

January 4, 2011

ERIE COUNTY COUNCIL – Reorganization Meeting

Mr. Smith called to order a Reorganization Meeting of the Erie County Council at 12:00 p.m. in the Erie County Council Chambers, Erie County Courthouse, Erie, Pennsylvania. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Mr. Smith called the roll:

Members Present: Mr. Beeman
Mr. Cleaver
Mr. Fatica
Dr. Foust
Mr. Giles
Mr. Leone
Mrs. Loll

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Douglas R. Smith, County Clerk
Joseph P. Maloney, Council CPA
Barry Grossman, County Executive
Jim Sparber, Director of Finance
Sue Ellen Pasquale, Manager of Accounting

Chairman Elected Mr. Smith opened the floor for nominations to the office of County Council Chairman. Mr. Giles nominated Mr. Leone; Mr. Fatica seconded. Dr. Foust moved to close the nominations; Mr. Giles seconded the motion. There being no objections, the nominations for the office of County Council Chairman were closed.

Mr. Smith called for the vote on the nomination of Mr. Leone, and Mr. Leone was elected to the office of County Council Chairman in a unanimous roll call vote.

Vice Chairman Elected Mr. Leone opened the floor for nominations for the office of County Council Vice Chairman. Mr. Cleaver nominated Mr. Fatica; Mr. Giles seconded. Mr. Giles moved to close the nominations; Dr. Foust seconded. There being no objections, the nominations for the office of County Council Vice Chairman were closed.

Mr. Leone called for a vote on the nomination of Mr. Fatica as Vice Chairman of County Council and it carried in a unanimous roll call vote.

Presentation of Plaque to Dr. Foust Mr. Leone presented Dr. Foust with a plaque from Members of County Council for his fine work as Chairman this past year. Mr. Leone believes Dr. Foust did an excellent job and also believes that all Members of Council would agree.

Comments by New Chairman Mr. Leone thanked his colleagues for their vote of confidence. In his estimation, the position of Chairman of County Council is one that is likened to riding a wild stallion for a year. Mr. Leone commended Dr. Foust for his leadership this past year. The numerous controversies during his tenure were resolved with good leadership, judgment and excellent communication. Mr. Leone also commended all of his colleagues in the area of communication. Dr. Foust has faced the hard issues this past year, i.e., community college, Pleasant Ridge Manor, and Emergency Management to name a few.

Council does not always agree on issues, but has a unique way of resolving this setback. Members talk and break bread after every Council meeting. Everyone will not always be on the same side of an

issue; but as Mr. Leone has expressed many times, an issue is an issue and win or lose that issue, Council moves on. He is proud to say that in all the years he has been on Council, this community has been fortunate to elect individuals from their districts that represent their needs. Hopefully, this process will continue to exist in Erie County.

Mr. Leone noted that this past year has been one to remember. The County experienced problems in 9-1-1 and there have been Emergency Management issues. Those issues are, at this time, hopefully resolved or close to it. An ombudsman was hired for OCY after considerable time. This position is called the Quality Assurance and Compliance Administrator and reports to the Director of Human Services. Not to mention the last of the adventures, and hopefully the last referral to it – the community college. Council has tackled the issue of Erie County Care Management and has successfully completed new bylaws and the Administrative Code section for this corporation.

This year Council faces one large issue – Pleasant Ridge Manor, which has become somewhat of a controversy because of various studies completed by this administration. As one member of Council, Mr. Leone will fight to maintain the system as it presently exists. Members of Council have also commissioned a study and its results will be forthcoming. The issue of gambling with the aged and indigent is not his way of doing things. Mr. Leone assured Council that he will fight to maintain this system.

Mr. Leone stated that Mr. Giles, as a councilman, has made some extensive reports and even though members comment and joke about those reports, Mr. Leone ventures to say that Mr. Giles has performed his responsibilities to this Council and to his constituents in an excellent manner. Joe Giles was the president of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania in 2010. He was almost elected second vice president of the National Association of Counties. Mr. Leone commended him for his hard work during the past year and also for his hard work during the previous years he served as chairman of many committees in CCAP.

All Members of Council are to be commended for their hard work in the liaison areas to which they are assigned. Mr. Leone believes that each member must review the areas they presently represent and try to make changes with each other in an effort to learn more in areas that are the responsibility of Council Members. He asked everyone to review their area and discuss with each other any changes they would like to make by the next Council meeting. Mr. Leone would like to make assignments to liaison positions as presented Council Members. Further, Mr. Leone would like to make more than one councilman as liaison to some of these areas. The primary one will be the liaison, the second one would be an alternate.

Mr. Leone assigned Dr. Foust as Chairman of the Finance Committee, Vice Chairman will be Mr. Giles. Chairman of Personnel will be Mr. Cleaver and Vice Chair will be Mrs. Loll. He has not made any changes to the Retirement Board and will not unless a member requests replacement to Mr. Leone.

