

# Allegheny County Council

436 Grant Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
Phone (412) 350-6490



## Meeting Minutes - Approved

Wednesday, March 18, 2015

4:00 PM

Conference Room 1

## Committee on Budget and Finance

*Michael Finnerty, Chair;*

*Barbara Danko, Nick Futules,*

*Amanda Green Hawkins,*

*Heather Heidelbaugh,*

*Bob Macey,*

*Sue Means,*

*John Palmiere and*

*Jan Rea*

*-Members*

**I. Call to Order**

*The meeting was called to order at 4:01 PM.*

**Invited Guests:**

**William D. McKain, CPA - County Manager or Designee**

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

**Honorable Judge Joseph Williams - Allegheny County Jail Oversight Board**

*Judge Williams was present from the Jail Oversight Board.*

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

*Ms. Soroka, Ms. Celestino and Mr. Cox were present from the Department of Budget and Finance.*

*Ms. Griser and Ms. Chirdon were present from the Office of the Controller.*

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

**II. Roll Call**

**Members Present:** 9 - Finnerty, Barbara Danko, Amanda Green Hawkins, Heather Heidelbaugh, Bob Macey, Sue Means, John Palmiere, Jan Rea and Nick Futules

**Members Absent:** 0

**Members** 2 - John DeFazio and Chuck Martoni

**Non-Members:**

**III. Approval of Minutes**

[8839-15](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the Budget and Finance Committee meeting of Allegheny County Council held on February 25, 2015  
**Passed**

**IV. Agenda Items**

**Resolutions**

[8835-15](#)

A Resolution of the County of Allegheny amending the Grants and Special Accounts Budget for 2015 (Submission #03-15).

**Sponsors:** Chief Executive

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

*Ms. Danko, Ms. Celestino and Mr. McKain discussed the national activities of one of the granting agencies.*

*In response to questions from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain and Judge Williams noted that there are approximately 40 magisterial district courts in the County, and Mr. McKain described the methodology that would be used to determine needs for computer*

*upgrades in the various courts.*

**Affirmatively Recommended**

Enactment No: 8-15-RE

### **Discussion Topic: Jail Oversight Board**

*At the invitation of the Chair, Judge Williams provided an overview of the activities of the Jail Oversight Board, and discussed the purview of the Board in relation to County contracting activities, noting that he sought appointment to the Board due to concerns relating to inmate health and safety.*

*Judge Williams described his concerns relating to the provision of medical care to inmates at the County Jail, noted that he is undertaking efforts together with the administration to augment the care currently offered at the County Jail, and suggested that there may be opportunities to cooperate with local colleges and universities, specifically their nursing and medical programs, to augment prisoner care.*

*Judge Williams discussed efforts that are being undertaken in order to facilitate inmate education and the provision of job training to inmates, and also noted that there are many inmates who may be well-served by receiving assistance with drug or other addiction issues, but that such services are not always available.*

*Mr. DeFazio discussed efforts that had been undertaken with Judge Williams in order to facilitate hiring a psychiatrist at the County Jail after the incumbent resigned.*

*Ms. Heidelbaugh discussed efforts that she has undertaken with Mr. McKain to ensure that individuals are released in a timely fashion once they are eligible for release, noting that approximately \$12 million per year may have been spent unnecessarily housing individuals who could or should have been released.*

*Ms. Heidelbaugh and Judge Williams discussed previous reports of issues relating to medical care at the County Jail, and whether the current medical care vendor is in compliance with the terms of their contract. Judge Williams noted that the current contract term only runs through the summer of 2015 and that a decision will need to be made with regard to the continuation of that contract in the relatively near future, but also highlighted that there would be some administrative overhead required in order to ensure that any successor healthcare system at the County Jail would be an improvement.*

*Ms. Means and Judge Williams discussed the need for improved recordkeeping with regard to medical care services at the County Jail, as well as the lack of necessary supplies in some instances.*

*The Chair and Judge Williams discussed the appropriateness of diversion and/or alternative court programs as a means of avoiding putting individuals in the County Jail when not absolutely necessary.*

*Ms. Heidelbaugh suggested that there may be a danger of civil rights or other groups alleging that the medical care situation at the County Jail amounts to a constitutionally flawed system, and Judge Williams noted that he has made efforts to make clear to those types of entities that remediation efforts are underway.*

*Ms. Heidelbaugh and Judge Williams discussed the potential merits of triage type efforts in the County Jail, as well as the potential benefits of increasing the number of physicians and/or other medical staff.*

*The Chair suggested that the current medical care provider may not have been the best of partners for that purpose, and asked whether that vendor has undertaken any tangible efforts at remedying the current medical care issues. Mr. McKain noted that there has not been demonstrable consistency and stability from the vendor, but there are some hopeful signs with regard to some new staff members.*

*In response to a question from Ms. Danko, Judge Williams noted that reduction of recidivism is of paramount concern.*

*Ms. Danko, Judge Williams and Mr. McKain discussed the possibility of increasing the use of technology in order to improve medical care and recordkeeping.*

*The Chair passed the gavel to Mr. DeFazio in order to continue the meeting in his absence.*

*In response to a question from Ms. Heidelbaugh, Judge Williams provided additional detail relating to existing specialty court programs and suggested that, given the positive results to date, there may well be wisdom in expanding programs of that nature, but that the inertia of starting a specialty court is sometimes significant.*

*Mr. Futules and Judge Williams described the discretionary nature of setting bonds for individuals who are arrested, as well as the ability of the Warden to commit individuals to alternative housing unless the committing judge specifies otherwise.*

*In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain discussed staffing levels and overtime pay at the County Jail, noting that overtime can be an issue due to the nature of the institution, but that the County Jail did come in under budget in 2014.*

*Ms. Means and Mr. McKain discussed the useful life for the County Jail, with Mr. McKain noting that there are projects in the capital plan intended to keep the County Jail as operable as possible for as long as possible.*

*Mr. Palmiere suggested that there is wisdom in fostering public awareness of the underlying causes of criminal behavior, rather than characterizing all prisoners with the same broad brush. Judge Williams expressed agreement, adding that breaking the cycle of criminal behavior by making re-entry into society more practicable by providing education, job training, and the like is of fundamental importance, as is breaking the cycle of addiction for drug offenders.*

## **V. Adjournment**

*The meeting adjourned at 5:03 PM.*