

Allegheny County Council

*County of Allegheny
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Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 18, 2008

5:00 PM

Conference Room 1

Committee on Public Safety

*Jim Burn, Chair; John DeFazio, Matt Drozd, Jim Ellenbogen, Vince Gastgeb,
Chuck Martoni, and Bill Robinson - Members*

I. Call to Order

Summary: *The meeting was called to order at 5:07 PM*

Invited Guests:

Stephen Zappala, District Attorney or Designee

Jim Flynn, County Manager or Designee

Frank Aggazio, Executive Director, Housing Authority

Bobby Gabbianelli, Associate Director, Housing Authority

Pat Valentine, Deputy Director, Behavioral Health

James Bonacci

Summary: *Invited guests in attendance: Mr. Flynn, Mr. Aggazio, Mr. Gabbianelli, Mr. Bonacci, Ms. Valentine, and Dawn Botsford for Mr. Zappala*

Recognized attendees: Mike Voge, Housing Authority Police; Isobel Storch, Swissvale Solicitor; Charlie Neid, Swissvale Resident; David Petrarcha, Swissvale Council; Martin Bush, Swissvale Councilman; Greg Gepphert, Swissvale Police; Tony Veltre, Swissvale resident; Karan Larson, Swissvale Planning Commission, Swissvale Mayor Swartzwelder; and Sharon Hanchett, Swissvale Council.

Council staff in attendance: Jared Barker and Joe Catansese

II. Roll Call

Roll Call: Present: Matt Drozd, Chuck Martoni, Chair Jim Burn, Council Member Rich Fitzgerald, and Council Member Bob Macey
Absent: John DeFazio, Jim Ellenbogen, Vince Gastgeb, and William Robinson

III. Approval of Minutes

4140-08 Motion to approve the Minutes of May 8, 2008 Public Safety Committee Meeting.

Action: **A motion was made by Martoni, seconded by Drozd, that this matter be Passed. The motion carried unanimously.**

IV. Agenda Items**Resolution**

4070-08 A Resolution authorizing the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office to apply for and to accept a grant from the Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission (MPOETC) and agreeing to adhere to all rules, regulations and training standards established by MPOETC.

Sponsors: District Attorney

Summary: *Ms. Botsford provided the committee with a summary of the substance of the bill and a description of the Municipal Police Officer's Education and Training Commission*

requirements for the Resolution.

Action: **A motion was made by Martoni, seconded by Drozd, that this matter be Affirmatively Recommended. The motion carried unanimously.**
Enactment No: 30-08-RE

Discussion Topic:

Section 8, Group Home, and Other Housing Within Allegheny County

Summary: *The Chair discussed the impetus for the Section 8 discussion and deferred to Mr. Aggazio.*

Mr. Aggazio described the Section 8 program, discussed how individuals sign up for program participation, waiting lists, the rental transaction, inspections and rental rates, and described how the Housing Authority and County interrelate in its administration. He indicated that the number of vouchers issued is capped, that right now we have about 5000 in Allegheny County, and that the federal government has been scaling the numbers back over the last few years. He indicated that about 97% of the vouchers are in use.

In response to a question from Mr. Martoni, Mr. Aggazio indicated that the Housing Authority is fully federally funded and overseen. Mr. Aggazio also indicated that there are Sec. 8 units in 110 municipalities in Allegheny County, and that the Authority cannot designate any particular municipality or area in which a voucher may or may not be used.

Mr. Aggazio provided a general overview of Housing Authority police activities over the last 5 years, and how they relate to residents.

Chief Vogel discussed the Housing Authority Police's enforcement options.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked how often people take vouchers issued in Allegheny County to other Counties or states. Mr. Aggazio noted that it is rare, although individuals with vouchers from other municipalities do move into Allegheny County on occasion. Mr. Aggazio noted that the destination municipality has jurisdiction over administering the voucher once it is used in that jurisdiction.

Mr. Macey noted that the term "Section 8" is often used to describe all public housing units.

Mr. Drozd noted that two municipalities have expressed concerns that Housing Choice voucher tenants can be less than ideal residents because they are not invested in the communities, and Mr. Aggazio discussed the Authority's ability to address those issues, should they arise.

The Chair suggested that problems can occur that are related to either the landlord or the tenant, and Mr. Aggazio agreed.

In response to a question from the Chair, Chief Vogel noted that there are seven Housing Authority Police officers to patrol public housing properties and properties

adjacent to them, but that these officers do not patrol Section 8 properties because the Housing Authority does not own those properties. The Chief noted that the Housing Authority Police only have jurisdiction over a Section 8 tenant if he or she violates the Section 8 regulations. Mr. Aggazio noted that the Pennsylvania House yesterday voted to approve jurisdiction equivalent to municipal police for the Housing Authority Police.

The Chair indicated that seven officers does not seem like a lot to patrol an entire county, especially if the jurisdiction of the Housing Authority Police is expanded. Chief Vogel noted that a very low percentage of arrests in communities are on Authority owned public housing property.

Dr. Martoni suggested a Motion from Council to Congress requesting more funding for Housing Authority Police.

The Chair turned to the Swissvale issue and deferred to Mr. Bonacci, who summarized his concerns about the Pyramid group home issue, indicating that the home was not, in his view, in compliance with all applicable local ordinances and noting that the home was placed in Swissvale without the knowledge of the Borough.

Ms. Storch, Mr. Nied, Mr. Petrarcha, Mr. Busch, Mr. Gepphert, Mr. Veltre, Ms. Larson, Mr. Swartzwelder and Ms. Hanchett offered supporting comments.

V. Adjournment

Summary: *The meeting adjourned at 6:40 PM*