

August 21, 2007 Minutes from July 17, 2007 Reg. Mtg. approved. First Rdgs. Gen. Fund S.A. for Budget Software; Cap. Prjcts. Fund S.A. for Prison Pre-Release Bldg; E911 S.A. for Tower Rent; E911 S.A. Act 56 Investment Income; Approval of Agrmt with Baker Integrated Technologies; Gen. Fund S.A. for Overtime & Temp. Staff in Tax Claim; Gen. Fund S.A. for Library Operations Maintenance & Repair; Revised Revenue for Guardian Ad-Litem; Gen. Fund S.A. to Alms House Cemetery; Gen. Fund S.A. Dir. of Adm. Hours; Gen. Fund S.A. Finance Dir. Hours; Appt'd Off. Salary-Dir. of Adm.; Appt'd Off. Salary-Dir. of Finance. Support of Non-Binding Memorandum of Understanding between Com. of Pa, DOC & Erie County adopted. Aptmt. Of Auditors to Perform Audit of Health Tobacco Control Grants adopted. Sale of Parcel from Repository approved.

#### Erie County Council – Regular Meeting

Mr. Giles, Vice Chairman, called to order a Regular Meeting of the Erie County Council at 7:00 p.m. at the Fairview Township Building, 7471 McCray Road, Fairview, Pennsylvania. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the County Clerk called the roll:

Members Present: Mr. Giles, Vice Chairman  
Mr. Augustine  
Mr. Cleaver  
Mr. Foust  
Mrs. Loll  
Mr. Mitchell

Members Absent: Mr. Leone, Chairman

Also Present: Douglas R. Smith, County Clerk  
Joseph P. Maloney, Council CPA  
Sean Wiley, Director of Administration  
Sue Ellen Pasquale, Manager of Accounting

Thank You  
To Fairview Twp.

Mrs. Loll thanked everyone for attending the meeting this evening noting the large audience. She also wished to thank Mr. Dave Carner, a Fairview Township Supervisor, for being so gracious, and expressed her appreciation to Fairview Township for making this building available for Council's meeting this evening. She acknowledged Bill Beardsley, a tax collector, was also present in the audience, as well as Sue Weber, the County Controller, several department heads, employees and visitors.

Hearing of the Public

Mr. Giles reminded the audience there is a five minute time limit for anyone wishing to speak who wrote in ahead of time, and three minutes for anyone else who may wish to speak.

Bob Pettis, 154 West 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Erie, has been a caseworker at the Office of Children and Youth for over 15 years and is currently a supervisor. He stated that under the leadership of Council, Mr. DiVecchio and Mr. Lucht, this agency has met or exceeded all of the goals set locally with the State DPW and federal mandates. Council has provided for more caseworker positions; however, there are 16 openings out of 57 positions. This leaves 41 workers who must serve between 60-70 children; 26 of these workers have been at the agency for a year or less. Caregivers are being lost at an alarming rate for other jobs offering less work, less stress and more money. This agency is facing a crisis. He requested an opportunity to sit down with Members of Council to address these issues.

Alyssa Beer, 154 West 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Erie, has been employed at OCY as a caseworker for 2 ½ years. She stays at OCY because she feels she can make a difference for children and their families. Workers at this agency are underrated; although their job may end at five, their minds continue to worry about cases. The number of cases carried by a caseworker is overwhelming. There is not enough time to devote the appropriate amount of work to each family. This agency is in a state of crisis. She asked Council to understand what caseworkers and supervisors go through every day.

Brittany Pierson, 1751 East 41<sup>st</sup> Street, Erie, approached Council as a daughter of an OCY worker. Her mother loves her job and helping people; however, she does not see her mother nearly enough because her mother comes home from work and continues to work for the families of Erie County. As a social work major, Ms. Pierson is cautious about working for OCY once she graduates because she would like to start a family as well. She sees how her mother has to work at home in the evening since there is not enough help at the agency.

Betti-Jo Gilbert, 154 West 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Erie, has been an intake worker at OCY for almost six years. There are workers at the agency that have been there for under two years, several for over 20 years, and a gap between 20 years and 9 years. These workers believe in what they do; however, this crisis is impacting the families they work with. Caseworkers demand consistency from the parents, yet this agency introduces them to caseworker after caseworker. Decisions as to whether to do paperwork or visit children have to be made. This agency needs Council's help. Ms. Gilbert stated she spends more time at work than at home, and she takes her case children with her. She has given up time with her own children to go to work. She asked Council for the tools to take care of the children of this county.

