

Allegheny County Council

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Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 13, 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: *Meeting was called to order at 4:10 p.m.*

Invited Guests:

Jim Flynn, County Manager or Designee

Amy Griser, Director, Budget & Finance

Derek Uber, Assistant County Manager

Ramon Rustin, Warden, County Jail or Designee

Summary: *Invited Guests Present: Mr. Flynn; Ms. Griser; Mr. Uber; Mr. Ramon Rustin, Warden, Mr. Ed Urban, County Jail Designee*

Recognized Attendees: Mr. Pete Schepis, Budget Office

Council Staff Present: Jennifer Liptak, Joe Catanese, Jared Barker, Stephanie Buka

II. Roll Call

Summary: *Non-Committee Council Members Present: Jan Rea, Bob Macey*

Ex-Officio Member Present: Rich Fitzgerald

Roll Call: Present: Jim Burn, Susan Caldwell, Michael Finnerty, Brenda Frazier, and Chair William Robinson

Absent: Joan Cleary, Vince Gastgeb, and Rich Nerone

Phone: Matt Drozd

III. Approval of Minutes

2640-06 Motion to approve the Minutes of the May 23, 2006 Budget & Finance Committee Meeting.

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

IV. Agenda Items**Resolutions**

2487-06 A Resolution of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, setting forth County policy regarding the construction of a tunnel, commonly known as the North Shore Connector project.

Sponsors: Matt Drozd

Summary: *Councilman Drozd is concerned about County money that may be spent on this project. Chairman Robinson told Councilman Drozd that Ms. Griser and Mr. Flynn will be preparing an update on all capital projects, and there are no signed agreements between Allegheny County and the Port Authority relative to the North Shore Connector Project. The Chair added that this project has not placed any other projects in jeopardy. Councilman Drozd said this is about anticipating the detrimental effects that*

this project would have and he added that Allegheny County does not have any dollars to commit to this project at this time. He asked whether Mr. Donatelli was in attendance, and the Chair responded in the negative. Chairman Robinson said there are no guarantees between Allegheny County and the Port Authority. Chairman Robinson said that before Councilman Drozd's arrival, a Motion, that was the sense of council, expressed their opposition to the North Shore Connector Project. There have been no definitive decisions and the Chair's experience is that the Port Authority will say they are undecided. Chairman Robinson said it is helpful to work with Ms. Griser and Mr. Flynn on these issues. Councilman Finnerty said passing a resolution on this does absolutely nothing, because it's a matter for the state and federal government to handle. Councilman Drozd responded by saying that he is representing his constituents and said Council does need to participate. He said he has a responsibility to speak on behalf of his constituents. Drozd stated that dollars diverted from Allegheny County roads and bridges towards a project like this is not fair. Chairman Robinson said it would be wise to keep this bill in committee because he didn't believe Councilman Drozd would obtain a second vote at this time. He added that it would be wise to wait for a response from the Port Authority. Chairman Robinson said that the previous Administration agreed to work on the North Shore Connector Project, and the current Administration will honor that agreement, but would probably take a different stand on this matter. Chairman Robinson will have Ms. Liptak draft a letter to send to the Port Authority requesting a response. Councilman Drozd said the figures don't equate, the number keeps growing, and there is a gap of \$141 million dollars. He said while those monies may come from the state, the County, in the past, had to bail the Port Authority out of trouble and as a result Allegheny County's roads, bridges, and services suffered. Councilman Drozd said he'd like to get clarification on this issue. He deferred to Chairman Robinson's recommendation to hold the bill in committee.

Action: Held in Committee

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

Summary: Councilman Burn introduced this resolution. He said this bill would amend Resolution No. 24-05, which created a policy requiring County authorities, agencies, and boards receiving funding from the County's adopted budget to provide certain information. This information would be presented to County Council and would include five items: budget priorities, the criteria that shows how a program is operating, any staffing alterations, a description of all significant programmatic changes, and a description of all changes that have been made to the existing structure of fees.

Councilman Burn said this is about communication, and taxpayer monies going to authorities and boards with no accountability. He said he would like to see more teeth put into this resolution. Chairman asked whether Councilman Burn had considered the time frames that are already in place for the budget process. Councilman Burn said yes. Ms. Liptak said she worked in conjunction with Ms. Griser last year, and they both received responses which were provided to all Council Members. Ms. Liptak said this really enhanced the budget process. Chairman Robinson asked Councilman Burn whether he would like the Budget & Finance Committee to enhance what they are already doing and change some of the time frames. He asked whether it would be helpful to meet with Ms. Liptak, Ms. Griser and Mr. Flynn to see how this bill would work with what is already in place, so a foundation could be established. Councilman Burn said this would enhance what is already in place concerning tightening the purse strings. Chairman Robinson said it would benefit the County if they worked together on this bill. Ms. Liptak will make meeting arrangements and the Chair said they will move forward from that point. Chairman Robinson asked for the bill to be held in committee and Councilman Burn agreed to hold it in committee.

