

MINUTES

Erie County Council

View More At
www.eriecountypa.gov



Carl Anderson, III, Chairman
Kim Clear, Vice Chairman
André R. Horton
Scott Rastetter
Mary Rennie
Ellen Schauerman
Brian Shank

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 5, 2021

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

OPTIONAL PRAYER OR INVOCATION

Councilwoman Schauerman offered the words of Benjamin Franklin: "Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let every New Year find you a better person."

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mr. Anderson, III; Mrs. Clear; Mr. Horton; Mr. Rastetter; Mrs. Rennie; Mrs. Schauerman; Mr. Shank

Also Present: Douglas R. Smith, James Sparber, Tracey Fugagli, Thomas Talarico; Nicole Inan; Amy Swartzfager

HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

None to be heard.

NEW BUSINESS

County Clerk Smith explained the process of the reorganization.

Possible Motion to Select 2021 Chairman of Erie County Council

Mr. Smith called for a motion in putting forth nominee for Chairman. Mr. Shank motioned to name Carl Anderson, III Chairman of County Council; seconded by Kim Clear. No other nominations were put forth. Passed 7 to 0.

Mr. Smith passed the gavel to Mr. Anderson. Chairman Anderson offered thanks to his colleagues for their confidence in electing him.

Possible Motion to Select 2021 Vice Chairman of

Chairman Anderson opened the floor for nominations of Vice-Chair. Mrs. Rennie motioned to select Mrs. Kim Clear as Vice-Chair of Erie County

Erie County Council

Council; seconded by Mr. Horton. No additional nominees were put forth. Passed 7 to 0.

**Presentation to 2020
Chairman Horton**

Chairman Anderson and Mr. Smith presented former Council Chairman Horton with a gift in recognition of his service and leadership that he has shown to Council, staff, and to this County Government. Mr. Anderson recognized the great strides and progress that Mr. Horton has made for the community, thanking him for his service. Mr. Anderson read aloud the engraving on the gift presented: "To Andre R. Horton, who displayed robust leadership and a fighting spirit while breaking down barriers to education and opportunities as Chairman of Erie County Council during 2020. We as your colleagues respectfully present this."

Mr. Horton offered appreciation for the recognition, and offered that nothing would have been completed without all of Council working together unified. He is looking forward to a successful 2021.

**REPORTS OF COUNTY
OFFICIALS****Message from new
Chairman of Erie County
Council**

Chairman Anderson again thanked his colleagues for electing him as Chair. As previously expressed by Mr. Horton, Chairman Anderson reiterated that the Council is a body of talented individuals committed to the community. He went on to recognize former colleagues Fiore Leone, Kyle Foust, Kathy Fatica, and Carol Loll, naming them as the most committed public servants he has known. He recognized the new members who were elected in 2020, and stepped up under tedious circumstances. He noted how cohesively Council banded together in unity through the pandemic, and however different their views may be, the love for the community and independent districts shines through. His goal is to be a leader and listener. Mr. Anderson voiced that he drives by the 500 block of East 6th Street daily, to stay grounded in knowing where he came from. He stated his mother and grandmother taught him how to work, and his father taught him how to believe in himself and others. The advice that was given to him by his father was to stand up for something, not against something and that's how to make the community a better place. Mr. Anderson voiced that over the years he has had the opportunity to be mentored by such people as Millard Luther, Ann Greenwald, Sally Kohler, Dr. Garvey, Rusty Cunningham, Barbara Heifer, Tom & Michelle Ridge, Tom Hagan, Ron DiNicola, Phil English, and many others who have help him participate in this community, to be involved, ad help grow and learn about the different aspect of this community to be able to serve it better. In addition to their support, he thanked his family: His wife Evelynnn and their two children, Autumn and Carl Jr., their niece Julie. He stated that his family is at the center of everything that is important to him.

Mr. Anderson continued, that especially coming out of this pandemic, it is important to continue to be aggressive and bold, but fiscally responsible and accountable. He announced that he has asked Vice-Chairwoman Clear to Chair the Finance Committee, with Scott Rastetter as Vice-Chair. Additionally, Mary Rennie will Chair the Personnel Committee, with Brian Shank as Vice-Chair.

Mr. Anderson outlined some important items of business:

1. Compensation Committee: This body set's the salaries for the elected officials on the ballot for those individuals who will be elected to take office in 2022.

This committee will be comprised similarly of what will be believed as the leadership of the Election Board. Mrs. Rennie will serve as Chair, with members Mrs. Clear, Mrs. Schauerman, with advice and consent of Mr. Shank. This year the even-members of County Council, the County Executive, the Sheriff, and the District Attorney will all be elected. The work will need to be done quickly, brought to Council, and passed before petitions are taken out. Petitions, by law, may begin February 16, 2020.

2. Chamber has asked for support of Council for the initiative that it is undertaking in recreating their mission, positioning themselves to be an economic leader in this community. It was previously presented to Council, but was asked that they come back with a clear plan so that this Council can support the endeavors with them as a community partner, and to do that in a manner that isn't only recognized as spending tax-payer dollars but in making an investment with a community partner in effort to move this community forward.