Cindy Pierson, 1751 East 41<sup>st</sup> Street, Erie, is a worker at OCY and stated that the agency is in a crisis and immediate attention is needed. This situation with the loss of staff, diagnosed five years ago, has become critical, and cannot be allowed to continue. Countless trained professionals have left this agency for higher paying jobs, less stress, the freedom to spend more time with their own families, as well as a sense of being valued. The Child Welfare League reported gross caseload inadequacies and promises were made, but she asked what has changed. A recommendation was made to hire 15 intake workers, Council promised to take action, and two years later this agency is still understaffed and does not have 15 new intake workers. Mr. DiVecchio and Council need to act now to insure the safety of these children.

Maria Foster, 2301 Peach Street, Erie, stated that she disagrees that changes have been made within OCY. Ms. Foster stated that from personal experience, there has not been a timeliness of reunification. She does not doubt that caseworkers are overworked. The pay scale is designated by the state; the worker chooses that job. Ms. Foster stated there is no reason she should not be able to see her grandchildren. Something needs to be done and Council has not accomplished what they should have. Recommendations were made, but not followed.

Renee Vendetti, Erie, stated the Child Welfare League recommendations were put in place to be followed, but nothing has happened. When she asked about the ombudsman position, she was told it was put on the back burner. She asked if that was what Council thought of the children. These families need help, the workers need help. Council must address the issues of families and workers. Council is still violating the Administrative Code; first readings go to second readings and are passed. Council needs to listen to the constituents.

Kenneth Przepieski, 640 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Erie, referred to Ordinance 87 noting it must have gone from a first reading to a second reading. This ordinance refers to a \$15,000,000 note from Mellon Bank. Mr. Przepieski believes Mellon Bank is from Pittsburgh, and asked if this was going to help condos from Pittsburgh be built. He referred to Resolution 43 and asked how much money was exonerated at 11 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street. Ordinances 87 to 92 went to second readings, and he questioned when Council will stop pushing the agenda. He noticed Mr. Smith

also had the title of Clerk of Elections and doesn't believe Mr. Smith should be allowed to get two paychecks, one for being County Clerk as well.

Dan Galena, Erie County, distributed a copy of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to Members of Council. During the last several years, Mr. Galena and other members of the community have chosen to participate in Erie County government, and have criticized Council for their blatant violations of the County Administrative Code, the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act, and other matters of government. Council continues to break those laws. Mr. Leone stated that he plans to implement changes to the Administrative Code denying public speakers, citizens and taxpayers their right to petition the government. This is no more than a blatant effort to stifle the protected free speech and constitutional rights of the citizens of this community.

Gene Walczak, 140 West 9<sup>th</sup> Street, has worked at OCY for 28 ½ years, and his wife for 25 years. This agency is now in a crisis. The workers have met with Mr. DiVecchio and Mr. Wiley who have promised to look into the problems. As the executive director, Mr. Lucht is a breath of fresh air, putting issues into effect and providing better communication. Mr. Wiley will be extending an invitation for Council to meet with the workers, and Mr. Walczak asked members to please accept.

Sue Weber, 5338 Norris Drive, as the Controller, sees the Personnel Action Sheets that come through her office and noted the turnover rate at OCY is alarming. There are a number of factors involved, a large part of the problem being the pay. Ms. Weber observes the salaries on these action sheets from the entire county, and couldn't help but notice that the caseworker salary is pitiful. People with no education, pushing pencils are making more money than these workers who have the weight of the world on their shoulders. She believes their entire salary scale needs to be reviewed because these workers are leaving for other jobs that pay more, have less hours, smaller caseloads, and less stress.

Mr. Foust asked Ms. Weber whether there was a monetary amount she thought these workers should make per hour. Ms. Weber replied that she did, and is aware of the pay scale in other counties; however, the caseload needs to be taken into consideration as well. Mr. Foust asked for a figure for the pay raise, adding that he agrees with her, but is looking for suggestions on a figure as well. Ms. Weber recommended that Mr. Foust meet with Larry Meredith, the Director of Personnel, or Mr. Lucht, to review the salary scale in other counties, such as Crawford County where many workers leave to seek employment. Ms. Weber stated the figure would depend on the amount of education a worker has, as well as experience. Mr. Foust then asked Ms. Weber whether she had a figure in mind for entry level. Ms. Weber invited Mr. Foust to meet with her at her office to look at what other counties pay.

