

Allegheny County Council

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



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, November 17, 2016

5:00 PM

Conference Room 1

Committee on Government Reform

*John DeFazio, Chair; Jim Ellenbogen, Michael Finnerty, Nick Futules, Ed Kress,
Charles Martoni and Sue Means - Members*

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:01.

Invited Guests:**William D. McKain, CPA, Allegheny County Manager, or designee(s)**

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

Mr. Szefi was present from the Law Department.

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

II. Roll Call

Members Present: 4 - John DeFazio, Michael Finnerty, Nick Futules and Sue Means

Members Absent: 3 - Jim Ellenbogen, Ed Kress and Chuck Martoni

Members 1 - Bob Macey

Non-Members:

III. Approval of Minutes

[9908-16](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the May 18, 2016 meeting of the Committee on Government Reform.

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

IV. Agenda Items**Ordinances**

[9868-16](#)

An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, authorizing an increase in the expense allowance for members of Allegheny County Council, as provided by Article III, Section 7(e) of the Home Rule Charter of Allegheny County.

Sponsors: Council Member Finnerty

At the request of the Chair, the clerk read the title of the bill and Mr. Finnerty explained his rationale, noting that the expense allowance has not been adjusted since the Home Rule Charter came into effect in 2000. Mr. Finnerty noted that the last whereas clause essentially summarizes how the expense allowance would have increased over time, had the 5% increases been done at all points in time at which it was permissible under the Charter.

Mr. Futules expressed concern about the automatic 5% escalator clause, and noted that most Council Members don't reach the existing \$3,000 limit.

Mr. Finnerty indicated that those Members who do not reach the limit will experience no change.

Ms. Means expressed concerns about the automatic 5% escalator clause.

Mr. Finnerty noted that he believes that other governments handle pay raises for elected officials in much the same way as his bill would.

Ms. Means and Mr. Finnerty discussed the genesis of the pay rates for the Allegheny County row officers.

Mr. Futules suggested that, if the increase is not really necessary, it may be unwise to enact it.

The Chair indicated that he personally would not use or need the increase, but he would not stand in the way of the ordinance if others wished to enact it.

Mr. Macey noted that expenses can mount relatively quickly, and that, in his experience, that can vary from year to year. Mr. Macey also suggested that increases in inflation, gasoline and other costs, and the like result in increasing expenses over time.

Mr. Finnerty noted that he typically does use most of all of his expense allowance, mostly through mileage, often during the third quarter.

Mr. Futules indicated that he has no desire to bear any adverse consequences of voting for an increase that is not necessary.

Ms. Means noted that she is also concerned about the retroactive application of the increase.

A motion was made by Finnerty, seconded by Means, that this matter be Returned Without Recommendation. The motion carried by the following vote:

Members Yes: 3 - DeFazio, Finnerty and Means

Members No: 1 - Futules

Members Absent: 3 - Ellenbogen, Kress and Martoni

Members 1 - Macey

Non-Member:

9869-16

An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, authorizing an increase in the per meeting stipend for members of Allegheny County Council, as provided by Article III, Section 7(a) of the Home Rule Charter of Allegheny County.

Sponsors: Council Member Finnerty

At the request of the Chair, the clerk read the title of the bill and Mr. Finnerty explained his rationale, noting that it is similar to the reasoning behind the proposed expense allowance increase.

Ms. Means noted that she has the same concerns regarding retroactive application and the automatic escalator clause.

Mr. Futules indicated that he has the same concerns, and also suggested that a non-unanimous decision on the final vote might create some awkward consequences.

Ms. Means suggested that she would prefer that more staff members be hired, and would prefer to see revenue put to that purpose.

Ms. Means expressed a desire to see how other home rule counties handle elected officials' pay increases.

A motion was made by Futules, seconded by Means, that this matter be Returned Without Recommendation. The motion carried by the following vote:

Members Yes: 4 - DeFazio, Finnerty, Futules and Means

Members Absent: 3 - Ellenbogen, Kress and Martoni

Members 1 - Macey

Non-Member:

[9898-16](#)

An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, amending the County's Administrative Code to increase the annual salary of the Allegheny County Chief Executive effective January 1, 2020, and to provide for an annual revision of the Chief Executive's salary in succeeding years based upon certain criteria, as authorized by Article III, §7(d) of the Home Rule Charter of Allegheny County.

Sponsors: Council Member Finnerty

At the request of the Chair, the clerk read the title of the bill and Mr. Finnerty explained his rationale, noting that it is similar to the reasoning behind the bills that relate to Council and that he believes that pegging the Executive's salary to the Governor's makes sense.

In response to a question from Mr. Futules, Mr. McKain noted that the Chief Executive has publicly indicated that he believes that there is wisdom in increasing the salary for the position in order to ensure that qualified individuals remain interested in serving.

In response to a question from Mr. Futules, Mr. Szefi noted that there is no Charter or other statutory language that ties the Council Members' salaries to the Chief Executive's.

Ms. Means noted that she has the same concerns about the retroactive effect and automatic escalator clause and that, while she agrees that the salary should be increased, but that it should be done via individual ordinances enacted on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Futules indicated that he regards the Chief Executive's pay as being separate from the Council Members' pay, and that he would support the proposed increase.

Ms. Means, Mr. Futules and Mr. Szefi discussed the concept of retroactivity, with Mr. Szefi distinguishing retroactive pay from a cumulative increase for raises not accepted in the past.

Mr. Finnerty noted that the January 1, 2020 effective date was selected to place the initiation of the pay raise after all of the elected officials affected have run for election with it in place.

Ms. Means and Mr. Szefi discussed the Constitutional requirement that prohibits elected officials from taking pay increases during a term of office.

A motion was made by Finnerty, seconded by Futules, that this matter be

Affirmatively Recommended. The motion carried by the following vote:

Members Yes: 4 - DeFazio, Finnerty, Futules and Means

Members Absent: 3 - Ellenbogen, Kress and Martoni

Members 1 - Macey

Non-Member:

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:28.