3. The Redevelopment Authority, similarly, brought forward a proposal for a loan program particularly steered for minorities. Council has asked that Tina Mengine bring forward the final plans and strategy that she would like to utilize this plan and her intentions on using the seed money in leveraging funds in order to grow this loan program to make a positive impact in the community.

4. VisitErie will be coming back to Council, as they chose not to prudently spend money during the COVID period from the CARES Fund, but to return some of those funds so that they could be reallocated immediately. VisitErie still needs to put advertising together once the pandemic period has passed, to ensure we are attracting people to the Erie Area.

5. Undertake discussions for the Diversity Coordinator position and f that position will come forward with a plan of action that will show impact for the community.

6. County Council reorganization of staff. Of all departments of County Government, particularly over the time Mr. Anderson has been present, many

have grown substantially. In over twenty-years, the County Council office has not expanded, but the work load has. Of particular note is the undertaking the manual work of the new laws of the Election Code, it has put significant strain on staff. Mr. Anderson complimented and thanked Mr. Smith, Ms. Inan, Mrs. Pennsy, and Mrs. Fernandez for their work. He stated that there is a plan to realign the office, creating one position that would entail being a Deputy Clerk and a Deputy Supervisor of Voter Registration, then opening up a position of Executive Secretary as there is a tentative individual for the new position.

7. Addressing plans for Pleasant Ridge East. Given information provided through a survey between 2019 and ending 2020, and in working with the Administration, decisions are now needing to be made.

8. In working through the pandemic, and eradicating the COVID-19 strain on the community, Mr. Anderson would like to propose a Vaccine Community Awareness Committee. This is not to interfere with the work that the Administration or the Department of Public Health are doing, rather to enhance. Many Members of Council have been inundated with calls of when and how the vaccines will be distributed as well as concerns on not getting the vaccine. Mrs. Schauermaier will be the liaison to the Health Department and has agreed to take on a leadership role with this Committee. Other members have not yet been named.

9. COVID Impact & Economic Revitalization Committee: Co-Chaired by Mr. Anderson and Mrs. Clear, with Mr. Shank and Mrs. Rennie as members. The focus will be on how the COVID pandemic has negatively affected the Erie economy and strategies to move the community forward. The Committee will work jointly with community partners such as: ECGRA - will act as an administrator and design consultant. Perry Wood and staff will be working with Council. At the beginning of the pandemic, Perry Wood and his staff came forward with a bold and aggressive plan to make sure that people did not go hungry or homeless, and were able to step forward when things were falling through the cracks. Jefferson Educational Society - working as a community engagement partner. The Chamber - in working with James Grunke and Amy Murdock, they are working to understand the depths of the effects on employment and it's reinvigoration of Erie. There are several other community partners who are willing to step forward to give testimony as we have public hearings; providing expert witnesses in getting to the root of how this COVID crisis has effected the economy. There are intentions to have public hearings in each of the seven County Council Districts over the next 6 to 9 months to gather and disseminate information for use; looking at such areas as: volunteer firefighters, farmers, convention center, Corry, minority and new Americans, small business, manufacturing, restaurants, bars, and other community endeavors.

10. Historic Preservation - creating a Historic Authority and potential recreation of Fort Presque Isle. Mr. Anderson has uncovered the potential resource that is being utilized in other parts of the state, particularly in Allegheny County's Regional Asset District. In addition, there is an initiative being undertaken on the eastern part of the state. There will be a need to have other community leaders involved, including our state legislative delegation, and certainly our state senator could play a big role in helping Erie County secure these funds.

11. Reinvigorate Erie - city and county; Currently allow people who serve the government - the city, the school districts, the firefighters, the police to not need to reside in those particular municipalities; Mr. Anderson feels this is a detriment to the communities that they serve. Cannot go back and require those individuals to work or live in those parameters, however can offer incentives as we look to diversify in those particular departments by offering homes that are sitting in the Redevelopment Authority inventory, the Land Bank inventory, perhaps offer incentives on property taxes, and/or to rehab homes and have the presence of those who are serving our community, back in neighborhoods.

Anderson further emphasized: If we are standing still, we are really falling behind. This is a time where we need to be bold and aggressive. Need to be patient and persistent. Together a new Erie County can be built. He believes in the resilience of the people in Erie County. He believes in this Council. He believes in the commitment that this Administration and the people who work for Erie County have to this community. He believes all things possible when united, we work together to serve common goals.

Comments from other Members

Mrs. Clear thanked former Chairman Horton for his leadership and guidance. She went on to compliment Mr. Anderson's goals that have been set out and his visions, expressing enthusiasm to be a part of compass of the County in being part of recovery and response in walking toward the future.

Mrs. Schauerman congratulated the new chairpersons, and commented how quickly the 2020 year passed. She looks forward to working again with this Council and sees potential and opportunity.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Anderson adjourned the meeting at 4:39pm.

The first Finance & Personnel Meetings of 2021 will occur January 14 at 4pm via zoom conference.

The first Regular Meeting of 2021 is January 19, 2021 at 4pm (via zoom). The closure of the Erie County Courthouse to the general public will continue until at least January 31. Call the Council office 451-6303 or go to www.eriecountypa.gov for specific meeting information.