Mr. Giles wished to note that typically, the hearing of the public is Council's opportunity to hear from the public and there is no dialogue, debate or informational points involved. This is Council's opportunity to hear from the public.

Carol Clapp, Erie, stated that the OCY Policies and Procedures Manual at the Erie County Library has not been updated since 2005. There are many open cases involving lawyers that have been fired. She would like Council and the County Executive direct Amy Jones, OCY's lead attorney, to make an effort to resolve those cases. She stated the caseworkers in this county are overworked and understaffed; this causes problems. Families say there are problems; caseworkers say there are problems. She hopes that County Executive Mark DiVecchio, when he was elected said these problems would be corrected, will get into gear and address these issues before there is another Brittany Legler in Erie County.

Tammy Jo Rodgers, 154 West 9<sup>th</sup> Street, approached Council with a salary figure of \$35,000 for caseworkers and \$45,000 for supervisors to get this agency on par. She advised Council there have been changes at this agency. Speaking for herself, she noted she has worked closely with Mr. Lucht changing some programs at this agency. One program is doing exceedingly well. Administration is concerned with what is going on. Mr. DiVecchio recently waived the 60 day waiting period for caseworkers, although it will not solve the problem, because this agency needs to retain those workers.

The director and administration are more accessible; there is more open and clear communication. She commended Amy Jones on a fantastic job.

Minutes	Mr. Foust moved to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held July 17, 2007. Mrs. Loll seconded, and it carried in a unanimous roll call vote.
Finance Committee	Mrs. Loll reported the Finance Committee met Thursday, August 16, 2007, and agreed to place on the agenda Ordinances 93 through 103 for a first reading, as well as the possible adoption of Resolutions 44 and 45, and a sale of parcel from the repository for unsold properties.
Personnel Committee	Mr. Cleaver reported the Personnel Committee met on Thursday, August 16, 2007, and agreed to place on the agenda for a first reading Ordinances 104 and 105.
Mr. Cleaver's Comments	Mr. Cleaver wished to take this opportunity to thank both county and city volunteers who made Celebrate Erie such a successful weekend. The County had a booth at the event, and volunteers worked the weekend on their own time, and he wished to applaud them. This event was a success due to the volunteers in both the county and the city.
Mrs. Loll's Report	<p>Mrs. Loll submitted the following report:</p> <p>On August 7, 2007 she attended the Cranesville Borough public meeting. The major item on the agenda was the repair of a sewage lift station. A decision will be made as to how to change the electronic control board in an effort to make it easier to repair and keep the cost of replacement down.</p> <p>On August 9, 2007, Mrs. Loll attended the Metropolitan Planning Commission meeting. She received information on the change in housing characteristics from 1970 to 2000. This was compiled to help update the housing section of the Erie County Comprehensive Plan. At the meeting, Mrs. Loll received the project summary for the Northwest Pennsylvania Daily Incubator Study. This includes the goals, location, estimated cost, implementation and business plan.</p>
Mr. Giles' Report	<p>Mr. Giles referred to a news release in June from the Erie County General Authority. A paragraph in the report captured his attention, and he found it informational. This news release pertained to a loan that Council had already approved for Community Resources for Independence. Mr. Giles wished to share this portion of the news release noting that he was unaware of how large an organization Community Resources for Independence is and the significant role it plays.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“Community Resources for Independence (CRI) was approved for \$2.6 million in tax-exempt financing to purchase a new facility that will serve as the organization's headquarters, at 3410 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street in Millcreek Township. CRI, which is currently located at 2222 Filmore Avenue, is a nonresidential organization committed to enriching the lives of those with disabilities. The organization employs a total of 700 employees throughout the state, 180 of which are based out of the Erie office.</p> <p>Mr. Giles also reported that a reply has been received from the Federal Government regarding the Department of Health and Human Services issue of the loss of medical benefits for individuals once they become incarcerated. This has been an issue that affects the cost and operation of the jail system, both at a statewide and National Association of Counties level. Unless and until an individual has been convicted, those benefits should be in place. As Mr. Giles had indicated earlier, meetings were held with Congressman English, Senator Specter, and Senator Casey to discuss those matters. There may be a study as to the impact in terms of transferring those costs to the federal side from the county side.</p> <p>Mr. Giles explained the reason for his chairing the meeting tonight is due to a tragedy Mr. Leone has experienced in his family. Mr. Giles stated that Mr. Leone extends his excuses to all,</p>

including Mr. Galena. Mr. Galena interrupted declaring he did not have a problem with Mr. Leone personally and would expect Mr. Giles to refrain from making such comments.

