

Allegheny County Council

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Meeting Minutes - Approved

Wednesday, March 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 4:02 PM

**Invited Guests: William D. McKain, CPA-County Manager or Designee
Dennis Davin-Director, Department of Economic Development or Designee**

Mr. Szymanski, Mr. Barker, and Ms Sicard were present as staff of Council.

Mr. Futules was present as a non-committee member.

Mr. Davin, Mr. Exler and Mr. Hurley were present from the Department of Economic Development.

II. Roll Call

Council Members Present: 4 - Finnerty, Macey, Means and Rea

Council Members Absent: 5 - Daly Danko, Green Hawkins, Heidelbaugh, Martoni and Palmiere

III. Approval of Minutes

[8144-14](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the Budget and Finance Committee meeting of Allegheny County Council held on March 12, 2014.
Passed

IV. Agenda Items

Discussion Topic: The State and Function of the Allegheny County Department of Economic Development

The Chair invited the guests to the table to conduct their presentation on the Department of Economic Development.

Dennis Davin introduced his two Deputy Directors, Bob Hurley and Jack Exler and stated that he would review the structure and the personnel of the Department.

The Chair asked that Mr. Davin provide copies of his presentation for Council Members. Mr. Davin agreed.

Mr. Davin provided an overview of the Department of Economic Development, its functions, budget, and size.

The Chair asked how Allegheny County's Economic Development rated in size as to the rest of the Country. Mr. Davin replied that Allegheny County has the 3rd largest County Department in the Country only behind Los Angeles and

Mr. Macey asked for clarification on how the Federal programs were structured and asked which area of the County was in "the worst shape"

Mr. Davin said that was hard to calculate but the section that has received the most attention would be the Mon Valley and specifically Braddock and because of the large decline in population, there was an especially high amount of demolition to be conducted there. Mr. Exler stated that McKeesport and Penn Hills also receives much

funding and attention.

The Chair asked for clarification regarding the HUD CDBG funds and how they were allotted. Mr. Davin stated that the fund allocations were available on the HUD website.

Mr. Davin highlighted strategies utilized in the Mon Valley and how they focus on the riverfront communities, to clean up brownfields and to create infrastructure. The rivers are one of the biggest attractions and people want to live near them.

Mr. Davin reviewed the duties of his employees and highlighted the amount of work and diversified work which is under their jurisdiction. Grant reporting and accounting is done within the Department.

Mr. Davin reviewed sources of State and Federal funding for Economic Development's administration. This leaves the County without financial liability for the staffing costs of the Department, making the Department of Economic Development a unique organization not reliant on County tax-payers.

The Chair asked if Economic Development used the County Law Department for legal work. Mr. Davin stated that they did but they also hired outside legal counsel for things like contract enforcement.

Mr. Davin gave an overview of the various Authorities that interplay with the Department. He also highlighted the requirement for Council to pass a "health and welfare" argument within a resolution for the Higher Education Authority and the Hospital Building Authority to receive money through bonds through the Department.

Mr. Davin reviewed the programs dealing with home-ownership and home-improvement, highlighting the success of the Vacant Property acquisition program. The Chair asked if we received matching funds for these programs. Mr. Exler stated that some CDBG funds went to this program.

Mr. Futules inquired how the Vacant Property program worked. Mr. Davin stated that the individual's municipality would have to be a participant first by enacting enabling legislation.

The Chair asked for Mr. Davin to provide Council with an updated list of participating municipalities along with a guideline on how to apply for the program.

Mr. Davin stated that he would give Council further information on the "Save Your Home Program" and reviewed how the program assists citizens in a foreclosure process. Judge James and Sheriff Mullen were credited with the inception of the program.

Mr. Davin reviewed TIF and LERTA schemes and stated that he would like to move away from using TIF programs for retail developments and would like to see it rest solely on Economic Development projects.

Mr. Davin reviewed the Minority Contract Development Program and stated that it had been very successful and finally addressed the Planning division which addresses mapping, sub-divisions, and transportation initiatives.

Ms. Means inquired as to Public Works assistance for remediating properties and Mr. Davin stated that he was looking for State funding for certain projects. Ms. Means also inquired about the Bethel Park Fire Department and the Bethel Park Industrial Site. Mr. Hurley stated that they would get a report to Ms. Means.

Mr. Rea asked for clarification on CITF funding and the process. Mr. Davin stated that the fund was 6.6 million, the funds are transferred to the Redevelopment Authority, applications are sent to the Redevelopment Authority Board and are reviewed by them. Mr. Hurley stated that State guidelines are followed within the granting of these funds and that they are not entirely discretionary. Ms. Rea asked to see a standard or guideline that is written to guide the decision on where the funds go. Mr. Davin highlighted some of the factors that were considered in deciding what projects receive those funds.

Ms. Rea asked for a list of CITF projects. Mr. Davin complied.

Ms. Means clarified the autonomy of Parks projects.

The Chair inquired as to comprehensive reports from the Department. Mr. Davin stated that he would give a report in the next week.

The Chair asked when the debt for the rebuild of the airport would be paid off. Mr. Davin stated that it should be paid off in 2018 and then the debt service would decrease substantially which would make the airport more competitive with fees.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:08.