The past year has been troublesome for many reasons, principally because of the economic climate and lack of jobs in this area. Mr. Leone stated that this year and last year individuals on social security received no cost of living increases; a problem for the elderly. Many constituents are in dire need of help in any way possible. People are struggling to make ends meet. Council needs to help wherever possible.

This year's contract with the County employees indicates a zero increase. Further, Council has eliminated in excess of 70 jobs when presented budgets in the last three years - 2009, 2010 and 2011. Mr. Leone does not believe any of Member is proud of that decision; however, this County is faced with very hard times. The unemployment rate is at 9.2%, a staggering figure. Mr. Leone believes better and more efficient ways of delivering services to this community are needed.

Mr. Leone noted that a Salary Board needs to be appointed. He assigned Mr. Giles as chair; Mr. Cleaver and Mr. Beeman will serve on the board as well. He explained that during election times prior to individuals taking out petitions, they are informed of the salary for that specific position. Mr. Leone advised this board that a decision must be made prior to February 15th. Further, he asked that

they review the economic climate and vote accordingly. As one council member, he will not vote for any increases for any elected official. As representatives of this County, Council Members need to heed to the wishes of the constituents.

On another issue, Mr. Leone will be accessible to this Council and this administration and all of its departments. He intends to meet with all departments and elected officials on a periodic basis. As expressed previously, the only way to resolve issues is to talk about them. Face to face communications are needed with this administration.

Mr. Leone commended the administration for the many issues they were able to resolve; however, he would hope that this administration would learn and understand that an issue is an issue. If lost, drop it and go on to the next one. There are many fish to fry and it's time to move on. He applauded the administration for their no tax increase budget. They have worked hard and should be acknowledged for that work. He also would like to mention that the Director of Administration, Mr. Jerry Mifsud, has worked hard to accomplish some very difficult tasks, especially in his first year. Mr. Leone commended Mr. Grossman for his pick; it was a good one.

The goals for this year must be reasonable and attainable:

1. A no tax increase budget – possible and hopefully attainable
2. Installation of a video camera in Council Chambers to be tied to the audio section; also video conferencing for substantial savings to this county. This needs to be in the chambers for various reasons. The chambers are used by the District Judges, and can be used to hold meetings that Council can attend without having to travel large distances. Obviously, the members that are assigned positions on various committees on CCAP need to be present for those meetings. His hope would be to orient and educate other Council Members in these areas as well, by using video conferencing.
3. Economic Development. The County needs to assist any and all of the businesses in this community that need help in retaining jobs and further, in areas of attracting new business. Jobs have been leaving this community for various reasons. The holes in this area need to be plugged. County Council has that responsibility and needs to exercise more effort in this area.
4. Consolidation of the Pleasant Ridge Manor Facilities.

In conclusion, Mr. Leone stated that these goals are difficult, but necessary, and need the cooperation of all members of this Council.

He again thanked his colleagues for their vote and confidence in his leadership this year.

Mr. Leone also wished to make another presentation to Dr. Foust. He handed Dr. Foust a rubber gavel and asked him to stand next to Mr. Cleaver with it the next time Mr. Cleaver makes comments with his microphone on.

Mr. Leone also bought a set of stuffed animals and asked Mr. Smith and Mrs. Bruno to place name tags on them for each Council Member. He then handed out the stuffed animals to each member.

Mr. Leone then reminded Council Members to review the proposed meeting schedule for next year and advise him within the week of any potential conflicts.

County Executive's
Comments

Mr. Grossman congratulated Dr. Foust. This was the first year for his administration and he feels he had good communication with Dr. Foust. The administrative and legislative bodies don't always agree, nor does he believe they should, but Mr. Grossman was very pleased by the professionalism with which Council conducted itself and with communications. Mr. Grossman also noted that Mr. Fatica as chairman of the Finance Committee and Mrs. Loll as chairperson of the Personnel Committee had very good lines of communication. He is sure that will

continue with the new chairpersons. Mr. Grossman congratulated Mr. Leone on his third or fourth tour as Chairman. Mr. Leone corrected Mr. Grossman stating it was his seventh nomination as Chairman of Council.

Mr. Grossman is sure it will be a good year as everyone tackles the problems of the county. He again extended his congratulations.

Mrs. Loll's Comments Mrs. Loll stated that Dr. Foust, as chairman, was more than fair, and did a wonderful job. He was a gentleman and she was pleased in his leadership last year.

Mr. Fatica's Presentation Mr. Fatica wished to present an item to those who do not reside in Millcreek Township. He handed out a calendar put out by Millcreek Township noting that those who live in Millcreek Township already receive them. He explained that this calendar has won awards nationally for the excellence put forward in recycling the various materials used. Township residents contribute the photographs used for the calendar and people may recognize some of the photos. A lot of work goes into preparing this calendar.

Adjournment There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Ann M. Bruno, Council Secretary
