

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

REORGANIZATION MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 3, 2023

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by County Clerk, Julie Slomski.

OPTIONAL PRAYER OR INVOCATION

The optional prayer or reflection was led by Mrs. Schauerma.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Charlie Bayle (via phone), Andre Horton, Mary Rennie, Ellen Schauerma, Terry M. Scutella, Brian Shank, and Jim Winarski (via phone)

Others Present: Julie Slomski, Jill Pennsy, and Solicitor Tom Talarico

HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

No members of the public addressed the Council.

NEW BUSINESS

Nomination of Council Officers; Chair and Vice Chair

Ms. Slomski asked for the nomination of officers.

Mr. Scutella nominated Mrs. Rennie for Chair of County Council. The motion was seconded by Mr. Horton, and failed 3-4. (Y: Horton, Rennie, Scutella N: Bayle, Schauerma, Shank, Winarski)

Mr. Bayle nominated Mr. Shank for Chair of County Council. The motion was seconded by Mr. Winarski, and passed 4-3. (Y: Bayle, Schauerma, Shank, Winarski N: Horton, Rennie, Scutella)

Mr. Horton stated it appeared that the new year looked to begin as it had ended, but it should be acknowledged and not operate like business as usual. He noted that, as the longest serving member of the Council, he watched the traditions and rules of order be stripped away one by one by last year's administration, and his colleagues had marching orders. He stated that it appeared it would be another partisan year, and that was disheartening. He maintained that the members of the districts should hold their representatives accountable, and watch the votes of the Council members, as a startling picture would emerge. He welcomed the public to examine his voting record. He argued that voters and parties expect their nominees to adhere to the basic principles on which they were elected.

Mr. Shank asked for nominations for the Vice-Chair.

Mr. Winarski nominated Mrs. Rennie for Chair of County Council. The motion was seconded by Mr. Shank, and passed 7-0.

Mr. Horton stated congratulations to Mr. Shank for his nomination, and noted that it may be historical for a member to have two consecutive years as Chair. He expressed the need to learn from the past. He referred to the last two years, and stated that the year before last there was a drastic change, and it seemed like a race to the bottom, and he hadn't thought it could get worse. He noted that last year, especially towards the end, he was proved wrong. He stated that he did not see things being different going forward. Although he'd like to be optimistic, every indication was that it would remain the same. He stated that the Council's current trajectory put the authority of the Council at stake. He declared that it should be a concern of the County Council, Republican or Democrat, about the erosion of legislative authority and power that has taken place. He argued that the Council had been complicit many times last year in handing over its authority, and that was a shame for the citizens of Erie County. He said there should be discussion about every item on the agenda.

Mr. Shank thanked the members that supported him. He stated his thanks to the office staff for their help in making the Council members look good.

Mrs. Rennie stated it was a new year, but the priorities remained the same. She stated the Council voted on many things, and some may look partisan, but others should never be partisan. She noted that good government and operating by the rules should never be partisan. She noted this was a year that they would be supporting authoritative, legal, good government, and following the rules. She pledged, and thought all Council members would do the same, to rise to the occasion.

Comments by the Chair and Members

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Mr. Shank stated the Comments by the Chair and Members section that was on the agenda, he would have to talk about later because the Chairs of Personnel and Finance were the most important. He instructed the Council members to let him know if they wanted any changes to the liaison list. He presented a hand out to the Council members with a section of the Robert's Rules, and stated that they would be implementing it during the meetings out of decency of guests and visitors of the meeting.

Mr. Horton called for a point of order, if they were going to follow "Robert's Rules". He stated that it looked like it was something attempting to be benchmarked. He stated it looked like it had been extracted from Robert's rules and made their own, and should be discussed with the Solicitor and amongst the members of Council. He stated that it could not be asked of the members to abide by it at the reorganization meeting without discussion.

Mr. Shank stated in fairness they would review it at a later date.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1:18p.m. on the motion of Mr. Horton.

***The next Finance/Personnel Committee Meetings are Thursday, January 19, 2023 at 4pm in room 114A, Erie County Courthouse or via Zoom.**

***The next Regular Meeting of County Council is Tuesday, January 24, 2023 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, no later than the end of business 5 days prior to the meeting. The public must be present at the meeting to speak.**