



Allentown

435 Hamilton Street
Allentown, Pa. 18101

Minutes - Final

City Council

Wednesday, April 20, 2022

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

Special Meeting to Act on CED Director Appointment

Roll Call: Vice President Zucal

Present: 7 - Candida Affa, Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Joshua Siegel, and Natalie Santos

RESOLUTIONS FOR FINAL PASSAGE (To be Voted On):

[15-5022](#) Appointment of the Community and Economic Development Director

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [R69 CD Director Appointment](#)

[Vicky Kistler Resume](#)

[Resolution #30418](#)

Mayor Matt Tuerk stated that he appreciates the opportunity to be here tonight. Often people say there is a person that needs no introduction. He will give Vicky a little introduction here. You all got the memo, but he is beyond thrilled to bring forward Vicky Kistler as his candidate as the Director in the department of Community and Economic Development. Vicky has 15 years of experience managing the Health Bureau and have been a fantastic manager during her career. That managerial experience is one thing that is going to help her excel in this position, but more importantly in some respect is the public health knowledge that she is bringing to the role. They are post Covid in an environment that one of the most important things that a city can do is to ensure the social determinants to health are taking care of and leading to healthy outcomes to our residents and Vicky will bring that knowledge not just to her role as the Department of Community and Economic Development Director, but she will spread that knowledge throughout our whole cabinet. He stated that he could not be more excited to bring Vicky forward. It doesn't need much of an introduction. Her record speaks for her.

Ms. Vicky Kistler stated that she can't thank Mayor Tuerk enough for the support and the kind words and all of them for the relationships that they had for the past 29 years that she is actually with the city. She can't tell them enough how much that she has learned in the past almost two months

of being in the DCED department and how happy she is to come into that department at what she sees as its most pivotal moment. As you know, in the last two years, they have made efforts to modernize the Health Department. It has been a tedious painful process that we are now starting for the first time to recognize and reap the rewards of that. They are at that point now with Building Standards and Safety, Planning and Zoning, with the implementation of the Intergov System. The Intergov System is going to be an absolute mixed blessing for us because it is going to show us all our single points of failure and it is going to monitor all of our tremendous success. She is so happy to come into this position at a time when we are going to modernize those departments, but also at a time when this administration is focused on the neighborhoods. As we learned so clearly with Covid that is where we needed to take our outreach and we needed to take our information in education in order to have an impact in this city, it has to be neighborhood based. She is excited that the mayor is supportive of all of those plans to engage the community into those neighborhoods so much so that we have an intent to blend the Department of Recreation and Special Events into the office of neighborhood engagement so we can get our citizens to engage socially, recreationally. We can look at the cleanliness, the Zoning that affects our neighborhoods, the quality of the houses that affects our neighborhoods and ultimately improves the health and the lives of the people who live here. To her, the city is on the cusps of one of the most exciting times and to have the opportunity to lead a group of who she found to be an incredibly dedicated group of individuals. It is a privilege and an honor.

Mr. Ed Zucal asked Ms. Kistler when she talks about modernizing the different department, we are you thinking about doing.

Ms. Vicky Kistler stated that Leonard Lightner and Tom Williams started that process of bringing on Intergov. Intergov is the computer system that is going to take what is now a piece of paper that touches upwards of 12 desks before a business permit, or a license, or an inspection gets triggered. It is going to allow citizens in real time to see the status of their issue. Of their permit, of their application, or their licensure. It is going to allow communications with citizens by email, by text, rather by snail mail. It is going to allow a whole new level of interface between our customers and our service delivery personnel. It is also going to provide data. Data that we can share in real time on blight properties, on permits, on citations, on inspections, that you can look at, that the citizens can look at and that perspective developers can look at to know more about our city. Some of the software is incredibly exciting. It can post pictures of actual developments so that people can see it in its progress. There is a lot of misunderstanding about Code Enforcement and Building Standards and Safety and what land use development is. She stated that she does not

understand it all and learning, but she thinks the citizenry needs the opportunity and Council needs the opportunity to see how these departments function and the tools that we are going to be implementing will allow that to happen.

