

MINUTES

Erie County Council

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Brian Shank, Chairman
Mary Rennie, Vice Chairwoman
Charlie Bayle
André R. Horton
Ellen Schauerma
Terry M. Scutella
Jim Winarski

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, October 18, 2022

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Shank led the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

OPTIONAL PRAYER OR INVOCATION

Mrs. Schauerma gave the invocation.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Chairman Brian Shank, Vice-Chairwoman Mary Rennie, Charlie Bayle, Andre Horton, Ellen Schauerma, Terry M. Scutella, and Jim Winarski

Others Present: Julie Slomski, Megan Moore, Amy Swartzfager, and Paul Lichtenwalter

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Presentation by Mel Witherspoon to Mark Rosenthal

Mr. Mel Witherspoon, Councilman of the City of Erie, presented Detective Mark Rosenthal with an award for his dedication to the Spoon Summer Basketball League. He stated that Mark was well-liked by the young people because he interacted with them. Detective Rosenthal stated that Mr. Witherspoon's program was a great program that helped him and other law enforcement personnel interact with the kids and their families, to build a positive relationship.

HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

Sam Talarico

Sam Talarico, Erie: Mr. Talarico stated that after listening to the Council meetings for the last 8-9 months, he felt compelled to come and speak about Project Resolve. He noted that Councilwoman Rennie had already mentioned that it set a bad precedent, and there were legal issues brought up by the County Council Solicitor, and a previous Council member. He stated it wasn't worth the risk of litigation and funds to support it. He stated this had been a colossal blunder by the Administration. He maintained that it brought controversy, although no one was opposed to the project. He stated the County Executive

campaigned on economic development, but not at the exclusion of everyone else. The budget of the County showed its cause was human services. He stated that the participants of Project Resolve, PSU and Wabtec, have unlimited funds, but do not have the obligation, as the County does, to serve people in need. He implored the Council to honor their commitment to the people of Erie County, and repair the divide created by the Administration.

Brian Pitzer

Mr. Pitzer did not attend.

Carl Anderson

Carl Anderson, Erie: Mr. Anderson stated he had concerns, but was still optimistic. He stated the Council was the protector of the citizens of Erie County and its services. He stated that the buck stops with the County Council, and it was their responsibility, but to others just politics. He contends that all county services lead to economic development and community prosperity. He stated that he and the previous Council constructed a fair and equitable plan, where no one got everything, but everyone got something. He stated that the plan was accepted 7-0 by that Council, which included four of the current Council members, who are equally Republican and Democrat, and county and city representatives. He claimed that those members are now being asked to change their vote for an incomplete plan, to achieve political ends rather than meet community needs. He stated that the County Executive and his Administration had killed the momentum that was put forward with the ARPA plan for political gain, like the broadband project in Summit Township. He asked the Council to stay the course.

Michael Fuhrman

Mr. Fuhrman did not attend.

Bishop Dwane Brock

Bishop Dwane Brock, Erie: Bishop Brock listed the different boards and committees he serves, and stated when money is allocated he does not vote. He stated that he was disturbed by the recent attacks on the integrity and character of 3 members of the community, Matt Harris, Gerald Blanks, and Melvin Witherspoon. He proclaimed the attacks to be despicable, unfair, and unsubstantiated. He declared it to be beneath the dignity of the office for such to dig, define, and fabricate dirt just to validate what they viewed as a racist claim. He stated he could not stand by while their character was assassinated and impugned. He disclosed that the County Executive told him when they met that "perception is reality". He maintained that perception can also be delusional based on a person's prejudice and bias. He announced the perception of his community was that the elimination of the DEIC was always the goal of the County Executive, that he had been looking for a reason to de-fund the DEIC, and blatant racism was the core. He asserted that poverty may have no color, but

disproportionately affects people of color. He called upon different groups of the community to stand against this racist, barbaric regime, or threatened that they would take their protest to the next level.

Gerald Blanks, Chairman of DEIC: Mr. Blanks stated the Commission had begun only one year before, but in that time, small mini-grants and business grants were being distributed to the community from ARPA money. He maintained that an extraordinary group of professionals were on the Commission's Board doing great things; they are not compensated, but want to fight for those who cannot fight themselves. He declared they have been called into question, without the opportunity to develop. He quoted, " All that needs to occur for evil to prevail, is for good people to do nothing."

