

Allegheny County Council

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Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 18, 2016

4:00 PM

Conference Room 1

Committee on Budget and Finance

Mike Finnerty, Chair

Members; Sam DeMarco, Nick Futules, Paul Klein, Ed Kress, Bob Macey, Chuck Martoni, Sue Means, John Palmiere

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:02.

Invited Guests:

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

Mary Soroka, Allegheny County Budget Director or Designee

Mark Wolosik, Director, Elections or Designee

Jerry Tyskiewicz, Director, Administrative Services or Designee

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

Ms. Soroka and Ms. Celestino were present from the Department of Budget & Finance.

Mr. Wolosik was present from Elections.

Mr. Tyskiewicz was present from Administrative Services.

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

II. Roll Call

Members Present: 3 - Nick Futules, Finnerty and Paul Klein

Members Absent: 0

Members 1 - John DeFazio

Non-Members:

III. Approval of Minutes

[9636-16](#)

Motion to Approve the Minutes of the Budget and Finance Committee Held on April 27, 2016

**A motion was made by Klein, seconded by Finnerty, that this matter be Passed.
The motion carried by a unanimous vote.**

IV. Agenda Items**Resolutions**

[9631-16](#)

A Resolution of the County of Allegheny amending the Grants and Special Accounts Budget for 2016 (Submission #04-16).

Sponsors: Chief Executive

At the request of the Chair, the clerk read the title of the bill and Mr. Szymanski summarized its provisions, noting that it would accomplish a single amendment to the grants & special accounts budget to authorize \$72,000 in additional funding from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency for training and education at six Community Intensive Supervision Program locations.

At the request of the Chair, Ms. Soroka and Ms. Celestino discussed the amendment

process and described the distinction between amending the budget to include new grants and amending to adjust existing grant amounts.

A motion was made by Futules, seconded by Klein, that this matter be Affirmatively Recommended. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Discussion Topic

Allegheny County Elections Department

Mr. Wolosik and Mr. Tyskiewicz provided a brief overview of the operations of the Elections Department, noting that the Department oversees over 1,300 polling places and administers to the needs of over 6,500 poll workers, processes nominating petitions, administers absentee ballots, and programs the voting machines. Mr. Wolosik noted that the Return Board certifies the election results, and the Department processes the necessary post-election paperwork, including certificates of election. Mr. Wolosik noted that the Department also administers absentee ballot applications and maintains campaign finance reports. Mr. Wolosik also described the Department's administrative activities, including responding to questions and complaints regarding elections, processing voter registrations and changes. Mr. Wolosik noted that the Department maintains over 4,700 electronic voting machines, and described the physical and technical maintenance that is undertaken on each machine. Mr. Tyskiewicz noted that all of this is done by 36 employees.

In response to a question from Mr. Klein, Mr. Wolosik noted that election equipment is tested thoroughly prior and subsequent to each election day, and that the County retains a CPA firm to conduct random tests of the voting machines on each election day, as well. Mr. Wolosik also indicated that the County allows voting rights groups to select 20 machines each year for firmware and other testing, and that an independent firm is retained to ensure that none of the Department's voter databases are in any way connected to or accessible through the internet. Mr. Wolosik indicated that the last time new voting machines were purchased, it was done with federal funding through the Help America Vote Act, and that wear items such as batteries have been bought since then with County funds. Mr. Tyskiewicz noted that many voting rights advocates seem to favor optical scan machines, but that switching systems would entail a significant investment. Mr. Wolosik noted that the cost could run in the \$15-16 million range.

Mr. DeFazio briefly discussed the Return Board's experience with the concerns that have been expressed regarding machine reliability and accuracy, noting that it appears that a comfort level has been established. Mr. Wolosik noted that there had been no instances of a clearly anomalous election result attributable to the use of electronic voting machines.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. Wolosik discussed the concept of the undervote, and noted that undervotes became more apparent when electronic machines came into use, because the machines specifically call undervotes to the respective voters' attention.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. Wolosik discussed trends regarding poll workers, noting that only about 30% of the existing poll worker positions have been filled by election in recent years, while that rate was closer to 90% 30 or 40 years ago. Mr. Wolosik indicated that the Department expends significant effort each year trying to ensure that as many of the existing poll worker positions are filled as possible.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. Tyskiewicz noted that the pay rate for poll workers may play a part in the lower participation rates, but that there really is no

consensus about how much of an increase would be enough to meaningfully increase participation rates. Mr DeFazio suggested that some increase would be likely to help.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. Wolosik discussed voter registration during the driver's license renewal process, and discussed the process for changing parties if a voter should wish to do so.

The Chair noted that some judges of elections have inquired about the possibility of having a street list included in the election materials provided by the Department. Mr. Wolosik indicated that street lists can be provided on request, but that doing it as a matter of course would be difficult to administer.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:37.