

Allegheny County Council

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Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 1, 2017

4:00 PM

Conference Room 1

Committee on Public Safety

Jim Ellenbogen, Chair

Tom Baker, Patrick Catena, John DeFazio, Sam DeMarco, Nick Futules, Paul Klein, Ed Kress, Bob Macey, Denise Ranalli-Russell, DeWitt Walton, Members

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:02.

Invited Guests:

William D. McKain, CPA, Allegheny County Manager or designee(s)
Coleman J. McDonough, Superintendent, Allegheny County Police

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

Superintendent McDonough was present from the County Police.

Mr. Hickton was present from Xpressbet, LLC

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

Note: Mr. Klein was designated to chair this meeting by Chairman Ellenbogen.

II. Roll Call

Members Present: 4 - Tom Baker, Sam DeMarco, Paul Klein and DeWitt Walton

Members Absent: 6 - Ellenbogen, John DeFazio, Nick Futules, Ed Kress, Bob Macey and Denise Ranalli-Russell

Members 2 - Sue Means and Patrick Catena

Non-Members:

III. Approval of Minutes

[9715-16](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2015 meeting of the Committee on Public Safety.

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

[9998-17](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the June 29, 2016 meeting of the Committee on Public Safety.

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

IV. Agenda Items

Ordinances

[9989-17](#)

Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, authorizing the acceptance of the donation of three thoroughbred horses for adoption by the County for use in the Allegheny County Police's Mounted Unit.

Sponsors: Chief Executive

The Chair read the title of the bill and deferred to Mr. McKain who provided a brief summary of the bill, noting that it involves the donation of three horses for use by the

County Police's Mounted Unit.

Superintendent McDonough noted that there would be 11 horses in the Mounted Unit including the three to be donated through the bill at issue, together with 10 officers who are assigned to the Mounted Unit on a rotating basis. Superintendent McDonough noted that Xpressbet had suggested that similar donations might be possible on an ongoing basis in the future. Superintendent McDonough indicated that the Mounted Unit provides crowd control, observation, and general deterrence service, as well as attending community events from time to time, often in the County Parks.

Mr. Hickton indicated that his experience with County personnel has been extraordinarily professional, kind and patient, all of which are desirable qualities when working with horses. Mr. Hickton provided some background information relating to Xpressbet's activities at facilities throughout the country, and indicated that his belief is that the entity could ultimately come to function as a conduit for horses to be donated to law enforcement nationwide, although Allegheny County will be the pilot project for that type of program. Mr. Hickton noted that, should the Council not approve the donation, the horses can be donated to another agency, but that Xpressbet would provide support for the horses for 90 days after the donation. Mr. Hickton also noted that, in the event that any of the horses must be euthanized or otherwise require unusual medical care, Xpressbet would participate in those actions.

In response to questions from Mr. Walton, Mr. Hickton indicated that the life expectancy for a horse of this type is roughly 25 years, and that Xpressbet's goal is to donate horses that are approximately four to six years of age, with a service expectancy of at least 10 years followed by an alternative placement in a different setting appropriate to animals of that age. Mr. Hickton also discussed the criteria used to determine the suitability of various horses for certain types of placement, noting that bloodlines, stature, temperament, disposition and other factors play into the decision, and that one of the three horses involved in this donation is a former state champion and exceptionally friendly animal.

Mr. DeMarco expressed a feeling that the notion of donating former racehorses to law enforcement is a win-win scenario, as well as being a humane way of treating these animals.

In response to a question from Mr. DeMarco, Mr. Hickton noted that all three of the horses were geldings throughout their racing careers.

In response to a question from Mr. DeMarco, Superintendent McDonough and Mr. McKain discussed the mechanisms through which the horses are cared for in stable facilities in South Park. Mr. McKain offered to provide information regarding fire alarm and/or suppression measures in the stables.

In response to a question from Mr. Baker, Mr. McKain noted that the usual avenue through which horses are donated to the County is by private owners, and that this is the first donation by an entity like Xpressbet of which he is aware.

In response to a question from Mr. Baker, Mr. McKain and Mr. Hickton discussed media and community outreach regarding the donations.

In response to a question from the Chair, Superintendent McDonough and Mr. McKain noted that the City of Pittsburgh at one time had a mounted unit, but that it was discontinued in the early 2000s, and that there are very few mounted units in the

Commonwealth outside of the State Police and the Philadelphia Police.

Mr. Walton discussed his experiences watching the community interact with the County Police horses at past African American Heritage Day parades. Mr. Hickton noted that Xpressbet is currently working with former Steeler Mel Blount to create a STEM educational program for inner city youth based on equine health and medicine and involving the horses.

In response to a question from Ms. Means, Superintendent McDonough discussed the training necessary for a typical mounted officer, noting that there is a formal training and mentoring program for officers who are interested in participating in the Mounted Unit. Superintendent McDonough indicated that the County Police will also evaluate the horses' suitability for service and, if it becomes necessary, will return any animal that is not suitable. Superintendent McDonough noted that these three horses had received at least some training already through Bright Futures Farm's TARP program. Mr. McKain indicated a willingness to provide data regarding the cost of caring for a Mounted Unit horse for a year.

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

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:29.