

November 4, 2015

**ERIE COUNTY COUNCIL – Special Meeting**

Fiore Leone, Chairman, called to order a Special Meeting of the Erie County Council at 12:00 p.m. at the County Council Caucus Room in the Erie County Courthouse, 140 West 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 114A, Erie, PA.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**OPTIONAL PRAYER OR INVOCATION**

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

“Let us pray. As we enter into this meeting, we pray that the decisions set by the state is fair to all the citizens and moves forward at a pace that will minimize the use of the funds being considered to set aside today. We ask this in His name. 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

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

**HEARING OF THE PUBLIC**

None.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

None.

**REPORTS BY COUNTY OFFICIALS**

None.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Dr. Foust commented that one point to consider regarding furloughs is that he is not seeing that Council, whatever the plan the Administration may come up with, Council may not want to do that and possibly go ahead with the full \$30 million, which is an option. He is not trying to set the Administration up in a trap in some way, he feels that, as a Council, they need more information as to how Council can implement some of these concrete steps before they move forward. Unless something changes soon, he would prefer to take all these measures, and as Mr. Sparber stated previously, there are a few weeks before that has to happen.

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Mr. Fatica commented that Council has received some very good advice from Mr. Maloney and Attorney Talarico on this and he feels that all are in agreement that this is the advice we should follow. On November 14<sup>th</sup>, Council will be setting a budget and Council is not even sure what's coming from the state. Council is operating in limbo. On November 17<sup>th</sup>, the budget will be voted on. The numbers just don't add up and Mr. Fatica appreciated the advice and information from both Mr. Maloney and Attorney Talarico.

Mr. Breneman stated that Council also has to provide its own recommendations and actions on the budget before the end of the year, otherwise the budget as proposed is passed. Council is also under the added pressure to make sure that the right decisions are made on the budget. Unfortunately, Council cannot do what the state did and does not have the luxury to be at an impasse.

Chairman Leone stated that there are not enough votes to pass the ordinances today. He then entertained a motion to table these ordinances.

Mr. Horton moved to table Ordinances 125, 127, and 128, 2015. This was seconded by Mr. DiMattio, and carried in a unanimous roll call vote.

Prior to adjournment, Dr. Foust suggested that the Administration, even working with Council if they want more directly and instead of bringing a plan, if they want to work in conjunction with Council to try to figure out what a more concrete furlough plan would look like and when that would take place. Dr. Foust would really like to see that before he votes on how much should be borrowed. At the same time, possibly firm up language in these ordinances that will allow some additional Council control over the release of the money, possibly even in steps, just to make sure that the language is down in the end before it's voted on.

Mr. Breneman commented that any non-profit having management coming to them at any point and not providing information if they do have to shut down various areas, Council is just asking for something reasonable from the Administration regarding a firm answer as to whether or not with the \$30 million or without if there is going to be a furlough.

Mr. Fatica noted that Human Resources and discussion with the Unions will have to have something that has shape and form to it.

Mr. Horton was in agreement with Dr. Foust's suggestion of the Administration working more closely with Council to have a team approach in order to avoid an adversarial role. He felt that communication between both parties is important and he has no understanding or concrete steps from the Administration. He felt it would be unconscionable for him to vote on these without that information. He thanked Finance and the Administration and understands the pressure all are under for the people in the County. He knows that the most vulnerable in his district have been positioned as pawns by the state and it's unfortunate that we find ourselves here. He feels that tabling these ordinances is appropriate at this time.

Chairman Leone also wanted the Administration to know that it isn't that the members of Council are opposed to doing this type of program, Council would like to see what the end results would be, and in some cases we are really bailing

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out the state. He felt that Council has to go to the community and the news media should be responsible for also helping the community understand that this is because of the impasse of the budget from the state. Someone needs to do something about it and Chairman Leone sees some of the legislators getting paid even while they are having this impasse, maybe they should stop their payroll in the state which might help.

Mr. Horton further commented as the Personnel Chair that any talk of furlough he is very concerned and he felt it is ridiculous to be the last person to get information on that when you are the Personnel Chair. He would like to see that line of communication improve.

Chairman Leone did not see a problem with Council and the Administration getting together. He believes that every member of Council would be more than willing to sit down and discuss the issue with the members of the Administration.

Mr. DiMattio stated that he would hope that the news media portrays to everybody that this isn't just a governmental problem. It's not a matter of the state giving money to the County and the County doesn't have money to operate. It is much more far reaching than that and some of the greatest examples are OCY and the Health Department. Those most needy in the community who can least stand a budget impasse are the ones who will be most greatly affected. He is not saying that the County shouldn't borrow money in the long run to keep the offices open, but he wants to send a message to the other people in Harrisburg and that's what has to be done. If the County borrows the money, it just enables the state to stay out all the longer.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

Deneé M. Breter, Council Secretary

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