

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

Tuesday, March 5, 2019

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Leone called to order a Regular Meeting of the Erie County Council at 7:00 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 come here tonight and reflect and share the strength and support for our citizens. We come and do not turn away from the people, but hear and strive for justice and peace among us all. We ask for the guidance and help of Jesus, the light of the world. 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

Chairman Leone stated that those who called in and were placed on the agenda would receive 5 minutes to speak. Anyone else who wishes to speak would receive 3 minutes to speak.

Randy Barnes

Mr. Barnes, Harborcreek, PA; Mr. Barnes spoke about ECGRA and the fact that they are using a VISA card to pay for coffee creamer. He then wanted to know how much the County is paying for coffee creamer and who is buying the coffee. He then discussed Bridgeway Capital and the partnership with ECGRA. He wanted to know why money is going to Pittsburgh. He wonders whether Mr. Wood is following IRS rules for tuition reimbursement. He concluded his remarks by citing the extra payments to Mr. Wood by ECGRA in lieu of health insurance as overly generous.

EJ Fike; City of Erie: spoke in support of a stand-alone community college. He just obtained a bachelor's degree from a local college. He spoke about the student loans that he had from going to school. He felt that if he had a community college available to him when he wanted to go to college he would not be so far in debt. Because of the amount of debt that he has, he cannot obtain the mortgage he would like because of the student loan debt.

Art Leopold; Erie, PA: He stands in support of the workers striking at Wabtec. He then spoke about the community college and the need for it in Erie County. Many areas in the state have a community college and Erie County should have the opportunity to enjoy what it would afford to the citizens. Education is necessary for the youth and he feels that a stand-alone community college is necessary. He feels that Erie County is owed this from Harrisburg.

Freda Tepfer; Erie, PA: suggests that Council open up appointments to boards, commissions or authorities, to the public and let people apply for them. It is an appropriate way to help people to become involved in their government. She then spoke about the community college. She stated that if it wasn't for a community college she may not have gone on to traditional college. She went to community colleges for career transitions and took many courses when working in the educational field. She feels that a place-based community college is essential to give people an identity and offer them support services that only community colleges can provide. She feels there is no better foundation for people who are challenged financially or in transition, than a community college.

Catherine Whitetree; Erie, PA: She wanted to add on the community college discussion; she grew up in a large family and some of her siblings were able to obtain scholarships. Those who couldn't qualify entered the military to obtain a college degree. She stated those siblings went to school elsewhere and did not come back to Erie—it's brain drain. That there is a gap between high school and college which needs to be filled for those who need a little help or can't afford other schools. She feels that a community college is a way to keep families here.

Bob Casillo; Erie PA; He resides in Mr. Leone's district; he wanted to talk on behalf of the community college. He is a board member and past president of the Erie School District. He stated that over 80% of the 11,000 students are living at or below the poverty level. This is the poorest urban school district in the Commonwealth. He stated that these kids graduating have little or no hope for a family sustaining job. His children's tuition to traditional colleges cost his family over \$160,000; a cost most people simply cannot bear. He believes the community college will bring hope to graduates and the kids coming from public education.

Elsbeth Koehle; Erie, PA: She stated that when her parents were in college in the 70's they were able to work and go to college. She is currently in debt after going to college and she would like her children to have the opportunity to go to a community college so they are not burdened with \$100,000 of debt like she is. A place which is an affordable stepping-stone while they decide their ultimate path. Without a community college the 16501 zip code will continue to get worse until Erie falls off the map.

Judy Roth; Fairview, PA: Spoke in favor of a community college. She is a small business owner and was able to offer education as a benefit to her employees when she was in Cleveland. She was able to provide classes to her employees through the Cuyahoga County Community College. She stated it is a benefit to a community. She is unable to offer her employees such a benefit here due to the cost of the four traditional colleges in the County.

