

Allegheny County Council

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Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 3, 2006

4:00 PM

Conference Room 1

Committee on Budget and Finance

William Russell Robinson, Chair; Jim Burn, Susan Caldwell, Joan Cleary, Matt Drozd, Mike Finnerty, Brenda Frazier, Vince Gastgeb, and Rich Nerone

I. Call to Order

Summary: *The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM, recessed at the call of the Chair, and reconvened at 4:05 PM.*

Invited Guests:

Mark Flaherty, County Controller or Designee

Jim Flynn, County Manager or Designee

Amy Griser, Director, Budget & Finance

Derek Uber, Assistant County Manager

Mark Wolosik, Manager, Elections

Tim Johnson, Director, Administrative Services or Designee

Summary: *Invited guests present: Mr. Flynn, Mr. Uber, Mr. Wolosik, Mr. Tumolo for Mr. Flaherty, and Mr. Johnson.*

Council staff in attendance: John Mascio, Jared Barker, and Stephanie Buka

II. Roll Call

Summary: *Non Committee Members present: Council Members Macey and Rea*

Roll Call: Present: Susan Caldwell, Joan Cleary, Matt Drozd, Brenda Frazier, Vince Gastgeb, and Chair William Robinson
Absent: Jim Burn, Michael Finnerty, and Rich Nerone

III. Approval of Minutes

2793-06 Motion to approve the Minutes of the September 19, 2006 Budget & Finance Committee Meeting.

Action: **Held in Committee**

IV. Agenda Items**Ordinances**

2601-06 An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, establishing County policy on funding the use of private homes or businesses as polling places in order to assure compliance with the requirements of Act 45 of 2006, the Voter Accessibility Act.

Sponsors: Susan Caldwell, Vince Gastgeb, Jan Rea and Matt Drozd

Summary: *Ms. Caldwell explained that the bill would place a ban on allocating any funding for the purpose of using a privately owned building as a polling place in the November 2006 General Election, or any other election held thereafter. She also said that the bill directs the Elections Board to take all necessary steps to ensure that no privately owned buildings are used as polling places in any election held after July 1, 2006.*

Ms. Cleary said that some areas have no public places for voting and that polling places

need to be on private property or even at residences.

Ms. Caldwell asked Mr. Wolosik if the county was permitted to eliminate private residences from being used as polling places. Mr. Wolosik said that they are not prohibited from using private residences, just private residences of elected officials. He said that in some areas they are forced to use private residences or the people in that voting district would have no place in their district to vote. He said that the county has approximately 680 non public voting places. Ms. Caldwell asked him what the county's liability was with regard to using private residences as voting places. Mr. Wolosik said that the county has blanket liability for everything it does. He said that if someone is injured at a private residence while voting the county would be liable.

Ms. Caldwell asked him what the county pays to use private residences. He said the average is approximately 60 dollars per place or some other pre arranged fee.

Ms. Cleary said that she thinks the county is doing the best job they could reasonably do in trying to keep polling places as local as they can, and she said she would not be in favor of having to move people to other districts to vote.

Mr. Gastgeb said that he believes that this is a budgetary issue. He said that the Election Code requires that the county appropriate necessary funds to conduct elections. He said that he has a problem with funding elections that take place in the garage or home of a party official. He asked if they really need to do this. Mr. Wolosik said that there were 2 instances where voting was conducted at an elected officials residence, but they have been corrected.

Ms. Frazier and Mr. Wolosik discussed the process and procedures used in choosing polling places.

Ms. Cleary said that while she agreed with the intent of the bill, she felt it was a bit redundant in that the Department of Elections already does what the bill asks them to do. She said that she does not understand the purpose of the bill.

Mr. Macey said that he supports the bill.

Mr. Wolosik said that their goal is to use all public places for voting but with a county the size of Allegheny and the geography of the county it is not always possible.

Mr. Gastgeb and Mr. Wolosik discussed how election district boundaries are determined.

Ms. Caldwell said that the gist of the bill is to give Council some budgetary control over this matter. She said that it clarifies state law and makes these issues clear to the public.

The Chair said that he thinks that the Elections Department is understaffed and that they need to be prepared at budget time to make sure that adequate resources are available to them.

