

Allegheny County Council

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Meeting Minutes - Approved

Wednesday, November 18, 2015

4:00 PM

Conference Room 1

Committee on Budget and Finance

*Michael Finnerty, Chair;
Nick Futules,
Amanda Green Hawkins,
Heather Heidelbaugh, Terri Klein,
Bob Macey,
Sue Means,
John Palmiere and
Jan Rea
-Members*

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:06.

Invited Guests:

William D. McKain, CPA, Allegheny County Manager or designee

Mary Soroka, Director, Department of Budget & Finance

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

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

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

II. Roll Call

Members Present: 5 - Heather Heidelbaugh, Sue Means, Jan Rea, Terri Klein and Michael Finnerty

Members Absent: 4 - Amanda Green Hawkins, Bob Macey, John Palmiere and Nick Futules

III. Approval of Minutes

[9302-15](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the November 12, 2015 meeting of the Committee on Budget and Finance.

Passed

IV. Agenda Items

Resolutions

[9300-15](#)

A Resolution of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, adopting an Operating Budget pursuant to Article IV, §2 and Article VII, §4 of the Home Rule Charter, by setting forth appropriations to pay the expenses of conducting the public business of Allegheny County and for meeting debt charges for the fiscal year beginning January 1, 2016 and ending December 31, 2016.

Sponsors: Council Member Finnerty

The Chair distributed copies of a side by side comparison that had been prepared by Mr. Szymanski, and depicting the differences between his operating budget resolution and the Comprehensive Fiscal Plan. The Chair noted that the appropriation for the Vacant Property Review Board had been increased, and the nondepartmental fringe benefit recovery line item had been decreased by an equivalent amount.

The Chair noted that it is not his intention to move the bill at this time, and that additional discussion would be undertaken at tomorrow's session.

Ms. Means asked that her bill regarding the Act 202 abatement program be scheduled

for additional discussion, and the Chair indicated that he believes the bill will be discussed again at some point.

Ms. Heidelbaugh, the Chair and the Clerk discussed the Sunshine Act's notice provisions.

The Chair and Ms. Means discussed the merits of considering the Act 202 bill at the next day's budget session rather than deferring consideration to the week of Thanksgiving.

The Committee and guests discussed scheduling matters for the Committee as its deliberations continue.

The Chair and Ms. Soroka provided some additional detail regarding the revenues available to fund the Port Authority's appropriations and the nature of those appropriations.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, the Chair noted that the County does not regulate or control the Port Authority beyond appointing the board. The Chair and Ms. Means discussed comments that the Council had received regarding transit needs throughout the County.

Held in Committee

[9301-15](#)

Resolution of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, adopting a Capital Budget pursuant to Article IV, §2 and Article VII, §4 of the Home Rule Charter by setting forth appropriations to pay the expenses for capital expenditures during the fiscal year beginning January 1, 2016 and ending December 31, 2016.

Sponsors: Council Member Finnerty

The Chair distributed copies of a side by side comparison that Mr. Szymanski had prepared, depicting the differences between his resolution and the Comprehensive Fiscal Plan. The Chair provided a brief overview of his capital budget resolution, summarizing revenues contemplated and the projects that are included, noting increases to the amount appropriated for courthouse improvements and Settlers Cabin Park improvements and an equivalent decrease in the appropriation for county road lateral support projects.

In response to a question from Ms. Klein, the Chair discussed the uses to which the additional appropriation would be put at Settlers Cabin Park, noting that the principle uses would be trail maintenance and construction of a new basketball court.

Ms. Means indicated that she believed that about \$1 million was budgeted for the South Park ice rink in 2015, and wondered what the 2016 appropriation for South Park would be used for. Mr. McKain indicated that part of it would be used for improvement of the ice making equipment, and to construct a smaller secondary rink to allow individuals to continue using the rink while hockey leagues are using the primary surface. Mr. Lentz noted that the 2015 appropriation was approximately \$1.5 million, yielding a total project budget of about \$2.5 million. Mr. McKain noted that roughly \$800,000 of the funding would be coming from Regional Asset District funds.

In response to a question from Ms. Heidelbaugh, Mr. McKain discussed the costs associated with the website redesign, noting that the 2016 appropriation will be used to accommodate integrating the Health Department information into the regular County

website. Mr. McKain offered to supply the Committee with additional detail regarding the transition, and Ms. Soroka noted that the Health Department has some special needs regarding website design.

In response to questions from Ms. Heidelbaugh, Mr. McKain discussed anticipated capital expenses at the County Jail for 2016, highlighting the need for roof maintenance and a variety of other smaller maintenance needs.

Ms. Klein asked about the Shuman improvement projects for 2016, and Mr. McKain noted that the 2015 budget was principally used to improve security, and that the continuous usage of the building creates a number of relatively routine maintenance costs as time passes.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain discussed the in-house capital improvement line item, noting that the line item has to be fairly vague, as it is used to accomplish a variety of maintenance tasks over the course of the year, in response to needs as they arise.

Ms. Means and Mr. McKain discussed the ongoing courtroom improvement activities from 2015 and those anticipated for 2016, and also discussed the methodology for selecting courtrooms for improvement.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain discussed the potential wisdom of rehabilitating the jury rooms. Mr. McKain noted that the Courts have discretion over project prioritization.

In response to a question from Ms. Rea, Mr. McKain discussed the impact of the reduced appropriation for road lateral support, with Mr. McKain noting that some of the 2015 appropriation is still in place, and that this amount should be adequate to offset the contemplated reduction in 2016.

In response to a question from Ms. Heidelbaugh, Mr. McKain indicated that demolition projects would be selected on a case-by-case basis, but that the odds are that the majority will be in the County parks in order to eliminate attractive hazards to the extent possible. Mr. McKain noted that Council's approval would be sought once the projects are identified.

Ms. Heidelbaugh and the Chair discussed the Settlers Cabin improvements referenced above in additional detail.

Ms. Heidelbaugh and Mr. McKain discussed the family court's presence in a building in Mount Lebanon.

The Chair noted that the CFP book contains a breakdown of the anticipated 2016 funding sources, and that the capital budget will increase from about \$80 million in 2015 to about \$92 million in 2016.

The Chair and Mr. McKain discussed the wisdom of placing the County in a position to keep to a regular cycle with regard to maintenance and/or replacement of County roads and bridges.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain noted that about \$590,000 of the supplemental vehicle registration fee appears in the capital budget within the 7th Street Bridge project, while the rest of the revenue realized from the fee appears in the operating

budget for public works activities and the like.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Mr. McKain noted that he would have Director Baechle provide an update on the South Park nature center.

In response to a question from Ms. Klein, Mr. McKain noted that the County is receiving some revenue from the Commonwealth derived from natural gas extraction for road and bridge projects, pursuant to the provisions of Act 13. Mr. McKain noted that the wellhead price of natural gas would not impact the amount to be received from the Commonwealth for this line item.

Ms. Means noted that she would prefer to see a list of the County's anticipated road projects as part of the budget process, so that the Council could have some notice regarding the coming year's road projects. Mr. McKain indicated that too much specificity is not desirable, because road maintenance priorities are often quite fluid, and can change significantly due to things like the harshness of the winter, changes in usage, and the like.

Affirmatively Recommended

Members Yes: 4 - Means, Rea, Klein and Finnerty

Members No: 1 - Heidelbaugh

Members Absent: 4 - Green Hawkins, Macey, Palmiere and Futules

Discussion Topic - County Operating and Capital Budgets

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:02.