Joseph Giles; Erie, PA; As a former Council Person Giles recognized the last day of Council Secretary, Deneé Breter. Mr. Giles offered kind words and best wishes to Mrs. Breter and presented her with a book from Berwyn Moore, Past Erie County Poet Laureate.

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

February 19, 2019 - Regular Meeting

This was moved by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Dr. Foust and carried in a 7 - 0 vote.

REPORTS OF COUNTY OFFICIALS

County Executive and/or her Designee

None.

Finance Committee - Mr. Anderson

Mr. Anderson stated that there was no business for the Finance agenda.

Personnel Committee - Mrs. Fatica

Mrs. Fatica stated that the Personnel Committee met on February 28, 2019, and agreed to place Ordinance Number 8, 2019, and a board appointment to the agenda.

Other

Mrs. Fatica gave the following report:

"After attending the Board of Health meeting on February 25, 2019, I think it is important that I share what I learned about 21st Century Public Health. This is

essentially a system upgraded often referred to as PH #2.0 and this system allows public health departments to engage in planning and addressing emerging public health issues, concerns and emergencies. Public Health is responsible for every Erie County resident, visitor, tourist and transient who travels through our county. The current operating system of public health leaves local health departments in vulnerable positions which could ultimately affect the entire community. Some examples of unforeseen issues are the inability to recover from a natural disaster or a new tick or mosquito borne disease that had never been seen in colder climates and the list goes on. As the world changes, public health response must be ready to change. The work of public health is directly related to economic vitality and national security. In a recent report from the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors, the impact of poor collective community health is described as having both economic and human costs. Several developments are driving the need to re-envision public health. Health trends in the past 30 years are such that leading causes of death are now attributed to behaviors like smoking, sedentary lifestyle, eating habits and social and physical environments in which we live, work, and play. Certainly, the current work of the Erie County Department of Health will continue, but upgrading the focus of public health will actually better reflect the mission statement: To preserve, promote, and protect the health, safety and well-being of the people and environment in the county. The members of the Board of Health are asking County Council to support the Erie County Department of Health as they investigate new ways to conduct business while exploring ways to advance local health practices. This moves the direction from reactive to proactive.

Mr. Horton read the following:

The Erie County community strongly supports the establishment of a community college. It highly values the introduction of a more affordable post-secondary option into the market. There's a strong demand for education and training that leads directly to available employment. In the absence of a community college, local groups such as the Erie Regional Manufacturing Partnerships are trying to fill the gap. However, none can address the existing community needs at scale. Groups like these will be partners with the community college. The need is too large for patchwork approach and the scale is growing. Relatively large layoffs by major employers coupled with a high percentage of local manufacturing workforce nearing retirement requires sustainable and scale-able retraining and new employee opportunities, which increases the urgent need for a community college. The community college model supports the needs of Erie County. The proposed curriculum is unique to Erie and meets the current needs. The model is nimble and can pivot if those needs shift. The kinds of students that typically enroll in community colleges require a level of advising and guidance that is not possible via distance learning.

