectives who are assigned in groups of three to patrol routes in areas of the City experiencing higher than normal numbers of calls for police assistance.*

*He said that during the course of their patrols, the detectives are specifically instructed to focus their efforts on arresting street level drug and firearm offenders, rather than delaying doing so in the hope that more significant arrests might result from further investigation.*

*He also said that the Motion also urges the County Police to increase their efforts at making municipalities throughout the County aware of the nature and extent of County resources that can be used to assist existing municipal police forces.*

*As is the case for all County Police activities not occurring on County property, an invitation from the local municipalities involved would be necessary before the County impact squad could become active there.*

*Mr. Fitzsimmons said that the motion refers to drugs and guns, and that these two things can not be separated. He said that the DA's office has a team that already does much of what is put forth in the motion. He said that they already work with community police in many of those areas.*

*Chief Moffat said that he agreed with Mr. Fitzsimmons. He said that the county already has a narcotics squad that works in the smaller neighborhoods.*

*The Chair said that the DA has signed an agreement with the state to form a task force. He said that he believes it is working well. He said that he believes that the law enforcement community is already working together, and that he does not want to be responsible for another layer of bureaucracy.*

*Mr. Fitzsimmons agreed with the Chair. He said that they already work with the smaller communities.*

*Mr. Kress said that he still believes that his motion would improve the current system.*

*Mr. Rizzo pointed out that whenever they are dealing with countywide enforcement, the Chiefs of Police Association need to be included. He also said that they never know what affect arrests will have on other pending investigations, and the motion may cause more harm than good in that regard.*

*Mr. Kress said that his motion would work by invitation, that the communities do not*

*have to take the help if they do not want it. He said that his intent is to improve the system. He said that maybe the county could hire more police and utilize them more.*

*Mr. Rizzo said that they work very closely with the county police and that they compliment each other well. Mr. Kress said that he just wants the county to help the smaller communities deal with drug problems. Mr. Rizzo said that while his intentions are good, it would take a lot more than a Motion to implement this. He said that the Sheriff's Office, the District Attorney's Office, and the County Police all work together. Mr. Rizzo said that implementing his motion would take a great deal of money and that it was a much bigger project than he may think.*

*The Chair said that he was very uncomfortable discussing police operations in public and suggested that they conduct a private meeting with the experts to discuss this matter.*

*Mr. Kress said that he would look into finding additional money in the budget to hire more law enforcement personnel. Mr. Rizzo suggested that Mr. Kress meet with the District Attorney and discuss this with him privately.*

*The Chair said that he did not want to continue public dialogue on this subject. He complemented the Sheriff's Office, the DA's Office and the County Police on doing a fine job and he thanked them for coming. He also said that he appreciated and respected Mr. Kress' passion for this subject.*

**Action:** Held in Committee

## V. Adjournment

**Summary:** The meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM