

October 20, 2015

ERIE COUNTY COUNCIL – Regular Meeting

Fiore Leone, Chairman, called to order a Regular Meeting of the Erie County Council at 7:00 p.m. at the County Council Chambers in the Erie County Courthouse, 140 West 6th Street, Room 117, Erie, PA.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Mrs. Loll read the following prayer:

“Let us pray. As we go about doing the responsibilities of our job, we ask that the family we have here at County government continue to work as a team. Give us the guidance to remember the people we represent and the needs of them, that we supply them with the tools to have a healthy and productive life. And we provide them with a fair and balanced budget, without waste and misuse of resources. We ask this in the name of our Lord. Amen.”.

Mr. Smith then took the roll:

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mr. Breneman
Mr. DiMattio
Mr. Fatica
Dr. Foust
Mr. Horton
Mrs. Loll
Mr. Leone

Members Absent: Douglas Smith, County Clerk

Also Present: Thomas Talarico, Esquire
Joseph Maloney, CPA
Sue Ellen Pasquale, General Accounting Manager
James Sparber, Finance Director

**HEARING OF
THE PUBLIC**

Randy Barnes, Harborcreek Township; Mr. Barnes wanted to speak about public safety and the budget. He commented that most of Council voted for the Next Generation Radio Project which requires a \$1.7 million per year but never really talked about how that was going to be paid for. He felt that Council should ask some hard questions of Mrs. Dahlkemper regarding pay upgrades and shifts in jobs from part time to full time, as well as new positions like the Diversity Officer. He asked if there are hard numbers of the race, sexual orientation, etc. and if there aren't, he wanted to know how the County could improve if they don't know where they are at. He also asked about the need for a grant writer. He then talked about Destination Erie which became Emerge 2040 and that urban sprawl is bad and there is a need to bring people back to the city. He discussed the Erie Water Authority buying the Millcreek Water Authority and how Millcreek is happy because they can expand their water lines. He felt if money keeps going into Emerge 2040, it's going down a hole because he felt there is no leadership in the County. He commented that DevelopErie threw millions of dollars down a hole in the name of economic development. He wanted to know why government can't find ways to do more with less.

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**APPROVAL OF
MINUTES**

Mr. Fatica made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 6, 2015 regular meeting. This was seconded by Dr. Foust and carried in a unanimous roll call vote.

**REPORTS BY
COUNTY OFFICIALS**

None.

**FINANCE
COMMITTEE
REPORT**

Mr. Breneman stated that the Finance Committee met on Thursday, October 15, 2015, and agreed to move Ordinances 99-105, 2015 along with Resolutions 49 and 50, 2015 to the agenda.

**PERSONNEL
COMMITTEE
REPORT**

Mr. Horton stated that there were no items for the Personnel Committee to review and thus no meeting was held.

**OTHER
REPORTS**

Dr. Foust updated Council on his attendance at the luncheon for the potential for Erie to be the secondary host for the International Hockey World Junior championships. We would be the secondary partner to Pittsburgh, which would be the main host city. The luncheon was attended by over 100 local athletic and community officials. Dr. Foust stated it was very impressive with what the Convention Center Authority and Erie Sports Commission had put together in a relatively short time. The four representatives from USA Hockey were extremely impressed with Erie and our facility, and this Council should be commended in part for being willing to go forward to help fund changes and improvements to those venues, because it helps draw people to this area that would not come otherwise, and draw economic activity to this community. He commented that it was a very, very positive visit. They described Erie Insurance Arena as a major league arena in a smaller town. They have already visited Buffalo, and have to go to St. Louis, and have set a date to announce. Dr. Foust feels that Erie's chances are very strong and he would not be surprised if Pittsburgh is selected, and Erie as the secondary host.

Dr. Foust then commented that last Monday, the members of the Transportation Committee that Chairman Leone appointed him, Mr. Horton, and Mr. DiMattio, did meet with the members of the committee that City Council appointed – Mr. Winarski, Mr. Jones, and Mr. Kwitowski, along with our solicitor, Mr. Talarico. Dr. Foust stated that it was an extremely positive meeting. There was not much of an agenda that particular day because had not begun to meet as a group. He commented that everyone had a chance to offer things from their perspective and they outlined four or five different scenarios that could be pursued. One being don't do anything and proceed as things are now to a complete transformation to a whole new authority where the County doesn't partner with the City. There are three or four different alternatives that could be promoted within that. He felt it was an extremely positive meeting. Nothing was ruled in, nothing was ruled out. He thought that everyone had an open mind and they plan to meet as a group after the Public Hearing that this Council will hold regarding a potential new transportation authority, even though that public hearing isn't on the issue at hand necessarily for

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the reasons why they are meeting. There is so much connected to it though that it makes sense to get the public feedback from that public hearing and each committee would be able to go back to their respective Councils and report on the meeting and develop whatever consensus may be there. They hope to meet shortly after the public hearing. He was very pleased and look forward to what the future may bring.