Benjamin Primis, Erie: Mr. Primis stated he was the CEO of Ben's Barrels, and his product was being sold at major retailers in Erie, and had the interest of world figures and the vice-president of Giant Eagle. He stated, as a black entrepreneur, he had no support. He didn't qualify for ECRDA or Flagship. He stated he was applying for grants from the DEIC, and hoped they would fully fund him. He maintained that black economic development in Erie, PA was pathetic, that there was no support. He argued that the black community was self-sabotaging their own success and stunting their own growth by murdering each other, and assassinating each other's characters. He stated they were their own worst enemy, but at the same time he needed them, as he could not do this alone. He proclaimed that he was judged by his past, and had received no help or support from the black leaders in his community. He expressed his desire to give back to his community, and show this side of himself. He stated he needed DEIC and the elected officials to do their jobs and fulfill the promises they had made to the community.

Art Leopold, Millcreek: Mr. Leopold stated that the priorities of the Council are where they put money in the budget. He questioned what would happen if someone told the Council their budget was cut by 30%, and then cut another 35%. He stated that money could not be taken away from initiatives that had the potential to set up infrastructure and get the community going. He referenced GECAC programs, and how a cut to their funding would cut the matching funds they received. He stated big projects could be financed another way, and asked the Council to please not take away their funding.

Freda Tepfer, Erie: Ms. Tepfer urged people to participate in the Mitch Problem Planning Organization's comment sessions online through December 2, 2022 and a meeting at the library on December 16, 2022. The program has to do with transportation project approval and funding. She stated people should go to the county website or Facebook page and comment. She noted that the ad-hoc committee was supposed to present to the Council, but did no new work, and presented the same bare-bones information. She stated their framework gave carte blanche to the County Executive to do what he wanted. She declared that serious consideration needed to be given to the disbursement of the ARPA monies, and shared with the full Council and the public. She claimed that there

was an example of disparate treatment by a member of the Council at the meeting. She stated she was threatened twice if she said anything else about her cell phone being locked up, and the co-chair was spoken to very disrespectfully. She reminded everyone to date their ballots.

Jerry Servidio, Millcreek: Mr. Servidio stated that the County Council C.P.A advised the Council to have a detailed report about the ARPA funds. He said it made no sense to pay someone, and ignore the advice. He questioned what they are paid, and could the county afford to keep doing that. He noted that Mr. Scutella visited PSU-Behrend, and then spoke about jobs. He questioned if anyone asked what type of jobs would be created, and would they stay in Erie. He expressed his displeasure at the thought of the Council giving money to an institution that would host a member of the Proud Boys. He questioned why Councilwoman Schauerma gave an invocation every week, and asked if they were evil. He asked if anyone was listening to the prayer because he didn't see it.

Jennie Hagerty, Fairview: Ms. Hagerty stated she has spoken multiple times about the Mercy Center for Women, but she wanted to speak about the leadership of the community, and the importance of being forthright and honest. She questioned why there was a push to allocate \$5M dollars to Penn State Behrend at this time, when there are homeless people throughout the city and county. She questioned why the \$5M had to be voted on today when there are human services needed for the homeless, domestic violence, and addiction, in every demographic of the county.

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

September 20, 2022 - Regular Meeting

A motion was made by Mr. Horton, seconded by Mrs. Schauerma, and approved 7-0.

REPORTS OF COUNTY OFFICIALS

County Executive and/or his Designee

There was no report given by the County Executive or his Designee.

Finance Committee - Mrs. Schauerma

Finance Chair Schauerma stated the Finance Committee met on Thursday October 13th and submitted to the agenda:
Old Business: Items B & C
New Business: Items A-C, E-G

Personnel Committee - Mr. Scutella

Personnel Chair Scutella stated the Personnel Committee met on Thursday October 13th and submitted to the agenda:
Old Business: Item A

New Business : Item D

Other

Board of Elections Chair Rennie reported that mail-in-ballots have started to be delivered. She reminded everyone to follow the instructions when completing the mail-in-ballots, to use the privacy envelope, and then sign and date the exterior envelope.

Mrs. Rennie then spoke about a budget item. She stated she wanted to call attention to the situation of the Erie County's Retiree group, and their increased costs. She stated previous workers only made a pittance, and they counted on the good benefits. She stated two positions requested by the County Executive would cover the cost, and it was not fair to put a deficit on the backs of these people.

OLD BUSINESS

Second Reading of Ordinance Number 133, 2022, "Reclassification of the Director of Business & Economic Development Position from NB20-K to NB20-M Grade Level" (First Read 9/20/22) (Tabled 10/4/22)(Personnel Committee)

Ordinance 133, 2022 remained tabled.

Second Reading of Ordinance Number 138, 2022, "Fifty-Third 2022 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$196,300 and Creation of New Line for Replacement of Prison Fire Alarm System" (1st Read 10/4/22)(Finance Committee)

Ms. Slomski gave a second reading of Ordinance Number 138, 2022, "Fifty-Third 2022 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$196,300 and Creation of New Line for Replacement of Prison Fire Alarm System." A motion was made by Mr. Horton, seconded by Mr. Scutella, and carried 7-0.

