

Allegheny County Council

*436 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Phone (412) 350-6490*



Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 8, 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 4:06.

Invited Guests:

William McKain, CPA, County Manager or Designee

Mary Soroka, County Budget Director or Designee

Marc Cherna, Human Services Executive Director or Designee

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

Ms. Soroka was present from the Department of Budget & Finance.

Mr. Cherna and Ms. Davis-Jones were present from the Department of Human Services.

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

II. Roll Call

Members Present: 5 - Finnerty, Sam DeMarco, Paul Klein, Ed Kress and Sue Means

Members Absent: 4 - Nick Futules, Bob Macey, Chuck Martoni and John Palmiere

Members 1 - DeWitt Walton

Non-Members:

III. Approval of Minutes

[9684-16](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the June 1, 2016 meeting of the Committee on Budget and Finance.

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

IV. Agenda Items**Discussion Topic****Presentation on the Drug and Alcohol Planning Council**

At the request of the Chair, Mr. Cherna and Ms. Davis-Jones came to the table.

Ms. Davis-Jones described the Drug & Alcohol Planning Council (D&APC), noting that the Council is required by the PA Drug and Alcohol Use Control Act and other state statutes, and that the Council must be demographically representative of the community and with demonstrable relevant experience or ability. Ms. Davis-Jones indicated that the Council, which must have at least 7 but no more than 11 members, provides significant support and oversight of the work done by the Department of Human Services.

In response to a question from the Chair, Ms. Davis-Jones noted that at least two Council members must be minorities and that the Council currently has seven members, three of whom are men and four of whom are women. Mr. Cherna noted that one of the Council members must be in recovery, and that the applicable law and regulations are fairly stringent and specific not only about the composition of the Council, but also about

funding, activities, and the like.

Ms. Davis-Jones noted that the County receives about \$18 million and provides drug and/or alcohol services to about 14,000 individuals per year, and that some of these services are through intensive outpatient programs and other more limited programs, and can entail education and other therapy strategies, including prescription anti-addiction drugs. Ms. Davis-Jones also indicated that there are more intensive 24 hour residential programs that are provided in conjunction with providers both inside and outside Allegheny County, as well as case management services, prevention and intervention services, and recovery support services. Ms. Davis-Jones indicated that populations must be prioritized for recovery support services.

In response to questions from Mr. Klein, Mr. Cherna noted that the number of individuals who receive services has remained fairly consistent for the past few years, and that the Department's services are provided only to individuals who do not have other healthcare to cover the cost of the necessary program(s). Ms. Davis-Jones and Mr. Cherna described the criteria used to evaluate whether treatment programs are considered successful.

In response to a question by Mr. DeMarco, Mr. Cherna indicated that it is not easy to track individuals who receive services from one year to the next with complete precision and to use that as a success criterion, but that the use of prescription anti-addictive drugs tends to be effective insofar as it establishes a means of weaning individuals from their drugs of choice. Mr. Cherna indicated that illegal drug producers are specifically formulating drugs to incorporate as much in the way of addicting substances as possible, and Ms. Davis-Jones noted that overprescription of certain anti-pain medications can also lead to addiction issues.

Mr. Walton suggested that technological advances in manufacturing street drugs have rendered them significantly more dangerous than in the past, and that his belief is that helping individuals who become addicted is obviously a significant social and community health issue. Mr. Cherna noted that the U.S. Attorney currently has a task force working in this area, and indicated that at some point, most individuals who are addicted reach a point at which they want to stop using the drug that they use, and the trick on some level is keeping those individuals healthy to that point and through the process of breaking their addiction.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Ms. Davis-Jones noted that there are over 120 people on the Department's waiting list for treatment services, with waiting times running anywhere from one to three weeks, depending upon the type of services needed. Ms. Davis-Jones and Mr. Cherna discussed the practices of the various licensed providers in allocating bed space to individuals with private insurance, individuals with government insurance, and those who are receiving services funded through the Department's efforts.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Ms. Davis-Jones described the mechanisms through which individuals who need services and who do not have health care insurance coverage can get in touch with the Department, and suggested that there would likely be wisdom in undertaking an ongoing program of educating the public about how to obtain the services that they may need. Mr. Cherna noted that individuals who contact the United Way's 211 information line or who contact the various rehabilitation providers are referred to the County for assistance when possible and appropriate.

In response to a question from Mr. Kress, Mr. Cherna noted that his previous comments regarding the incorporation of addictive substances into drugs applies to entities

manufacturing illegal drugs, and not pharmaceutical companies.

In response to a question from Mr. Kress, Ms. Davis-Jones and Mr. Cherna briefly discussed the services available to individuals who are seeking to become employed during their recovery, but noted that this is not a primary focus of the Department's efforts to assist in the recovery process. Ms. Davis-Jones indicated that housing is often a primary concern, as addicted individuals often have criminal records and/or other issues that make housing difficult to obtain.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Ms. Davis-Jones discussed practices and procedures that are necessary for recovery house environments to be considered as appropriate by the Department, and noted that these are not the same as governmental regulations relating to how those environments must be constructed and maintained.

Mr. DeMarco suggested that there might be wisdom in highlighting pending state or federal legislative measures that may be of help to the Department's work.

In response to a question from Mr. Klein, Ms. Davis-Jones noted that demographics are changing for individuals who suffer from addiction, and that the effects are far more widespread than many people think.

In response to a question from Mr. Kress, Mr. Cherna indicated that senior citizens can be susceptible to addiction, depending on what medications they are taking. Ms. Davis-Jones noted that they are seeing a trend towards mixtures of drugs in quantities that may not be dangerous in themselves, but that the combination of which can easily lead to an overdose.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. Cherna noted that there really is no average length of stay in rehabilitation programs, and that providers very often determine length of stay based on a number of criteria. Ms. Davis-Jones indicated that there is some data that suggests that the average across all service types is around 28 days, but that this includes outpatient, residential, counselling, and all other service types.

Mr. Walton. Mr. Cherna and Ms. Davis-Jones discussed the importance of long term service in many cases, because while detoxification can take place relatively rapidly, addressing the psychological and other factors that play into addiction often requires services over a much longer period of time. Ms. Davis-Jones noted that relapses happen, and that it is critically important to help individuals through relapses.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53.