

Allegheny County Council

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



Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 19, 2014

4:00 PM

Conference Room 1

Committee on Budget and Finance

Michael Finnerty, Chair

Members:

Barbara Daly Danko

Amanda Green Hawkins

Heather Heidelbaugh

Bob Macey

Chuck Martoni

Sue Means

John Palmiere

Jan Rea

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:01.

Invited Guests:

William D. McKain, CPA - County Manager

Warren Finkel - County Budget and Finance Director

Mr. McKain, Ms. Parees and Mr. Pilarski were present from the Office of the County Manager.

Mr. Finkel, Mr. Casciato, Mr. Schepis and Mr. Roukous were present from the Department of Budget & Finance.

Mr. Barker, Mr. Szymanski and Ms. Stevens were present from the Office of County Council.

II. Roll Call

Council Members Present: 5 - Finnerty, Daly Danko, Heidelbaugh, Means and Palmiere

Council Members Absent: 3 - Green Hawkins, Martoni and Rea

Council Members Phone: 1 - Macey

III. Approval of Minutes

[8069-14](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the Budget and Finance Committee of Allegheny County Council held on February 12th, 2014.

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

IV. Agenda Items

Ordinances

[7974-14](#)

An Ordinance establishing an Allegheny County "Rainy Day" Fund and providing for the administration of revenues placed into such fund.

Sponsors: Council Member Russell Robinson

Resolutions

[7960-14](#)

A Resolution of the County of Allegheny amending the 2014 Capital Budget for Allegheny County.

Sponsors: Council Member Russell Robinson

Discussion Topic: Presentation on the Functions of the County Budget Office and the Office of the County Manager

The Chair called Mr. McKain and Mr. Finkel to the table and asked for a brief overview of the functions of their respective offices.

Mr. McKain described the staff employed within and under the purview of the Office of the County Manager, highlighting the experience and qualifications of Ms. Parees and Mr. Pilarski. Mr. McKain continued to discuss the structure of the Office of the Manager.

Ms. Parees described her day to day responsibilities, noting that they include responsibility for the County offices of Court Records, M/W/DBE, the Kanas, Parks, Human Resources, the 911 call center, Public Works and Health.

Mr. Pilarski noted that his daily responsibilities include Administrative Services, the Medical Examiner, the Public Defender, the County Police, Real Estate, the Shuman Center, Facilities Management, and grievances filed against the County.

Mr. McKain noted that his departmental responsibilities include the Departments of Budget, Human Services, the Jail and Economic Development.

Ms. Heidelbaugh asked how the Council might go about asking questions directly to the Departmental directors, and Mr. McKain discussed his interactions with Council and staff.

In response to questions from Ms. Heidelbaugh, Mr. McKain discussed the difficulties involved in the transition to the new medical services provider at the County Jail and how his office has been working through those difficulties.

Ms. Danko and Ms. Means asked Mr. McKain how he views his role in terms of providing information to Council and its staff. Mr. McKain noted that the interaction tends to take the form of a request for information to a departmental director, but with a copy forwarded to him so that he can remain abreast of requests.

In response to a question from Ms. Danko, Mr. McKain gave an update on currently pending collective bargaining agreements, noting that only one remains in the arbitration process as of this date. Mr. McKain also noted that two units (the Jail and Police) have agreements that would be expiring in the relatively near future, and offered to provide a comprehensive list of bargaining units and agreement expiration dates to the Committee.

The Chair asked a question relating to the operation of the Department of Administrative Services' handling of assessment appeals, and Mr. Pilarski noted that the County is currently working on an electronic filing process for assessment appeals, but that the process would not do away with in person appeal hearings. The Chair requested information regarding any approximate timeline that may exist for the progress of a typical appeal through the process, and Mr. McKain and Mr. Pilarski offered to provide an overview of the workflow for assessment appeals.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. McKain offered to provide a copy of the review that was previously done with regard to Shuman Center and noted some of the concerns that were expressed in that report.

Ms. Means asked about staff size and training at the Shuman Center, and Mr. McKain described the staffing needs at Shuman, noting that a decrease in residents does not necessarily correlate to a reduction in staff size.

Mr. Palmiere asked a question relating to safety in South Park, particularly in relation to auto traffic safety within the park. Mr. McKain indicated that he would call Superintendent Moffatt in relation to his concerns.

In response to a question from Ms. Danko, Mr. McKain described his efforts to reduce and/or eliminate open ended services contracts, noting that shorter contract terms result in more reviews of services that are provided to the County and create a more competitive bidding environment.

Ms. Heidelbaugh expressed concerns about government involvement in areas of the economy that could be adequately handled by private enterprise, specifically in the context of the Kanes, and asked how much the County expended on advertising to increase occupancy at the Kanes in competition with private care providers. Mr. McKain suggested that private care providers do not necessarily provide care across the full spectrum of patient needs, and discussed efforts to expand the role of the Kanes. Mr. McKain and Mr. Schepis discussed occupancy rates, and Mr. McKain offered to provide information relating to County expenditures on promoting the Kanes.

At the Chair's request, Mr. Finkel introduced the professional staff and described the function of the Department of Budget & Finance and roles of each of the professional staff members.

The Chair requested a listing of the areas of responsibility for the professional staff, and Mr. Finkel and Mr. McKain agreed to provide it.

Ms. Danko asked how the department goes about estimating revenues for each budget year, and Mr. Finkel discussed the process that they employ, noting that larger revenue sources such as taxes are estimated by relying upon historical data. Mr. Finkel also indicated that there was additional uncertainty for 2013 due to a particularly large number of appeals resulting from the reassessment. Mr. McKain discussed how estimates are reached for other sources of revenue, such as state and federal funding.

Ms. Danko and the Chair suggested that there would be merit in hearing revenue estimates from the Department on a monthly basis in order to inform the budget process, and Mr. McKain offered to work with Mr. Szymanski in order to create a process.

Ms. Heibelbaugh noted that Council had just considered the Act 202 abatement program and that she had asked Mr. McKain whether the reason for reducing the abatement may have been occasioned by revenue concerns, then asked what sort of reporting was required for revenue concerns when and if they come into being. Mr. McKain indicated that the County has experienced atypical costs in the current budget year and that those types costs are definitively a concern, but indicated that he is not aware of any reporting requirement relating to revenue receipts.

Ms. Heidelbaugh noted that Council sets appropriations, and asked when the Council would receive information relating to any revenue shortfalls, should they come into existence. Mr. McKain indicated that he remains confident that revenues will exceed expenditures for this year, but that if forecasting would ever suggest otherwise, his inclination would be to bring it to Council's attention.

In response to a question from Mr. Palmiere, Mr. Finkel and Mr. Casciato discussed occasions on which budgets have been re-opened in prior years.

Ms. Means asked how much additional revenue is necessary from year to year in order to account for increasing health care, collective bargaining and other costs. Mr. Finkel suggested that \$10 million to \$15 million would be an approximate figure, and Mr. McKain suggested that a two percent growth rate would be something on the order of \$16 million from year to year.

The Chair asked about the process of formulating a capital budget. Mr. McKain, Mr. Finkel, Mr. Lentz and Mr. Casciato provided an abbreviated description of the process, with the understanding that additional information on the process could be provided to the committee in the future.

Ms. Heidelbaugh suggested that efficiency within the Department of Real Estate could be improved, and asked that the topic be discussed at a future meeting.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:28.