Mayor Matt Tuerk stated that the modernization of the department builds on Vicky's intuitive understanding of how it works. How to improve the processes. She has an intuitive understanding of improving processes which she has already been through a continuous improvement effort. She has brought that to the Health Bureau. The improvement in service delivery that we saw in the Health Bureau we should see it in our Community and Economic Development department because of the amazing efforts and intelligence that shifts will bring to that job. It is not just technology. It is making sure that we are thoughtful on who we do things and we respond to a 21st Century environment.

Mr. Ed Zucal asked Ms. Kistler what are some of her goals.

Ms. Vicky Kistler stated that some of her goals are to actually and we they started was a gamble lock in our Building Standards and Safety Department. Where we took people that has no experience in Building Standards and Safety and made them walk through the entire process with the seasoned staff and we mapped that out and during that point as we mapped that out we have identified areas of improvement and single points of failure. She stated that she would like to see a standard operating procedure manual for every single operations that goes along the way. That can become a training tool. That can also become a comparative tool to best practice models. We need to put ourselves in the role of the customer. We need an overhaul on the customer service end of things. Not that our staff is not geared to customer service, but when you have a paper-based system, we spend an exuberant amount of time chasing paper instead of talking to people. One of the goals is that we have better interfacing. We also need to pay some attention to our diversity, our equity, and our inclusion processes within this department because we do have challenges when it comes to language, when it comes to culture, when it comes to how you develop a business. She stated that some of her goals are to look at how they better communicate with citizens that may have some challenges communicating in a way we traditionally have. Another one of her goals is to actually look at these positions and do a tremendous amount with possible with cross-training so that when we have an illness, when we have a vacancy where possible because we do have some specialized positions, but where possible we can have folks cross-trained to be able to fill those vacancies and those situations.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated he saw the salary that the mayor is proposing to her

and it is well within reason. He stated that her experience just with the city alone he believes she deserves that. Although, all your experience is in healthcare is fair to say. He was just a little concern that we are taking a carpenter and trying to make them a plumber.

Ms. Vicky Kistler stated that she understands his concerns. To speak to that in her mind, leadership is leadership and if you build a good team and if you can get that team to support your philosophy and your plan, you can lead. She did not know how to respond to a pandemic. She stated that she knew how to pivot in turn and knew how to empower her team to go with her. She was very fortunate that they did. The other piece to that is that this city has recruited some amazingly talented individuals who she thinks have some great ideas and with proper tools, they can contribute to a great level if we empower them. She also learned about social determinants to health when she ran the shelter in the community and when she worked in the two local hospitals. Although she will never be a Planning and Zoning Plan Review Expert or possibly even a Codes Developer, she is hoping that she can rely on those folks to do those tools, but she can see the bigger picture and work with the administration and Council to take what the citizens ask for, what you ask for, and what Mayor Tuerk asked for and try to bring it into one plan with the behind it.

Mr. Ed Zucal asked if anyone else from Council.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks commended Ms. Kistler on the work that she done so far over the past 13 years in the health bureau. He stated that he had the honor and privilege to work with a number of your people in the Healthy Kids, Healthy Allentown Program Afterschool Feeding Program and they are just wonderful people. That program ended up winning an award from the National League of Cities and it is because of the hard work your people do. He stated that he has known her for a very long time since she first came on the job and has nothing, but good things to say about her. You hit the nail on the head when you said it is how you handle people. You are a people person and that to him means more than anything else. You certainly not a plumber or not a carpenter, but wearing a number of different hats as you do and you will still have direction over the Health Bureau and to him, it is important. He stated to Ms. Kistler that she has done a fantastic job and has his full support and will certainly be supporting her in this endeavor.

Ms. Vicky Kistler thanked Mr. Hendricks and said thank you for be willing to get down in the weeds far enough to meet those people and see how lucky she was to have them.

