

MINUTES

**Erie County Council**

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Fiore Leone, Chairman  
André R. Horton, Vice Chairman  
Carl Anderson, III  
Kathleen Fatica  
Dr. Kyle Foust  
Carol Loll  
Scott R. Rastetter

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**Thursday, February 14, 2019**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chairman Leone called to order a Regular Meeting of the Erie County Council at 4:35 p.m. at the Erie County Council Chambers, 140 West 6th Street, Room 117, Erie, PA. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Mrs. Loll read the following prayer:

**OPTIONAL PRAYER OR INVOCATION**

"Let us pray. We pray God will guide us as we meet here today. Help us to grow together in our work. Help us to learn and study, so we can make the right decisions. We speak these words day by day, that together we may make our part of the world better. And as we leave this place, let us go with a new commitment for our work. We ask this in the name of our savior, Jesus Christ. Amen."

**ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mr. Anderson; Mrs. Fatica; Dr. Foust; Mr. Horton; Mrs. Loll; Mr. Rastetter; Chairman Leone.

Also Present: Douglas R. Smith, James Sparber, Tracey Fugagli, Thomas Talarico, Sam Lynch

**HEARING OF THE PUBLIC**

Freda Tepfer, City of Erie; Ms. Tepfer stated that she recently started attending Council meetings. She wanted to state that she doesn't mind a moment of silence or prayer, but she is uncomfortable being prayed for in the name of someone else's savior. She felt that a more egalitarian prayer could be used.

**MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

None.

**REPORTS OF COUNTY OFFICIALS**

<b>County Executive and/or her Designee</b>	None.
<b>Finance Committee - Mr. Anderson</b>	Mr. Anderson stated that the Finance Committee met and agreed to place Ordinance Number 5, 2019, on the agenda for a second reading.
<b>Personnel Committee - Mrs. Fatica</b>	No report.
<b>Other</b>	None.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

<b>Ord. 5, 2019 - "2020-2023 Elected Officials' Salaries Ordinance"</b>	Mr. Smith gave a second reading of Ordinance Number 5, 2019, "2020-2023 Elected Officials' Salaries Ordinance". This was moved by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Horton.
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Dr. Foust stated that he knows that this is a tough task that members of Council had to take and in two years the other members of Council will be in the same spot. He understands the reasoning for the decision to try to smooth out some of the bumps that Council has had in the past and certainly members of Council do not make a lot of money as part timers, but to him, the percentage of raises ought to be in line with what was given to the non-bargaining. It would be 3%. He is not sure if there is support for that by Council or if there would be a second, but Dr. Foust moved to amend the raises to be 3% over the course of four years. This was seconded by Mrs. Loll. The motion failed in a 3-4 vote, with Mr. Anderson, Mr. Horton, Mr. Rastetter, and Mrs. Fatica voting no.

Mr. Horton then commented that he served as Chair of the subcommittee to review the salaries of the positions. He wanted to thank Mr. Anderson and Mr. Rastetter along with the CPA, Sam Lynch, in coming up with the figures and stated they did not take it lightly. He stated that the committee did this with the backdrop of knowing that after 30 years, a new pay plan was implemented for non-bargaining employees and the County is currently in negotiations with the bargaining units. Traditionally they have gotten raises and Council has not. The committee asked Mr. Lynch to reach out to like counties, what their scope of work is and what their paid. At face value, Council is fortunate that voters had the confidence in each of them to administer a \$426 million budget. He further commented that Council makes less than minimum wage - \$4.08 per hour. To him it is criminal in this day and age for the responsibility and magnitude of what Council does in their scope of work. A few times a 3% raise was given. This year is different because after 30 years they did implement a pay plan. To Dr. Foust's comments, most of them were right around 3% in the new pay plan

but some stretched as high as 10-11%. He stated that looking at other counties, looking at peers and the work that this Council does, the committee started with the 3%. He is not ashamed to say that the work that Council does and he does is one of the best jobs he has had in his life, but at a time when the minimum wage rate may get raised in the Commonwealth but in communities all over the country to \$12 to \$15 per hour and Council doesn't even make \$7.35 an hour. Some peers might make \$75-80,000 in Harborcreek or Millcreek wearing the title of roadmaster or something else, but by contrast their budgets may be \$150 million or less. He feels it is time that Council took care of their employees and bring up the salaries of the officials who do the work of the citizens in the county for the countless hours and the commitment to the job. He stated that he had a citizen comment that they pay Council's salary and he waited until the man was finished and showed him his paystub. The gentleman was appalled and apologized profusely. Mr. Horton asked Mr. Lynch to comment on this process and stated that the raises would amount to \$988 over four years. Currently, Council makes \$9,880 so the salary would go up \$988. The Chair makes an additional \$500 for his many duties as Chair.