The existing programs will be supported by a complimentary true community college. Erie County is missing out on massive federal investments specifically designed to address the challenges Erie currently faces. Two years ago, northeastern Pennsylvania community colleges received a four-year \$10 million federal grant to develop new degrees, certificate, and diploma programs in high priority career fields. The funding is part of the Trade Adjustment Assisted Community College and Career Training Competitive Grant Program, and Erie could be assessing that if it establishes the community college. Unprecedented corporate and philanthropic investments are on the table right now. There is over a half million dollars' worth of investments underway in the City of Erie proper downtown. It creates opportunities and will generate new programming and collaborative efforts for an Erie County Community College. The philanthropic community has committed over \$4 million towards the study and establishment of community college opportunities and will generate new programming and collaborative efforts for an Erie County Community College. A shifting higher education market supports the introduction of a community college. For profit institutions are costly. These for-profit institutions have received increased scrutiny based on new data collected by the U.S. Department of Education's College Scoreboard leading to closures across the country. At the same time, local colleges and universities are working hard to help Erie by providing associate degrees and shorter term certificates at reduced tuition rates. However, they are not designed to provide the kind of highly vocational training, developmental educational support, and strong ties to the labor market that community colleges typically support. Erie County has low education attainment, a soft base of high paying jobs, and significant poverty. A community college will be a lynchpin in increasing the educational attainment of the region, a key factor to attract new businesses and industry with decent paying jobs, which could lead to a reduction in poverty. Nationally, community colleges educate students at a much lower cost than four-year institutions; they attract a diverse set of students and have higher persistence rates for low-income students than for-profit institutions. Higher education via community college is a much less risky endeavor particularly for those of lower income. The graying demographics of Erie County will necessitate the replacement of many highly trained employees in the manufacturing sector. More people need necessary training and certificates. Erie County will benefit from a coordinated workforce in an economic development system that could nimbly access and respond to education and business needs. A community college could be the center of this integrated system, serving a centralized resource where employees are prepared for and connected with employment. A community college could also help foster the growth of the existing companies and attract new jobs to the area. It will serve as a feeder system to the already existing four-year universities. Community college of Erie will put Erie citizens on parity with the rest of the state and bring it to the funding table. Erie County is the largest population center in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania without a community college.

Taxpayers in Erie County are currently paying to support community colleges in other areas of the state, but not receiving any of the benefits, zero return on our investment. In a county that is struggling with poverty and population retention, a community college could help stem the tide of brain drain, and give students a chance to obtain training that matches locally available jobs. I'm getting there. Community college and university leaders throughout Erie County will benefit by a community college as a vehicle to increase the market of college-bound students. Local colleges and universities partner with the community college in communities where one exists to help carve out a niche in the market. Community colleges and other markets have established strong partnerships with existing post-secondary institutions which have proven to effectively increase enrollment and diverse course work offerings while increasing post-secondary attainment. Across the country enrollments at colleges and universities are declining while leaders from both political parties are exploring and even implementing free community college tuition programs. Former President Barack Obama talked of the value of two free years of community college, and in Tennessee and Oregon and most recently New York, that vision is becoming a reality. As Americans increasingly recognize that a high school often does not suffice, in communities fortunate enough to house a community college, extending public education to 14 years is becoming a bridge to either college or university or family sustaining jobs. It created an opportunity for a community college to fill in the gaps. Edinboro University is struggling with financial and enrollment challenges. The University of Pittsburgh and Penn State University are evaluating to close their local campuses. In an effort at the federal level, restriction of immigration is underway discouraging international student attraction and retention in the advent of the rural regional college, all represent market uncertainty but should not be viewed as a mitigating need. A community college in Erie County needs to create meaningful relationships with employees. The people in Erie County need to have access to training that translates into employment. If the community college forges these vital partnerships and seeks to be an engine of economic growth and workplace development, it will achieve its goals. While showing deep commitment to the community, four-year institutions in the Erie area offering two-year degrees is not an optimum solution to Erie's pre-baccalaureate education needs. Associate's degrees and providing shorter term certificates is not within the mission of most four-year colleges and universities. As a result, they are not designed to provide the kind of vocational training and developmental education, support, and strong ties to the labor market that community colleges typically offer for the student. This is not an economical root to such credentials since community colleges are always the least expensive post-secondary institution. While both community colleges and nearly all for-profit higher education institutions offer open access and educational opportunities, their similarities end right there. Over the past several years for-profit institutions have received increased scrutiny as new data collected by the U.S. Department of Education reveals that this sector charges higher tuition and has lower graduation rates than do community colleges.

In addition, a higher proportion of students attending these colleges have more student loan and default on this debt at a higher rate than community college students.

