

LUZERNE COUNTY COUNCIL

January 2, 2012

11:30 AM Council Meeting Room
2011 North River Street
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE

The first official meeting of the Luzerne county Council convened in the Council Meeting Room on January 2, 2012. The meeting commenced at 11:30 AM with the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Chair, James Bobeck.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

James Bobeck
Edward Brominski
Elaine Maddon Curry
Harry Haas
Linda McClosky Houck
Eugene Kelleher
Timothy McGinley
Rick Morelli
Stephen A. Urban
Stephen J. Urban
Rick Williams

ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT

Colette Check, Acting Clerk

PUBLIC COMMENT (AGENDA ITEMS)

Mr. Walter Griffith, Luzerne County Controller, questioned the salaries of Interim Manager and Interim Clerk, and Mr. Bobeck assured him that Council would formalize everything with the signing of the Letters of Intent. Check signing, Services of Row Officers, and Employment lie with the Executive branch of government. Griffith asked Agendas be posted early on webpage.

Mr. John Newman of Nanticoke commented on the integrity, knowledge, skills and abilities of Tom Pribula, Interim Manager. He stated his concerns on the "prospective" Manager and his financial situation and urged Council members to keep Mr. Pribula until the finalists were thoroughly researched. Mr. Bobeck assured him the vetting process is still continuing.

Mr. Thomas Dombroski of Kingston Township congratulated the new Council Members and "seconded" what Mr. Newman had expressed about the County Manager candidates. He stated that he hopes Council will use "common sense" in their decision making processes. He endorsed Mr. Pribula as County Manager.

Ms. Kathy Dobash of Hazleton expressed concern about the Chair violating Section 12.14 of the Charter because of service as an Arbitrator and Master. Also commented that a member of the Home Rule Study Commission and Transition Member interviewed for Clerk and to her that was for selfish purposes and not good government.

Mr. Jack Schumacher of Kingston congratulated the Council and hopes the people of Luzerne County get behind these people and show them appreciation for what they are doing.

Mr. George Race of Exeter requested that meeting time be pushed to 7:00 PM to allow for more people to attend.

MOTIONS:

A. MOTION to approve Robert's Rules of Order as a temporary rule structure for conducting Council business

Motion – Edward Brominski

Second – Rick Morelli

Unanimous Vote

Motion Carried.

B. MOTION to open nominations for Chair of County Council

Motion – Eugene Kelleher

Second- Timothy McGinley

Ayes on motion. Motion carried.

a. Nomination of Jim Bobeck for Chair of County Council

Nomination – Tim McGinley

Second – Elaine Maddon Curry

No further nominations.

Ayes to close nominations. Nominations closed. Roll Call vote:

2 Abstentions: Stephen A. Urban and Stephen J. Urban

All others voted in favor of James Bobeck.

James Bobeck was named Chair of County Council by a vote of 9 ayes and 2 abstentions.

C. MOTION to open nominations for Vice-Chair of County Council

Motion – Harry Haas

Second – Rick Williams

Ayes on motion. Motion carried.

a. Nomination of Linda Houck for Vice-Chair of County Council

Nomination– Eugene Kelleher

Second- Rick Williams

b. Nomination of Rick Morelli for Vice-Chair of County Council

Nomination– Stephen J. Urban

Second – Stephen A. Urban

No further nominations.

Ayes to close nominations. Nominations closed. Roll call vote:

7 in favor of Houck: Jim Bobeck, Ed Brominski, Elaine Maddon Curry, Linda McClosky Houck,

Eugene Kelleher, Tim McGinley, and Rick Williams

4 in favor of Morelli: Harry Haas, Rick Morelli, Stephen A. Urban and Stephen J. Urban

Linda McClosky Houck was named Vice Chair of County Council by a vote of 7-4.

RESOLUTIONS

A. Resolution by the Luzerne County Council Appointing Interim County Manager, effective immediately for a period not to exceed 6 months.

Motion to nominate Thomas Pribula – Eugene Kelleher

Second – Rick Williams

Roll call vote:

3 Opposed: Tim McGinley, Stephen A. Urban, Stephen J. Urban

All others in favor.

Motion carries 8– 3. Thomas Pribula was named Interim Luzerne County Manager.

B. Resolution by the Luzerne County Council Appointing Interim County Clerk, effective immediately for a period not to exceed 6 months.

Motion to nominate Colette J. Check – Rick Morelli

Second – Harry Haas

Roll call vote:

1 opposed – Ed Brominski

1 abstention – Stephen A. Urban

All others in favor.

Motion carries 9-1-1. Colette J. Check was named Interim Clerk to County Council.

C. Resolution by the Luzerne County Council Continuing Services of Former Row Officer and Deputies

Motion - Ed Brominski

Second – Rick Williams

Roll call vote:

2 opposed – Stephen A. Urban, Stephen J. Urban

All others in favor.

Motion carries 9-2: Resolution for Continuing Services of Former Row Officers and Deputies passes.

A Motion to approve the Council's regular meeting time as every Tuesday @ 6:01 PM which shall remain in effect until modified by County Council:

Motion - Elaine Maddon Curry

Second – Mr. Morelli

Roll call vote:

2 opposed – Stephen A. Urban, Stephen J. Urban

All others in favor.

Motion carries 9 -2.

Mr. Morelli asked about the possibility of internet viewing of Council meetings; Mr. Kelleher thanked the Zoning Department for moving their meeting upstairs; Stephen A. Urban asked for more substance to the Agendas.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Edward Holleran asked Council's permission to hold Constable Meetings in the Meeting Room.

Mr. George Race of Exeter asked Council to look closely at Salaries and Benefits and to resist the temptation to pander to Government Union employees. He apologized to Mr. Pribula for thinking that he would play the "Shell Game" with taxpayer money. He said that Pribula stepped down before he would do that and Mr. Race believes that the Council should remember this when they appoint a permanent Manager.

Mr. John Newman of Nanticoke asked that the elevator in the Parking Garage be repaired as soon as possible.

Mr. Angel Jirau of Wilkes-Barre expressed his desire to have a Diversity Commission where everyone's voice would be heard. He believes the Council needs to be more present at Homeless Shelters, Food Kitchens, etc. He asked that a new Diversity Commission be established and will be looking for Council members to work with the City.

Mr. Brian Shiner of Kingston asked that the name of the Room be changed and said he believes that a new microphone system is needed for the room. He asked who swore the Urbans into office today.

Mr. Stephen A. Urban responded to the question, stating that he and Mr. Stephen J. Urban had been sworn in by a notary during a private ceremony at their home.

Mr. Ed Warkiewicz believes that a bonding problem could occur when looking at the prospective County Manager. He said that it could range from 200-300% higher than the usual cost with someone who has financial issues.

Mr. Omeed Firouzi endorsed both Eileen Cipriani and Melissa Saba as people of excellent character who should be placed on Boards and Commissions when you are placing people in positions.

Mr. Ed Chesnovitch stated he doesn't know how anyone could be on the Council when he is totally against the Charter.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Edward Brominski – Thank you every one for being here and I am looking forward to working with you for the County.

Ms. Houck – I am honored to be part of the first County Council and we will do our best for the County.

Ms. Curry – Today is an opportunity for a new beginning to ensure our county moves ahead with a solid forward. What Luzerne County needs is a new, bold first step and we will work very hard to make you proud of Luzerne County once again.

Stephen J. Urban – Thank you for the faith and trust that you have given to us. We have a lot of work with Agenda items going forward. I am for the taxpayer; I look out for the small individual. We are not always going to agree and there will be fireworks here and there, but today has been pretty mild. I look forward to disagreements because we are independent minds and we do what is right.

Rick Morelli – It is an honor and privilege to be here. And as a member who helped to write this Charter, it is an honor to be here to do what we have to do. I feel we have no choice but to do the right thing and move this County in the right direction. We have a great group of people who will disagree at times but at the end of the day we have to do what is best for the public of Luzerne County. I also want to say that in my campaign, my promise was not to take a salary for this position. I am going to be giving my salary to the following charities: Helping Hands, the SPCA, The American Red Cross, and the American Cancer Society. I want to do this to give back and to show my support.

Rick Williams – I am thrilled and honored to serve the public. My dream is that years from now people will use the words, "excellence", "best practices" to describe Luzerne County. It is my dream that we put in place a quality of life we don't have right now in Luzerne County. I will work hard and I support my Council members for their independence and I salute them for using that word!

Eugene Kelleher – Someone once said, "Do not follow where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail". I hope we leave a nice trail and not one littered with poor politics and poor government. I hope the people up here will be independent. There was a lot of independent thinking in the selections of who will or will not serve. We don't always agree. I was the minority of 1 on one of the votes. I walked out of the meeting feeling, "Did they hear my voice?" But everyone listened and the decision was made in the best interest of the County. I look forward to serving with these people and doing what is best for all the taxpayers of the County.

Harry Haas – Thanks to everyone for coming out and I know we will be looking for your continued support. This group of 11 really has the best interests of the County at heart. And I'm so excited to see politics in non-existent in this group...at least from what I can tell! The people of Luzerne County have chosen 11 dynamic people and I want to ask you for your continued support as we make changes and move this county in the right direction. It's not going to happen overnight as Judge Burke has said. It's going to take a long time to right the course, if you will. I come bearing a gift for everyone (and its OK Mr. Bobeck...I checked charter on this) a book titled The Slight Edge and it states that if you want to make changes in your life, you have do it incrementally. When you re-make government, you do it slowly and it's an honor to serve with all of you and with Acting Manager, Tom Pribula.

Stephen A. Urban – I want to thank the residents of Luzerne County who are here and those who are not here. This is the fourth time that I have been elected to office. I am proud of having been elected and proud of my Son being elected. We celebrated this morning. With that being said, the longer you stay here, the more critics you will have because of the more decisions you will have made. But in the end, stick it out and do what your heart says is the right thing to do. That is what I am going to do. I took an Oath of Office to defend the Constitution of the United States, and the Charter just like everyone else did. I will stand by my Oath. Mr. Chesnovich, no matter how many times you criticize me, you have the right to do so. But I will give you a warning...criticism must be truthful because as a public official, those who defame us will suffer the consequences in the Court of Law. God Bless You all!

Timothy McGinley – I am going to stand so that I may see everyone. It is an historic day in Luzerne County and I am proud to be part of it. There are a few remarks I would like to make. First, it is a new beginning for our county as we enter 2012. I would like to thank several people: the Home Rule Charter Study Commission who did a great job putting together this new government; the Home Rule Transition Committee who did a lot of hard work which at was completed so when Council came in

most of the work was done; I'd like to thank Council members who put in a lot of time and effort and who have worked hard and very professionally. I would also like to thank Ken Mohr, our Consultant, and the Pennsylvania Economy League who worked together to provide us with technical assistance. I have a few goals: To govern Luzerne County in a fair, honest, and transparent way; to provide services to our constituents in an efficient, cost efficient, and customer friendly atmosphere; to leave behind things of the past; and to treat each member with respect and civility. Finally to everyone in the County we want healthy and robust discussions to bring about positive results for everyone. A Healthy and Happy New Year to everyone!

James Bobeck – Just to let everyone know there will be a meeting tomorrow at 6:01. We realize the acoustics in this room are not the best. We will try our best to work with everyone to ensure checks and balances between the Executive and the Legislative divisions and I have a younger brother at Penn State who informed me that there is a game about to begin shortly.

Do I have a Motion to Adjourn?

Motion to adjourn: Mr. Morelli
Second: Mr. Williams
Meeting ended at 12:22 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Colette J. Check
Clerk to Council