Mr. Fatica felt that there is a misunderstanding with the general public as to why they are doing this and he was wondering how the word could be put out there as to what this is. Mr. Fatica stated that some people think that Council wants to take it over and that is not the case at all. Conversations should be editorialized so that people are aware of what this is really about. Dr. Foust responded that at the meeting there was discussion on that topic, but Council's general aim, (did not think that the Administration is opposed to this) is that the day to day operations of EMTA itself are not at issue and the service itself is regionalized in the sense that it touches many corners of Erie County. The fact is there are two partners right now that do not have equal funding and do not have equal representation on the Board and they are opposite of what their funding would represent. It has been on Dr. Foust's mind that we change to a County Authority not for Council's sake but to relieve the City of Erie of that particular responsibility so they could use those resources to help solve some of the concerns and initiatives they have in the city. This was well received at the meeting, not by everybody, but no punches were pulled either. If they were opposed to that particular point of view, they said so, so people knew where they stood. Dr. Foust stated that this is another reason why he felt the meeting was so positive. He feels that the public hearing will help as far as people being able to hear what the committee is talking about and what other ideas are out there. They have outlined four or five alternatives, but there could be more.

Mr. Horton then added that he is of the mindset that less is more and he would want to editorialize at this point. He stated that both the County and City, at the end of the meeting, agreed that less is more and were on the same page. They really want to get to the public hearing and that would be the editorial in itself. He stated that the most urgent thing about it was there was no opposition and he was encouraged by the spirit of cooperation. He commented that the committee is very mindful of the public.

Mr. Fatica further commented that he these kinds of issues always seem to have rumors that have a life of their own and keep regenerating themselves and before you know it, the County is going to take over everything and raise rates and it gets out of hand. He felt that the Committee is doing a good job in pursuing this the right way.

Mr. Breneman commented that he was pleased to see so many young faces in the audience and for once he's not the youngest person in the room. He stated that he will turn 33 next week, but has always had an interest in what is going on in government. He stated that they have come to what is often referred to as the "invisible government". County government provides more services than any other level of government that directly impacts your life and it's done in a way that doesn't get a lot of spotlight. In many ways that could be a good thing because most of the work that is done at the County is court related, corrections, and things that you don't normally want to interface with on a day to day basis. He stated that County government provides many of the federal and state mandated services directly to the people in Erie County. Municipalities handle things like garbage,

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sewer, water, police, and fire. The County provides almost everything else – protecting the vulnerable, the elderly, those suffering from drug and alcohol addiction, the Health Department that makes sure that restaurants are not feeding you rat or roach infested food, and makes sure that diseases don't spread that are out there. The Public Library is one of about 11% of the counties nationwide that have a county-wide library program. Council is coming upon the budget and Mr. Breneman explained that the Administration provides a proposed budget for over a dozen departments in the County that 1380 employees work in, and is a budget of over \$400 million. Most of this money is pass through money from the federal and state government. The County is mandated to provide these services and if we don't provide them, it would be a detriment to the community. In addressing the audience, he stated that if they had any questions about what the money is spent on, the budget is on the County website and warned that it is 627 pages. There is a long list of budgetary meetings coming up over the next several weeks where Council will meet with department heads and elected officials. County government does not function as one monolithic being, there are many elected officials and many different departments and services for the betterment of the community. Often people will diminish what an elected body does, what a County does, but instead of asking circular questions, Council is expected to do a lot and are expected to cut back a lot, and expected to do more work and change the future, but anytime it's done, Council is questioned about it. He wanted the audience to know that every person on Council and the County departments work their butt off. He stated that Council gets paid \$4.80 per hour and that Council works for every penny earned. This is a very transparent governing body and the public is always welcome to reach out to their Council representative if there are any questions about what was heard tonight or any other questions.

**MOTION TO
AMEND AGENDA**

Mr. Breneman moved to amend the agenda by moving Ordinances 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104 and 105, 2015, to a second reading. This was seconded by Mr. Fatica. Dr. Foust then requested that they vote on Ordinances 102 and 103, 2015, at least to amend the agenda on those separately.

Chairman Leone then stated that the vote for amending the agenda would be on moving Ordinances 99, 100, 101, 104, and 105, 2015 to a second reading. The roll call vote on this amendment was unanimous.

