

Allegheny County Council

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Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 1, 2020

4:00 PM

Conference Room 1

Committee on Economic Development & Housing

*Sam DeMarco, Chair; Tom Baker, Liv Bennett, Tom Duerr, Nick Futules, Bob Macey
and Anita Prizio, Members*

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:01.

Invited Guests:

William D. McKain, CPA, Allegheny County Manager or designee(s)
Lance Chimka, Director, Allegheny County Department of Economic Development

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

Mr. Chimka was present from the Department of Economic Development.

Ms. Settimaier was present from the Turtle Creek Valley COG.

Ms. Lewis was present from the Steel Rivers COG.

Ms. Morin was present from Connect.

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

II. Roll Call

Members Present: 0

Members Absent: 2 - Olivia Bennett and Nick Futules

Members Phone: 5 - Tom Baker, Tom Duerr, Bob Macey, Anita Prizio and Sam DeMarco

Members 1 - Bethany Hallam

Non-Members:

III. Approval of Minutes

IV. Agenda Items

Ordinances

[11396-20](#)

An ordinance authorizing the County of Allegheny levying an Allegheny County Demolition Fund fee of fifteen dollars (\$15.00) on each mortgage and deed recorded in Allegheny County, to be used for the purpose of funding demolition of blighted properties situate in the County in accordance with the provisions of 42 P.S. §21052.2.

Sponsors: Council Member Macey and Council Member Catena

At the request of the Chair, the clerk read the title of the bill and Mr. McKain summarized its provisions, noting that filming would be on hold until the Health Department issue guidance allowing for that to take place in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. Mr. McKain indicated that the filming would be around the Office of the Medical Examiner, and would be for a television series, which may result in future filming should the series be successful. Mr. McKain indicated that the filming would result in approximately \$56 million in total revenues for the region, and noted that local residents would also be

employed as extras and for production purposes.

In response to a question from the Chair, Mr. McKain indicated that the production company would be required to obtain adequate insurance and reimburse the County in full for out of pocket expenditures.

In response to a question from Mr. Baker, Mr. McKain noted that the ordinance does not contain a sunset clause, so filming delays due to the COVID-19 outbreak is not problematic from that standpoint.

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

[11453-20](#)

An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, authorizing Fidelis Productions LLC to use certain County-owned real and personal property in connection with filming a television series.

Sponsors: Chief Executive

At the request of the Chair, the clerk read the title of the bill and Mr. Macey discussed his intent in introducing the bill, noting that the bill found its genesis in Act 152, and that the new fee would provide assistance to communities of modest means that are struggling with blight issues, and he therefore regards it as significant as one tool that is available. Mr. Catena noted that he recognized that funding for demolition was insufficient for the community's needs during his time as a local government official, and that has always caused him concerns regarding public safety. Mr. Catena indicated that the new fee would not instantly fix all issues, but that it would be a useful source of additional funding.

In response to questions from Ms. Hallam, Mr. Chimka noted that the language of Act 152 caps the fee at \$15 per transaction, and Mr. McKain offered to research the matter of whether the fee could be reduced for low income home buyers, first time home buyers, and the like. Mr. Chimka noted that doing something like that may be difficult to administer.

In response to questions from Ms. Prizio, Mr. Chimka noted that deconstruction might be something of a moot issue, because the first effort would be to save the property if it is of architectural significance, but that efforts would be made to salvage what can be salvaged if the property as a whole cannot be saved.

Ms. Morin noted that her organization is fully in support of the fee, insofar as it would be of great assistance in meeting municipal demolition needs and bolstering economic development and public safety.

Ms. Lewis expressed appreciation for and support of the ordinance, discussed some of the deleterious impacts of blight on surrounding home value and public safety, and noted that there is never enough funding for municipal demolition needs.

Ms. Settlemaier further discussed the deleterious impact of blight on housing values and re-emphasized the importance of having a dedicated revenue source for demolition.

The Chair discussed the importance of maintaining property values Countywide.

In response to questions from the Chair and Mr. Macey, Mr. McKain noted that the

demolition revenue would be placed into a dedicated special fund, and Mr. Chimka noted that the revenue can only be used for demolition, per the terms of Act 152, and the PA DCED reviews the funding use plan.

In response to a question from Mr. Duerr, Mr. Chimka noted that demolition could be relevant in soft housing markets, but also in areas that are prone to having vacant structures that have been significantly damaged by floods or landslides, as well as in other redevelopment scenarios depending on community needs. Mr. Chimka also discussed the mechanics of how funding would be allocated, noting that he would treat the funding as an extension of the Safe Neighborhoods program, in which annual applications for funding are evaluated according to need, safety risks, potential economies of scale, and redevelopment potential.

Mr. Macey and Mr. Chimka discussed deconstruction, with Mr. Chimka noting that the companies that physically do the demolition work generally build potential deconstruction and salvage into their bids.

In response to a question from Mr. Futules, Mr. Chimka noted that the County has projected an average of \$2.1 million annually, based on historic deed filings. Mr. Chimka and the Clerk discussed Act 152's sunset language, and Mr. Chimka provided additional detail regarding the amount of the fee, noting that other counties that have opted to participate have levied a \$15 fee, as well.

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

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45.