In my closing, 82 percent of the respondents between 18 and 34 in Erie County said it was important or very important for the Erie County region to have a college. Seventy-eight percent of the women surveyed said having a community college is important or very important to the region. Seventy-five percent said that they believe that there are enough potential students in Erie County to support a community college. Seventy-seven percent of respondents believe it is very important for a community college to be involved with local economic development. In addition, we know community college students require a level of advisement and guidance that is not possible via distance learning. Face-to-face advising creates strong relationships between student and advisors. This intrusive model known as integrated planning and advising for student success has been adopted as one part of a large-scale reform effort across Tennessee and North Carolina community college system and has expanded into a national program for the Gates Society. It is our opinion that there is a market demand capacity to support a community college in Erie County. The addition of a community college to the market will assist with the countywide and regional transformation. The intent of this research is to not paint the community college here as Erie County's lifeline, but will define the essential role it could be in this transformation. That is taken right out of the community college application form, and it's not an attempt to litigate or validate because Erie County citizens have done that in 2006, we have done it in 2010. In 2016, this body, I'm proud to say, had the political will to advance it to the state level. We've met every requirement every other community college of the 14 have met, and we expect that our citizens will be afforded the same opportunities the other 14 community colleges, counties or areas that have community colleges are indeed afforded. Erie County has the poorest zip code in the Commonwealth. Numbers have gotten worse since 2006, they've gotten worse since 2010, they've gotten worse since 2016. Our state delegation, please advance the concerns of Erie County government with the board and the Department of Education, with the Governor, with both Chambers of the House, give Erie County residents a community college which we richly deserve.

Mr. Anderson commended Councilman Horton for his energy and passion on the issue of the community college. He feels that the citizens deserve a community college and joins Mr. Horton in his devotion for the issue.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Fatica moved to amend the agenda to make Ordinance 8, 2019 "First 2019 Drug & Alcohol Abuse Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$293,474 for Creation of Six New Positions." a second reading.. This was seconded by Dr. Foust and carried in a unanimous vote.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 8, 2019, "First 2019 Drug and Alcohol Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$293,474 for Six New Positions". (Personnel Committee) Mr. Smith gave a second reading of Ordinance Number 8, 2019, "First 2019 Drug and Alcohol Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$293,474 for Six New Positions". It was moved by Mrs. Fatica, seconded by Dr. Foust and passed unanimously.

Possible appointment of Michael Glass to the Erie County Convention Center Authority representing District 6. (Personnel Committee) The appointment of Michael Glass to the Erie County Convention Center Authority, representing District 6 was moved by Mr. Rastetter and seconded by Mr. Anderson. It was approved unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Leone commented on the impending loss of an excellent Council employee Denee' Breter, who is taking another position. Leone stated how much he is going to miss Denee', and that the loss for Erie County is going to be the gain of the federal courts. That all members feel she has performed her job in an outstanding manner. Effusive in his praise, Chairman Leone emphasized how much he would miss Denee' personally and professionally. Dr. Foust echoed how much his experiences with Denee' have been positive. He recalled she had been recommended by the former County Executive Grossman which was not a strong selling point in his book (smiling). Breter, however, had an outstanding interview. She in fact was head and shoulders above all the other candidates. He stated he would miss her, her excellent work and offered good luck in the future. Mr. Horton remembered how coming into office brand new was like stepping on a merry-go-round. He added that he wouldn't have been able to accomplish many of the things he has without her help. He assured her that he and his wife would see her again. Mrs. Loll said that whenever she needed something, she knew it would get done fast, and get done right if she asked Denee'. Loll echoed the sentiment of Members that Denee' would be missed. Mrs. Fatica related that when she needed something done the previous day that it had been done as if by magic. She

thanked her for being a friend to herself and to her husband Former Council Member Phil Fatica. Mr. Rastetter thanked Denee' for how much she has taught him over the past year; more than all these others put together (laughing). Mr. Anderson stated it had been an honor to know her and that she had been most helpful in his transition into Council. Anderson added how much he enjoyed working with Mrs. Breter and expected no less from another "eastsider".

Dr. Foust moved to adjourn the longest two item meeting in County history at 7:56pm.