Action: Held in Committee

2607-06

A Resolution of the County of Allegheny amending the Grants and Special Accounts Budget for 2006 (Submission #05-06).

Sponsors: Chief Executive

Summary: A Resolution amending the Grants and Special Accounts Budget for 2006 (Submission #05-06). Ms. Liptak reviewed the documentation and everything is in order. She said there is a small match for the DARE program at Sto-Rox Elementary. Chairman Robinson asked if there were questions, and Councilman Finnerty asked about the WIC project and whether it includes the McKees Rocks area. Budget Staffer, Pete Schepis, responded by saying he will research this and get back to Councilman Finnerty.

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

Discussion Topic:

2006 Budget Matters - Allegheny County Jail

Summary: Chairman Robinson said the Allegheny County Jail was over budget last year and they need to find out why and what they can do together to get back on track concerning their budget.

Ms. Griser said the Jail budget was increased by \$2.7 million dollars. The County's contract with Highmark was not set at that time. \$2.7 represents a \$1.8 million transfer, which Council approved, to personnel and services. Ms. Griser said that similar to the Shuman Center issues, the population increase drives up costs and similar to the Department of Public Works, workers' compensation results in overtime costs. In services, Ms. Griser said there are 3 chillers at the jail. She said one electric chiller will be installed and save the County at least \$500,000.00 dollars. In addition, they transferred twenty trade/maintenance staff to the DPW and a number of projects are now complete. The CCTV's are installed, the lobby area, family waiting area, kitchen floor, inmate storage and chiller installation are all important improvements. The jail is forecasted at a deficit, but one plus is that they are down from 41% to 38% in spending.

Ms. Liptak said right now, 42% is the goal for May, and overall, they are doing much better this year. Councilman Finnerty asked if they are talking about the adopted budget when referring to deficit and Ms. Griser responded in the affirmative.

Warden Rustin said there is a substantial increase in the inmate population, up from 2,279 to 2,686. One reason is that City arrests are up by 17%. The Warden said it's expensive because of overtime costs and staffing levels need to be maintained. He said 91 staff are currently on FMLA or 21% of his staff is off. Chairman Robinson asked whether there will be any solutions regarding this problem, in reference to the sick staff members, and how it would impact their budget. Warden Rustin said it is difficult for them to verify the validity of these cases, so with a third-party administrator's expertise, hopefully they will be able to lower the amount of overtime. Human Resources must award the actual contract. The Warden said the union was made aware of this problem and they do have an issue with this matter. Chairman Robinson told the Warden that he may have to work through this during contract negotiations. Warden Rustin expects that some action will be taken before negotiations take place.

President Fitzgerald said there is a program in Greenfield to educate middle school students about the dangers of drug use. He said parents go to the County Jail with their kids and the Warden and his staff are great, and it is an effective program.

Councilman Finnerty asked for clarification on the staff numbers and Ms. Griser said there are 400 total with 91 officers off (21%) on FMLA.

Councilwoman Frazier asked Warden Rustin how he is handling the large amount of referrals coming from the City. Warden Rustin said the reason for the increase in the inmate population is that officers are arresting probation violators and people wanted on outstanding warrants. Councilwoman Frazier asked whether they see a certain type of offender more often and Warden Rustin said that if you look at their population of inmates, the majority are coming in for some drug activity, thefts, drug possession, etc. and most are drug-related crimes. He said technical violations are another reason for the increase (i.e. failing a urinalysis). Councilwoman Frazier asked the Warden whether taking inmates to drug treatment facilities rather than jail would make a difference. The Warden said a University of Pittsburgh study based on the Jail Collaborative (The Allegheny County Human Services and Health Department) shows a 15% drop in recidivism rates if inmates with drug and alcohol problems get involved in treatment programming.

Chairman Robinson hopes that the staff members that are off due to illness will come back, and the Warden said they do have a disciplinary process in place. Chairman Robinson said it is worthy to recognize that inmates can earn their GED's, which speaks well for the Allegheny County Jail. Chairman Robinson said Warden Rustin and Ms. Griser will be available again later in the year for the budget process and Council Members are free to contact them in advance if necessary.

V. Adjournment

Summary: *Meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.*