Ms. Candida Affa echoed the Mayor's excitement because she is ecstatic

through the six or seven years that she has been here there is not a task in the past that she heard about where watching her work with the pandemic and everything. There isn't a task that you don't excel at. She stated that she understands Mr. Zucal's concerns, but like Mr. Hendricks said you are a leader. When Vicky speaks everyone listens, including Council. We have for the past six years and she knows that Ms. Kistler will excel at this. She has already experienced it with Heidi and Kelly as far as the point system. She stated that immediately within one week you had me in touch with them and keep her well informed. She stated that she believes that is what she is going to enjoy and the people that works with her is not only your drive, but your intelligence with your communications skills. She stated that she is with her 100 percent.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she is sorry about her tardiness. She was upstairs with the Inside Allentown folks. She stated that Ms. Kistler had mentioned about social determinants, health being like a driving factor. She asked would she be able to speak to that.

Ms. Vicky Kistler stated that if you look at education, housing and connectivity and social engagement and opportunities that come to individuals in a community, they all play a role in the health outcome. It was very very clear during Covid that people that had a pre-determined connection to a healthcare provider had a more solid positive outcome from their Covid diagnosis. The fact that we have the situation that we do where we have people living in unsafe housing. We have people doubling up and tripling up. There are kids who can't focus in school. We have daycare situations that our kids are plopped in front of a TV instead of a ready for school program. All of those things contribute to the health and welfare of a neighborhood. We need the neighborhoods. This isn't a situation that government can't solve. We need a neighborhood resolution to a neighborhood situation. One of the things that drives the economy is jobs. In her 25 years with the city, she has been a member of the DCED team and heard of them talk and seen them make changes and they have made progress on many levels, but they still have a long way to go to address some of those social determinants of health. A lot of them have to be addressed through relationships. Relationships with a school district, relationships with our community partners. Many of the things you bring up to Council when it comes to housing and safe and affordable housing. Those are all issues that affect not just the personal health, but the community health and those are what the administration has chosen to focus on and why she wants to be a part of this administrative team.

Mr. Joshua Siegel stated that it is not much more that he can say that his colleagues haven't already said in terms of admiration. He just wanted to commend her as well. The Mayor has made a wise and extraordinary

brilliant decision in moving you forward in this position. His duration on Council has been a lot shorter, but he can say that he is ecstatic. In the time that he has worked with her he has been thoroughly impressed by her command of the details, your capacity to relationship building. He stated that she hit the nail on the head. We are in a really unprecedented time in Allentown. He stated that he thinks adversity proves leadership and she demonstrated, especially during Covid how capable she is as a leader. Nobody could understand how to respond to a once in a century pandemic. She has demonstrated under adversity and challenges under many strifes that you are adaptable, innovative, and capable of collaborating and certainly if we are going to be successful as a city whether it is regionalizing the Health Bureau, having the conversations with the county right now, whether it is working with our anchor institutions like our hospitals, our businesses, he doesn't think that there is anyone as skilled in-depth and prepared and commands the respect and admiration of everybody in the city in the community to lead the department forward. He stated that she has demonstrated the marketability to get the nuance, the details, or whether it is how many kids to a daycare facility to make sure our children are safe when they are being cared for or whether it is making sure that we optimizing single points of failure and making sure we are figuring out how we can be more efficient. He stated that he is looking forward to working with her and that she will be an incredible Director of Community and Economic Development. he thinks ultimately that leadership is leadership. He stated that he thinks with her can you build these relationships, can you collaborate, can you bring everyone together at the end of the day he knows that she will be outcome focus and evidence based on that is what matters most for this department. He thinks that this city will be well served by you in this position. He thanked Ms. Kistler.

Mr. Ed Zucal thanked Mr. Siegel and asked if there was anything from the public.

Yes: 7 - Candida Affa, Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Joshua Siegel, and Natalie Santos

Enactment No: 30418

ADJOURNED: 6:18 PM