Second Reading of Ordinance Number 139, 2022, "Fifty-Fourth 2022 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$19,588 and Creation of New Line for AOPC Grant in Courts Bureau for Courthouse Security" (1st Read

Ms. Slomski gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 139, 2022, "Fifty-Fourth 2022 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$19,588 and Creation of New Line for AOPC Grant in Courts Bureau for Courthouse Security." A motion was made by Mrs. Schauerma, seconded by Mr. Horton, and carried 7-0.

10/4/22)(Finance
Committee)

NEW BUSINESS

First Reading of Ordinance Number 141, 2022, "Fifty-Fifth 2022 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$20,197 and Creation of New Bureau and Lines for Crime Victims Center PCCD Grant in the District Attorney's Office" (Finance Committee) A motion was made by Mrs. Rennie to amend the agenda and move items A-C to a second reading, seconded by Mr. Horton, and carried 7-0.

Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$20,197 and Creation of New Bureau and Lines for Crime Victims Center PCCD Grant in the District Attorney's Office" (Finance Committee) Ms. Slomski gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 141, 2022, "Fifty-Fifth 2022 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$20,197 and Creation of New Bureau and Lines for Crime Victims Center PCCD Grant in the District Attorney's Office." A motion was made by Mrs. Schauerma, seconded by Mr. Scutella, and carried 7-0.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 142, 2022, "Eleventh 2022 Public Health Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$175,526 for Additional PA Department of Health Grant Funds in the Tobacco Use Prevention Bureau" (Finance Committee) Ms. Slomski gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 142, 2022, "Eleventh 2022 Public Health Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$175,526 for Additional PA Department of Health Grant Funds in the Tobacco Use Prevention Bureau." A motion was made by Mr. Winarski, seconded by Mr. Bayle, and carried 7-0.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 143, 2022, "Twelfth 2022 Public Health Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$15,000 for Additional PA Department of Health Grant Funds in the Safe & Healthy Communities Bureau" (Finance Committee) Ms. Slomski gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 143, 2022, "Twelfth 2022 Public Health Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$15,000 for Additional PA Department of Health Grant Funds in the Safe & Healthy Communities Bureau." A motion was made by Mrs. Schauerma, seconded by Mr. Winarski, and carried 7-0.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 144, 2022, "Agreement to Render Legal Services of a Deputy Solicitor for Erie County Ms. Slomski gave a First Reading of Ordinance Number 144, 2022, "Agreement to Render Legal Services of a Deputy Solicitor for Erie County Council and Associated Bureaus."

Council and Associated Bureaus"(Personnel Committee)

Resolution Number 41, 2022, "Approving the FY 2022 Community Development Block Grant Application and Authorizing its submission to the Pennsylvania Department Of Community and Economic Development"(Finance Committee)

Ms. Slomski read Resolution Number 41, 2022, "Approving the FY 2022 Community Development Block Grant Application and Authorizing its submission to the Pennsylvania Department Of Community and Economic Development." A motion was made by Mrs. Schauerman, seconded by Mr. Horton, and carried 7-0.

Resolution Number 42, 2022, "Designating County Section 504/ADA Coordinator"(Finance Committee)

Ms. Slomski read Resolution Number 42, 2022, "Designating County Section 504/ADA Coordinator." A motion was made by Mr. Horton, seconded by Mr. Winarski, and carried 7-0.

Resolution Number 43, 2022 "Approving Joe Maloney as Temporary Financial Consultant"

Ms. Slomski read Resolution Number 43, 2022 "Approving Joe Maloney as Temporary Financial Consultant." A motion was made by Mr. Horton, seconded by Mrs. Rennie, and carried 7-0.
Chairman Shank stated the budget is a difficult time of year, and Mr. Maloney's past experience is very helpful to the Council.

ADJOURNMENT

The next Finance/Personnel Committee Meetings are Thursday, October 27, 2022 at 4pm in room 114A, Erie County Courthouse or via Zoom. The next Regular Meeting of County Council is Tuesday, November 1, 2022 at 6pm in room 117, Erie County Courthouse or streamed live at the link provided on the County Website. Members of the public wishing to speak at an upcoming Regular Meeting of Council or those requiring specific accommodation are encouraged to call or email the Council Office at (814) 451-6303 or Councilrequests@eriecountypa.gov,

Mr. Horton announced that there were Public Budget Hearings at 4pm on November 1st, and at 3pm on November 17th. He stated not one person had attended while he was on the Council, but they heard about it after the budget was passed. He invited everyone to join democracy.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Horton. The meeting adjourned at 6:53pm.

no later than the end of business 5 days prior to the meeting. The public must be present at the meeting to speak.