

Allegheny County Council

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Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 14, 2020

4:00 PM

Conference Room 1

Executive Committee

*John Palmiere, Chair;
Committee of the Whole*

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:01.

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

II. Roll Call

Members Present: 3 - Tom Duerr, Bob Macey and Anita Prizio

Members Absent: 2 - Bethany Hallam and Robert Palmosina

Members Phone: 10 - Tom Baker, Olivia Bennett, Patrick Catena, Sam DeMarco, Nick Futules, Cindy Kirk, Paul Klein, DeWitt Walton, Paul Zavarella and John Palmiere

III. Approval of Minutes

[11638-20](#)

Motion to approve the minutes of the October 7, 2020 meeting of the Executive Committee.

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

IV. Agenda Items

Discussion Topic

The Chair indicated that the concept for today's meeting is to discuss proposed changes to the Rules of Council, with an eye toward formal approval of the new rules at the next regular meeting. The Chair noted that most of the proposed changes are formal in nature, but that two - recording committee meetings and proclamation procedures - are more substantive.

The Chair noted that he would like to eliminate the proposed change to the Council of Friends appointees from the proposed changes for the time being, and discuss them separately at a later date.

The Chair started discussion of the proposed audio recording rule.

Mr. Macey asked what necessitated the change, given that the current minute process has been used without issue for several years, and whether that justifies the administrative overhead of maintaining the recordings.

Mr. Catena indicated that he would like to listen to the entirety of the proceedings at meetings that he was unable to attend, and that members of the public should be able to do the same.

In response to questions from Mr. Zavarella, Mr. Varhola indicated that the recordings would be audio only, and would not be transcribed.

Mr. Walton indicated that he would strongly oppose the notion of recording committee meetings, and that the appropriate course in his view would be to have staff increase the detail with which minutes are taken, and cautioned the members regarding potential downsides of recording the meetings.

Mr. Futules noted that committee meetings had been recorded in the past, but that the practice had been ended, and expressed agreement with Mr. Walton's premise that additional detail may be worth exploring, but that he would not support recordings.

Ms. Bennett indicated that she agrees with recording the committee meetings, and suggested that recorded meetings may be more accessible for the public.

Mr. Klein indicated that he would support recording, but with transcription.

Mr. Futules, Mr. Catena and Mr. Varhola discussed how recordings could be made available.

Mr. Macey expressed concerns about whether the recordings would have any standing as official records of the proceedings.

Mr. Catena reiterated his concerns about public transparency.

Mr. DeMarco and Mr. Varhola discussed whether there would be many public requests for recordings, if they existed.

Mr. DeMarco indicated that he is of two minds, and sees both sides of the issue.

Mr. Futules cautioned the members that audio recordings can be edited and publicly used during elections or by special interest groups, and that he has concerns about that happening if the recordings exist.

Mr. DeMarco and Mr. Varhola discussed potential workload relating to reviewing recordings.

Mr. DeMarco noted that this could become burdensome, depending on the breadth of the request.

In response to a question from Ms. Kirk, Mr. Varhola noted that the recordings would have to be kept permanently, once made, in keeping with the PA Right to Know Law.

The Committee voted to retain the proposed recording requirement.

The Chair moved the discussion to the proposed proclamation procedures, noting that the Council's approach has been fairly informal over the years, and indicating that he would like to see a more formalized approach that lends a sense of gravity to the presentations.

Ms. Kirk indicated that she has multiple issues with the proposed rule, noting that she doesn't necessarily believe that the characteristics and subject matter of the proclamations should be anything other than at the discretion of the presenting Council member.

The Chair indicated that he intends the proposed rules as guidelines, and that doing the less formal option or the more formal option would be up to the members.

Mr. Futules indicated that he agrees with the notion of giving the presenting member options.

Mr. Catena expressed appreciation for the Chair's attempt to tighten up the proclamation

procedures.

Mr. Macey noted that the proposed rule would give the presenting member the choice of presenting the leather bound formal proclamation or the cardboard bound informal proclamation is up to the presenting member, but suggested that there may be wisdom in having proclamations of either type given out selectively for significant events.

The Chair expressed agreement with Mr. Macey, noting that significant events are the ones that he would personally tend to recognize.

Mr. DeMarco suggested that he is in favor of options, but not mandatory limitations, because it would have the potential to differentially impact the at-large members.

Ms. Prizio noted that the proposed rule as drafted is phrased as mandatory; to be presented at a meeting, a proclamation would have to be in a leather binder.

Mr. Futules, the Chair, and Mr. Varhola discussed the mechanics of acquiring the leather binders.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50.