Action:

A motion was made by Caldwell, seconded by Drozd, that this matter be Affirmatively Recommended. The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: Yes: 5 - Caldwell, Drozd, Frazier, Gastgeb and Chair Robinson
No: 1 - Cleary
Absent: 3 - Burn, Finnerty and Nerone

2722-06

An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to amend the Code of the County of Allegheny, Division 1, entitled Administrative Code, to amend existing Articles and add a new Article requiring that all County authorities, agencies, boards and commissions cooperate with the County Controller in engaging an independent auditor for the purpose of conducting the annual financial audit of the authority, agency, board or commission, and requiring that the County Controller oversee such annual financial audits.

Sponsors: Jan Rea, Jim Burn, Susan Caldwell, Rich Nerone, Dave Fawcett, Matt Drozd, Bob Macey, Rich Fitzgerald, Michael Finnerty and Joan Cleary

Summary:

The Chair explained that the bill would require that an independent auditor be selected by the Controller, with advice from (but not the consent of) the entity being audited. He said that the bill does contain minimum qualifications for independent auditors, and stipulates that the auditor selected must be given free and unfettered access to the entity's records, and that the cost of the audit will be borne entirely by the entity being audited.

The Chair asked Mr. Tumolo if the Controller's Office was prepared to carry out the intent of the bill, and if so, what resources would they need. Mr. Tumolo said that they do not have the authority to audit Authorities. He said that he was in favor of the bill but that staff and funding could be a problem. He said that he would like to be able to have the Controller's office and the Authority select an auditor in order to provide some objectivity in the process. He said that the Controller's office was willing to work with Council to implement the bill but that he thinks the onus of paying for the audit should be on the Authorities while the selection of the auditor should have some county input.

The Chair said that most Authorities are required by law to have an audit. He asked Mr. Tumolo if the Controller's office were to get involved in the auditing process for Authorities would that compromise any ongoing audits. Mr. Tumolo said that they may end up with two audits of different scopes and that could be confusing.

Ms. Rea said since Authorities are supported by the public funds, she believes that they need to be responsible to this Council and to the taxpayers in general. She said that someone needs to be held accountable for the tax dollars spent on Authorities. Mr. Tumolo said that he believes that the bill does that.

The Chair agreed that Authorities need to be held accountable to the public.

Action:

A motion was made by Caldwell, seconded by Drozd, that this matter be Affirmatively Recommended. The motion carried unanimously.

Enactment No: 26-06-OR

2746-06

An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, requiring that the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) undertake an immediate audit of its financial and other activities for the purposes of fully disclosing to the public the condition of the College and creating corrective action plans, where warranted.

Sponsors: Rich Fitzgerald, Jim Burn, Joan Cleary, Michael Finnerty, Bob Macey and Rich Nerone

Summary:

The Chair said that he informed President Fitzgerald that CCAC has authorized a special audit which will be presented to the Board. He said that he and President Fitzgerald agreed that the bill should be held in order to give CCAC an opportunity to respond to the audit.

Action:

Held in Committee

2780-06

An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, authorizing the transfer of Ownership of a County Police Horse back to the original donors.

Sponsors: Chief Executive

Summary:

Mr. Flynn explained that five years ago, the original owners donated this horse, "Mac", to the County Police and that this bill would authorize the transfer of ownership of this horse back to its original owners. He said that the County Police Superintendent has determined that this horse is unsuitable for Police work and may create a liability for Allegheny County, and that the Controller has determined that the Police horse in question has only nominal value.

The Chair asked Mr. Flynn what the liabilities were for the county when they accepted the horse and when they returned the horse. Mr. Flynn said that when they accepted the horse, they assumed all liabilities, and when they return it, they will assume no liabilities.

Action:

A motion was made by Frazier, seconded by Gastgeb, that this matter be Affirmatively Recommended. The motion carried unanimously.

Enactment No: 27-06-OR

Resolution**2604-06**

A Resolution of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, amending Resolution No. 24-05, which created a policy requiring that County authorities, agencies, and boards receiving funding from the County's adopted annual budget(s) provide information to the County annually regarding budget priorities, information on the cost effectiveness and success of programs being pursued, and tying any requests for increased allocations to those priorities and programs, to include an annual presentation to Council discussing the implementation of such priorities and the continuing function of any authority or board

Sponsors: Jim Burn, Joan Cleary, Michael Finnerty, Jan Rea, Chuck Martoni, Matt

Drozd, Rich Fitzgerald, Susan Caldwell, Vince Gastgeb, Brenda Frazier,
John DeFazio, Bob Macey and William Russell Robinson

Action: **Held in Committee**

V. Adjournment

Summary: *The meeting adjourned at 5:35 PM*