#### First Readings

Mr. Smith gave first readings of the following ordinances:

Ordinance Number 93, 2007, "Twenty-Eighth 2007 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation for Budget Software and a Waiver of the Purchasing Code"

Ordinance Number 94, 2007, "2007 Capital Projects Fund Supplemental Appropriation for the Prison Pre-Release Building and Creation of a New Line Item"

Ordinance Number 95, 2007, "Fifth 2007 E911 Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation and Creation of a New Line Item for Tower Rent"

Ordinance Number 96, 2007, "Sixth 2007 E911 Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation and Creation of a New Line Item for Act 56 Investment Income"

Ordinance Number 97, 2007, "2007 General Fund Budget Waiver of the Purchasing Code and Approval of a Two Year Agreement with Baker Integrated Technologies for Maintenance on Dispatch Equipment"

Ordinance Number 98, 2007, "Twenty-Ninth 2007 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation for Overtime and Temporary Staff for Tax Claim and Revenue"

Ordinance Number 99, 2007, "Thirtieth 2007 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation for Library Operations Maintenance and Repair"

Ordinance Number 100, 2007, "2007 General Fund Budget Revised Revenue and Creation of a New Line Item for Guardian Ad-Litem"

Ordinance Number 101, 2007, "Thirty-First 2007 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation and Creation of New Line Item for a Grant to the Alms House Cemetery"

Ordinance Number 102, 2007, "Thirty-Second 2007 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation for Director of Administration's Increase in Hours"

Ordinance Number 103, 2007, "Thirty-Third 2007 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation for the Finance Director's Increase in Hours"

Ordinance Number 104, 2007, "2007 Appointed Official's Salary Ordinance – Director of Administration"

Ordinance Number 105, 2007, "2007 Appointed Official's Salary Ordinance – Director of Finance"

#### Mr. Foust's Comments

Mr. Foust pointed out that there were several people in the audience this evening new to County Council meetings, and explained the first reading policy – that ordinances are read twice, the first reading is in title only, and at the next meeting, when they will be voted on, ordinances will be read in their entirety.

#### Mr. Giles' Comments

Mr. Giles added, that as Mr. Foust has explained, when ordinances are voted on, the entire ordinance is read in detail.

Resolution In Support  
Of Non-Binding  
Memorandum  
Of Understanding

Mr. Smith gave a reading of Resolution Number 44, 2007, "Resolution in Support of a Non-Binding Memorandum of Understanding between the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Corrections, and Erie County." Mr. Foust moved to adopt; Mrs. Loll seconded.

Mr. Giles wished to point out that this particular Memorandum of Understanding goes back to involvement with the County Commissioner's Association of Pennsylvania and the Steering Committee called Courts and Corrections. Mr. Giles served on this committee for over twenty years. The District Attorney of Montgomery County discontinued running as DA and ran for County Commissioner. He is no longer in office, which indicates how long this particular matter has been going on. Getting the cooperation from the State, DOC and CCAP was certainly a significant challenge, and Mr. Giles expressed his gratitude that this issue is moving forward.

Mr. Giles called for a vote on Resolution Number 44, 2007, and it carried in a unanimous roll call vote.

Appointment of  
Auditors for Dept.  
Of Health Tobacco  
Control Grants

Mr. Smith gave a reading of Resolution Number 45, 2007, "Appointment of Auditors to Perform Audit of Erie County Department of Health Tobacco Control Grants For the Period Ending September 30, 2007." Mrs. Loll moved to adopt; Mr. Cleaver seconded.

Mr. Giles explained that Mr. Maloney, Council CPA, indicated to Council that there is a demand for an audit procedure which will result in an increase in workload for the agency that normally conducts audits. These costs are very reasonable.

Mr. Giles then called for a vote on Resolution Number 45, 2007, and it carried in a unanimous roll call vote.

Sale of Parcel  
Approved

Mr. Foust moved to approve the Sale of Parcel at Index Number 14-011-026.0-110.00. Mrs. Loll seconded, and it carried in a unanimous roll call vote.

Thank You

On behalf of all Members of Council, Mr. Giles thanked Fairview Township for hosting this well attended meeting at their new facility.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Ann M. Bruno, Council Secretary

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