Chairman Leone then stated that the next vote would be on a second reading for Ordinances 102 and 103, 2015.

Dr. Foust stated that he was asking for these to stay at a first reading is it is quite a bit of money and a very important step forward for County government and he felt it should have due process of public hearing and so forth. If it is moved to a second reading tonight he will wholeheartedly vote in favor of it going forward, but if the second reading can be held off until the next meeting it would allow all to have time to review further.

The vote for a second reading on Ordinances 102 and 103, 2015, failed by a vote of 3-4, with Dr. Foust, Mr. Horton, Mrs. Loll, and Chairman Leone voting no.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

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NEW
BUSINESS

**Ord. 99, 2015 –
OCY SA from Inc.
In Placement Exp.**

Mr. Smith gave a second reading of Ordinance Number 99, 2015, “Third 2015 Children and Youth Services Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$1,917,888 from an Increase in Placement Expense”. This was moved by Mr. DiMattio, and seconded by Dr. Foust.

Mr. Breneman stated that this comes down to federal and state mandated services that the County has to provide. There are additional costs to those mandates and this ordinance is an indication of that.

Ordinance Number 99, 2015, then carried in a unanimous roll call vote.

**Ord. 100, 2015 –
GF SA for OCY
Placement Exp. Inc.**

Mr. Smith gave a second reading of Ordinance Number 100, 2015, “Thirty-Fifth 2015 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$184,807 for Children Services Placement Expense Increase”. This was moved by Dr. Foust, seconded by Mr. Breneman.

Dr. Foust commented that a lot of this stems from the Jerry Sandusky child abuse case and most of these additional placements are being generated from an increase in reporting by the public. Mr. Fatica commented that the dollar amount in this ordinance is the County’s share of the cost.

Ordinance Number 100, 2015, then carried in a unanimous roll call vote.

**Ord. 101, 2015 –
OCY Rev. Revenue
& Exp. & Creation
Of Placement Lines**

Mr. Smith gave a second reading of Ordinance Number 101, 2015, 2015 Children & Youth Services Fund Budget Revised Expenditures and Creation of Court Ordered Placement Lines”. This was moved by Dr. Foust, seconded by Mr. Fatica, and carried in a unanimous roll call vote.

**Ord. 102, 2015 –
Debt Svc. Fund
SA & Creation of
Line Items for Bond
Issue Proceeds**

Mr. Smith gave a first reading of Ordinance Number 102, 2015, “First 2015 Debt Service Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$19,516,355 and Creation of Line Items for Bond Issue Proceeds”.

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**Ord. 103, 2015 –
Cap. Proj. Fund
SA & Creation of Line
For Next Gen. Radio
Project**

Mr. Smith gave a first reading of Ordinance Number 103, 2015, “Seventh 2015 Capital Projects Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$19,407,317 and Creation of Line Item for Next Generation Public Radio Project”.

**Ord. 104, 2015 –
Library Fund SA
& New Line for
PA Humanities
Council Grant**

Mr. Smith gave a second reading of Ordinance Number 104, 2015, “Seventh 2015 Library Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$500 and New Line Item for PA Humanities Council Grant”. This was moved by Mr. Fatica, seconded by Mr. Horton, and carried in a unanimous roll call vote.

**Ord. 105, 2015 –
GF SA for Add'l
County Council
Expenses**

Mr. Smith gave a second reading of Ordinance Number 105, 2015, “Thirty-Sixth 2015 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$40,130 for Additional County Council Expenses”. This was moved by Dr. Foust, seconded by Mr. Fatica, and carried in a unanimous roll call vote.

RESOLUTIONS

**Res. 49, 2015 –
Exon. Taxes in
Ft. LeBoeuf SD
& Summit Twp.**

Mr. Smith gave a reading of Resolution Number 49, 2015, “Exonerating Taxes on One Abandoned Trailer/Property #40-014-088.2-001.90 in the Fort LeBoeuf School District and Summit Township”. This was moved by Mr. DiMattio, seconded by Dr. Foust, and carried in a unanimous roll call vote.

**Res. 50, 2015 –
Exon. Taxes in
City of Corry
And CASD**

Mr. Smith gave a reading of Resolution Number 50, 2015, “Exonerating Taxes on Two Abandoned Trailers/Properties #05-028-189.0-019.00 and #05-032-177.0-003.00 in the City of Corry and Corry Area School District”. This was moved by Mr. DiMattio, seconded by Dr. Foust, and carried in a unanimous roll call vote.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Deneé M. Breter, Council Secretary