Mr. Lynch stated that when Mr. Smith provided the schedule of the salaries to him, he was stunned seeing the amount of pay set for the work that Council does. He has been working for the County since October, 2018, and knows the amount of time each member spends a month, along with the time spent with subcommittees that is not seen. He commented that he has worked for county government for over 20 years and understands Home Rule Charter counties and Commissioner counties and he has never seen pay this low. The minimum he has seen with commissioners is \$50,000+ per year. Yes, they have other jobs and have limited time to come in but the amount of work Mr. Lynch has seen the seven Council members do is unbelievable as is the pay received. He provided the subcommittee many options for pay raises so they had a lot to work with to be able to make a decision. There were many discussions and they came up with the current schedule.

Mr. Anderson wanted to thank Mr. Horton, Mr. Rastetter, Mr. Smith and Mr. Lynch for their hard work on the committee. Mr. Anderson stated that there were adjustments to salaries before the pay scale actually went into effect. Some of the non-bargaining positions that got pay bumps were up as high as 20%. Some people are getting 3% after their initial pay bump. This was given to be consistent with the bumps that were given before the pay plan took effect. The proposed schedule for elected officials is kept at a level amount for four years. Council members are not getting the additional 3% bump per year. This is a one-time increase for four years and one time level amount for the four years for the Chair and one time level amount for the Controller and Coroner. It is his understanding that they did get a bump before the pay scale went into effect. Their percentage increase is different than Council members' increase, but the committee felt it was in line with those positions receiving a pay bump prior to

the pay plan being implemented. This is something that is acceptable and level over the four years. There was a rationale behind what the committee did. This brings Council pay in line with the pay plan. Mr. Anderson stated that Council is the last group to be reviewed in the pay plan adjustment.

Mr. Rastetter stated that this raise only pertains to the four districts that will be changing hands potentially next year. This raise does not take effect until 2020 so the people on the committee will not get the raise. The raise comes out to about \$19 per week.

Mr. Anderson moved to amend to include the revised exhibit A, and asked that the exhibit stated "Chairperson Add-On" and eliminate the salary and also clarify that the increase is not a \$750 increase, but an increase to \$750 for the Chair add-on. This was seconded by Mr. Horton and carried in a 5-2 vote, with Dr. Foust and Chairman Leone voting no.

Chairman Leone stated he does not disagree with Mr. Horton or Mr. Lynch over the fact that Council is inundated with work. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. He believes that Council has more to do than they should have to do. He stated that the Home Rule Charter that Council deals with indicates that the Council is a part time job. He realizes that in the past 40+ years he has been on Council, members have taken on more and more work year after year, but when someone runs for the office they are running for a part time job not for anything that is full time and he agrees with Mr. Horton that Council doesn't make minimum wage but it is something one should understand when they run for the office.

Ordinance Number 5, 2019, as amended, carried in a 5-2 vote, with Dr. Foust and Chairman Leone voting no.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Prior to adjournment, Chairman Leone appointed three members of Council to a LERTA Committee. Chairman Leone felt that this is a responsibility more of this Council than it is with the Administration. The three members will be Mr. Anderson, Mr. Horton, and Mrs. Loll. He asked that they keep in mind they act as a group and not independently. Chairman Leone felt that they need to get together with members of City Council and the School District as that is where the LERTA Program would be if there will be one.

Dr. Foust asked what the task of the committee would be. Chairman Leone stated that they should at least be able to sit down and discuss what the LERTA Program will include, what it will achieve for the city and the county. If the city and the school district and the county vote for a LERTA Program, it will be a cost to members outside of the city because the tax base is reduced.

Mr. Horton commented that the committee would be sure to include all parameters, guidelines, all regulatory needs. His issue is that he has a vested interest because it includes his entire district. He clarified that he supports LERTA but he does not support it north of the Bayfront. For the record, Council has discussed having a public hearing when the times comes for the County to deal with it and the proper order of things would be the School District and the City, if and when it is ratified, it would come to the County and at that time, he would request that Council not act on it without a public hearing.

Mr. Smith wanted to remind everyone that the regular meeting to be held on Tuesday, February 19, 2019, would take place at 4:00 p.m., with caucus at 3:30 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

Deneé M. Breter, Council Secretary