

Allegheny County Council

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Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 24, 2016

4:00 PM

Conference Room 1

Committee on Budget and Finance

Mike Finnerty, Chair

Members; Sam DeMarco, Nick Futules, Paul Klein, Ed Kress, Bob Macey, Chuck Martoni, Sue Means, John Palmiere

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:06.

Invited Guests:

William D. McKain, CPA - County Manager or Designee

Mary C. Soroka - Director, Office of Budget and Finance or Designee

Mary Frances Cooper - President & Director of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

Karlyn Voss - Director of External & Government Relations of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

II. Roll Call

Members Present: 6 - Finnerty, Sam DeMarco, Paul Klein, Ed Kress, Sue Means and John Palmiere

Members Absent: 3 - Nick Futules, Bob Macey and Chuck Martoni

Members 2 - DeWitt Walton and Tom Baker

Non-Members:

III. Approval of Minutes

[9479-16](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the February 17, 2016 meeting of the Committee on Budget and Finance.

A motion was made by DeMarco, seconded by Means, that this matter be Passed. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

IV. Agenda Items

Ordinances

[9477-16](#)

Sponsors: Treasurer, Council Member DeFazio, Council Member Ellenbogen, Council Member Finnerty, Council Member Futules, Council Member Macey, Council Member Martoni and Council Member Palmiere

At the request of the Chair, the clerk read the title of the bill, and Treasurer Weinstein summarized its provisions, noting that the Pope's recent visit to Philadelphia created the impetus for a similar measure there, insofar as online booking services that facilitate the rental of private homes currently fall through a gap in the existing hotel tax ordinance's provisions.

In response to a question from the Chair, Treasurer Weinstein noted that property exchanges that do not involve monetary consideration would not fall within the provisions of the ordinance, as no tax would be collectible.

In response to questions from Mr. Kress, Ms. Culhane and Treasurer Weinstein discussed the intended meaning of the phrase "facilitates reservations" as used within the ordinance, noting that the intent is not to capture publishers of advertisements and that the ordinance is modeled after similar bills from Philadelphia and Harrisburg. Treasurer Weinstein noted that the booking agents appear to be in favor of the concept.

In response to a question from Mr. DeMarco, Treasurer Weinstein noted that the tax is payable for rentals and that the ordinance does not exempt anyone from paying the tax but, rather, improves the ability of the involved parties to collect and remit the tax amounts legally due.

In response to questions from Mr. Klein, Treasurer Weinstein discussed the existing mechanisms for tracking private property rentals that may be subject to the tax, and how he plans to communicate the new measures throughout the County.

Mr. Walton and Treasurer Weinstein discussed the potential revenue implications, with Mr. Weinstein noting that it is difficult to be precise in estimating the impact, insofar as there are no precise records regarding how many privately owned rooms or homes may be rented, or for how much.

In response to a question from Mr. Palmiere, Treasurer Weinstein noted that he does not plan on adding additional enforcement personnel prior to evaluating the administrative burden of the new ordinance.

In response to questions from Ms. Means, Ms. Culhane discussed the procedure for filing returns relating to the tax and the penalties for failing to remit the appropriate tax amounts.

Resolutions

[9473-16](#)

A Resolution of the County of Allegheny amending the Grants and Special Accounts Budget for 2016 (Submission #01-16).

Sponsors: Chief Executive

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

The Chair briefly described the history of the fee regarding the precious metals database maintenance.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Ms. Soroka and Mr. McKain described the reports that are generated for grant & special account amendments by the County's new budget software, noting that the same information is available, albeit in a slightly different format.

In response to questions from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain noted that the West Nile virus prevention grant is in the budget every year, but that the County received more funding for the program this year, so the budgeted appropriation had to be adjusted upward slightly. Ms. Celestino discussed the program's function, noting that the Commonwealth's DEP gathers data regarding the need for mosquito baiting, spraying, and the like.

In response to a question from Mr. DeMarco, Mr. McKain noted that the granting agency will certainly have grant conditions, but that he would need to review them to be able to tell for sure if the funding could be used for Zika or other mosquito-borne disease. Ms. Celestino described the grant conditions and noted that the conditions do limit the applicability fairly specifically to West Nile prevention, as mosquito feeding vectors vary among the species that carry various other diseases.

Mr. Palmiere noted that the Committee on Health & Human Services would be discussing Zika at a future date.

Ms. Soroka discussed the general parameters of the new grant for the Courts.

In response to questions from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain noted that there is no matching requirement for the Courts' grant and described the facility improvements that would be purchased with the grant funding in order to improve technology, security and confidentiality.

A motion was made by Palmiere, seconded by Means, that this matter be Affirmatively Recommended. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Discussion Topic Carnegie Library Board

The Chair called Ms. Cooper to the table, and she provided a brief presentation regarding the origins, funding, function, and day-to-day activities of the Carnegie Library. Ms. Cooper highlighted the function of the EINetwork. Ms. Cooper also summarized the Library's strategic plan, noting that the areas of focus included the library's facilities within the City of Pittsburgh, the Library's presence in communities and schools, information technology, funding and volunteerism, quantifying the Library's impact upon the community through data analysis, and organizational culture.

In response to a question from Mr. Klein, Ms. Cooper discussed the Library's bookmobile activities.

Mr. DeMarco noted that he has firsthand experience with seeing the extent to which the Library is used by the public.

Mr. Palmiere described his family's use of the Library's facilities and complimented Ms. Cooper on the Library's adaptation to evolving technological resources.

Mr. Kress expressed his satisfaction with the library system.

Ms. Means commended Ms. Cooper and Ms. Voss on their efforts.

In response to a question from the Chair, Ms. Cooper noted that there are 45 library systems in the County counting the local libraries, but over 70 library locations, 19 of which are part of the Carnegie Library.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:12.