

# **Allegheny County Council**

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



## **Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, July 28, 2016**

**5:00 PM**

**Conference Room 1**

## **Special Committee on Marketing**

*Edward Kress, Chair  
Committee Of The Whole*

**I. Call to Order**

*The meeting was called to order at 5:10.*

**Invited Guests:**

**William D. McKain, CPA, Allegheny County Manager, or designee(s)**  
**Miguel Fraga, First Secretary, Cuban Embassy**

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

*Mr. Evanto was present from the Department of Administrative Services.*

*First Secretary Fraga was present from the Cuban Embassy.*

*Mr. Diven was present.*

*Mr. Barker was present from the Office of County Council.*

**II. Roll Call**

**Members Present:** 6 - DeFazio, Cindy Kirk, DeWitt Walton, Ed Kress, Michael Finnerty and Tom Baker

**Members Absent:** 8 - Bob Macey, Chuck Martoni, Denise Ranalli-Russell, Jim Ellenbogen, John Palmiere, Nick Futules, Paul Klein and Sam DeMarco

**Members Phone:** 1 - Sue Means

**III. Approval of Minutes**

[9758-16](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2015 meeting of the Special Committee on Marketing.

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

**IV. Agenda Items****Discussion Topic - Business and Marketing Opportunities With Cuban Firms**

*At the Chair's request, First Secretary Fraga discussed the current diplomatic environment, noting that relations have just opened between the two countries for the first time in about 50 years, and that public opinion polls consistently indicate that the public has a desire to engage in trade with and travel to Cuba.*

*First Secretary Fraga noted that he believes that the Boxing on the Bridge event is historic, and could in his opinion serve to call attention to the newly improved environment. First Secretary Fraga gave food trade as an example, indicating that only a small percentage of Cuba's significant food imports come from the United States at present, and also mentioned that, at his recent visit to Point Park University, there was quite a bit of interest expressed in having students study in Cuba.*

*In response to a question from the Chair, First Secretary Fraga noted that there is a bit of a learning curve regarding how to go about developing a relationship, because there hasn't been one for so long. First Secretary Fraga indicated that a license from the*

*federal government is still required to travel to Cuba, but that the current administration is making it possible to qualify under the existing requirements comparatively readily.*

*First Secretary Fraga indicated that Cuba has a trade fair every November, and that American firms would be attending this year. First Secretary Fraga noted that over 1 million Canadians visit Cuba each year, and that his hope is that American visits could be at least as prolific.*

*In response to a question from the Chair, First Secretary Fraga discussed opportunities that exist in Cuba relating to improvement of infrastructure, telecommunications, and hospitality in order to facilitate increasing travel and business relations between the countries.*

*In response to a question from Mr. Baker, Mr. Diven described the process of working though the logistics of the Boxing on the Bridge event, and noted that Cuba has been particularly helpful and accomodating throughout the process. Mr. Diven noted that Cuba's Minister of Sport had even visited Pittsburgh even though the runup to the Olympics was in progress.*

*Ms. Kirk and Mr. Diven discussed the potential for the matches to be competitive, with Mr. Diven emphasizing Cuba's rich boxing tradition and current doinance in amateur boxing.*

*Mr. Diven noted that the food trade issue highlighted by First Secretary Fraga could be a tremendous opportunity for American farmers, and that Cuba's medical technology and care is highly advanced, and that this could be an area in which regonal healthcare delivery entities could develop relationships with Cuban firms.*

*Mr. Diven described the efforts to establish direct flights between Cuba and Pittsburgh, and the factors that mitigate in favor of establishing such service.*

*In response to a question from Ms. Kirk, Mr. Diven described his experience in Cuba, noting that he had been given unfettered access within Cuba. First Secretary Fraga noted that there is only one American bank currently operating wtihin Cuba, but that this has enabled the use of at least certain American credit cards within Cuba. Mr. Diven noted that currency exchange can be a little tricky, but that as things normalize between the two countries, that should become less of an issue.*

