

Allegheny County Council

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Meeting Minutes - Approved

Thursday, November 6, 2014

5:00 PM

Conference Room 1

Committee on Budget and Finance

Michael Finnerty, Chair

Members:

Barbara Daly Danko

Amanda Green Hawkins

Heather Heidelbaugh

Bob Macey

Sue Means

Nicholas Futules, John Palmiere

Jan Rea

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:09.

Invited Guests:

William D. McKain, CPA-County Manager or Designee

Warren Finkel-Director, Office of Budget and Finance or Designee

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

Mr. Finkel, Mr. Casciato, Ms. Celestino, Mr. Cox and Ms. Siroka were present from the Department of Budget and Finance.

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

II. Roll Call

Members Present: 7 - Finnerty, Barbara Danko, Heather Heidelbaugh, Bob Macey, Sue Means, Jan Rea and Nick Futules

Members Absent: 2 - Amanda Green Hawkins and John Palmiere

Members 1 - John DeFazio

Non-Members:

III. Approval of Minutes

[8585-14](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the Budget and Finance Committee meeting of Allegheny County Council held on October 22, 2014
Passed

IV. Agenda Items

Ordinances

[8532-14](#)

An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, establishing the tax levy upon all real property subject to taxation within the limits of Allegheny County.

Sponsors: Chief Executive

At the request of the Chair, the clerk read the title of the bill, and the Chair summarized its provisions.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain described the process through which the administration arrived at their recommendation for the millage for 2015.

Ms. Danko asked about other revenue projections generally, and Mr. McKain discussed growth in sales tax and drink tax revenues. Mr. Finkel indicated that the drink tax fund began the year with a balance of roughly \$9 million, and that \$2 million of that balance was drawn down in the course of 2014, but also noted that he expected the fund balance to be greater than \$7 million at year end.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. Finkel and Mr. McKain discussed debt

service payments.

The Chair and Mr. McKain agreed that the revenue from property taxes in 2015 is projected at just over \$344 million.

In response to questions from Mr. Macey, Mr. McKain indicated that the general fund balance is predicted to be roughly \$35 million at year end, and Mr. McKain and Mr. Finkel described the interdepartmental transfer process at year end.

In response to a question from Ms. Heidelbaugh, Mr. Finkel described the process through which anticipated revenues are estimated, and Mr. McKain described the procedure for adding new construction to the assessment rolls. Mr. McKain noted that the County tends to remain conservative with regard to potential assessed values for new construction, because there really is no way to tell what the assessed value will be until the rolls are certified with the newly completed construction included. Mr. McKain noted that this timing is a function of the County not performing interim assessments, which some other municipalities do.

Affirmatively Recommended

Resolutions

[8575-14](#)

A Resolution of the County of Allegheny amending the Grants and Special Accounts Budget for 2014 (Submission #15-14).

Sponsors: Chief Executive

At the request of the Chair, the clerk read the title of the bill, and Mr. Szymanski provided an overview of its provisions.

In response to a question from Ms. Danko, Ms. Celestino described the general parameters of the types of data that could be retrieved, and the circumstances under which it could be retrieved, by the activities to be undertaken by the grant funded program.

Ms. Heidelbaugh asked about the use of technology for surveillance activities absent search warrants, court orders, or other constitutionally permissible search authorizations. Ms. Celestino provided additional clarification regarding the parameters of the searches to be undertaken under the program.

In response to a question from Ms. Heidelbaugh, Ms. Celestino and Mr. McKain described the circumstances under which the single employee to be involved in the program may or may not be retained in the event that grant funding for his or her salary would expire.

Ms. Heidelbaugh noted that she would not be able to vote for the bill due to concerns that electronic surveillance activities may be subject to use in the absence of constitutionally acceptable justification for the search. Ms. Celestino offered to discuss the mechanics of these types of investigations with the detectives who are involved in these sorts of investigations, and Mr. McKain suggested that the District Attorney would have final authority over limiting the searches to constitutionally permissible situations. The Chair agreed that there may be wisdom in asking for clarification from the District Attorney, as did Ms. Danko.

In response to a question from Mr. Macey, Ms. Celestino noted that the City of Pittsburgh

already has a similar program.

Ms. Means asked whether there may be wisdom in holding the bill pending the additional requested information, and the Chair noted that the information should be available well before the final vote. Ms. Heidelbaugh suggested that a representative from the District Attorney's Office be present at the final vote in case of questions.

Returned Without Recommendation

Members Yes: 6 - Finnerty, Danko, Macey, Means, Rea and Futules

Members Abstain: 1 - Heidelbaugh

Members Absent: 2 - Green Hawkins and Palmiere

Members 1 - DeFazio

Non-Member:

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:44.