*In response to a question from Mr. DeFazio, Mr. Diven noted that the American boxers participating are the best of the local boxers, and that the matches would also be broadcast to probably 5 or 6 million viewers in Cuba.*

*Mr. Walton congratulated Firs Secretary Fraga and Mr. Diven, expressing his belief that this event is purely positive for the region and for Cuba, and emphasized Cuba's healthcare delivery system as a potential model for American efforts in that area.*

*Mr. Diven described a recent event at which the boxing teams went off with each other and used their cell phones to transalate as they talked about their sport.*

*In response to a question from Ms. Kirk, Mr. Diven noted that one of the challenges was pairing boxers up who are roughly equal in skill and experience in order to mitigate the chance of non-competitive matches to the extent possible.*

*Mr. Diven discussed the mechanics of the television broadcast, noting that the American*

version will have commercials, but that the Cuban version would have 2 minute stories about the Pittsburgh area. Mr. Diven described the effort that Cuba had put into televising this event, noting that Cuba broadcasts the Olympics extensively, and that they actually had to put quite a bit of effort into allocating the personnel and time to this event.

Mr. Finnerty thanked Mr. Diven and First Secretary Fraga. Mr. Diven noted that Congressman Doyle and the Chief Executive both put extensive effort into making the match a reality. Mr. McKain described some of the mechanics of the process.

In response to a question from Ms. Kirk, Mr. Diven described the strong public interest in the event.

Mr. Diven described one of the local boxers from Brookline whose father came to the United States from Cuba at age 13, and noted that this event has allowed him to meet his grandfather and other family members in Cuba for the first time.

Mr. Walton expressed gratitude for all of the work that was done by all of the different entities to make this event possible.

In response to a question from Mr. Walton, First Secretary Fraga noted that he would like to see a second event in Havanna, and that he would also like to see much more extensive exchange of agricultural products as a first step. First Secretary Fraga also noted that it only takes 36 hours to reach Cuba from the port of Mobile, AL, and that this should tremendously facilitate trade if and when the embargo is lifted by Congress. First Secretary Fraga indicated that a bill currently pending in the U.S. Senate would allow free travel to Cuba, and that his hope is that this bill will pass.

In response to a question from the Chair, First Secretary Fraga described the existing regulatory framework, noting that merely travelling to Cuba as a tourist is not permitted by U.S. law, but that it can be done with a federal license, and that a similar environment exists for American companies wishing to do business there. Mr. Diven noted that his understanding is the PPG is in the process of navigating the regulatory process, because they believe that the potential revenue is approximately \$100 million a year in paint sales alone.

Mr. Diven noted the importance of demonstrating the potential that exists to local companies.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. Diven described the corporate sponsors and private donors who had made the event possible and suggested that future events will likely be easier, now that everyone has been through the process of making the first one a reality.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. Evanto noted that the bridge would close around Midnight on Friday, and that equipment would start being moved onto the bridge at around 8:00 Saturday morning with setup running through the afternoon and the bridge to open to spectators at 6:00.

Mr. Diven noted that the event would air on PCNC and WPXI's website.

In response to a question from Ms. Kirk, Mr. Diven noted that the timing of the event was determined by the Pirates being out of town, and that July 26 is a national holiday in Cuba.

*In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. Diven noted that the bridge would be entirely closed to vehicle and pedestrian traffic.*

*Mr. Diven noted that there are some local companies or individuals that have some history of working with Cuban entities, and suggested that it may be wise to rely upon their experience in facilitatinig the necessary relationships.*

*In response to a question from the Chair, First Secretary Fraga noted that Cuba produces nickel and cobalt, but not a lot of steel, which it tends to import from Canada at present. Mr. Diven noted that Nickel is used extensively in technological applications, and suggested that there may be a natural fit there for local technology firms.*

## **V. Adjournment**

*The meeting was adjourned at 6:13.*