



# Allentown

435 Hamilton Street  
Allentown, Pa. 18101

## Minutes - Final

### City Council

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Wednesday, September 8, 2021

5:00 PM

Council Chambers

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#### Confirmation Hearing

#### Call to Order: Council President Guridy

This is a special council meeting to discuss and act on the Mayor's nomination of Charles Roca as Police Chief.

#### Roll Call

**Present:** 7 - Candida Affa, Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Julio Guridy, Ed Zucal, Ce-Ce Gerlach, and Joshua Siegel

#### RESOLUTIONS FOR FINAL PASSAGE (To be Voted On):

[15-4544](#)

R145

Appointment of Charles Roca as Police Chief, effective September 4 at a salary of \$130,000

**Attachments:** [R145 Appointment of Police Chief](#)

[ROCA RESUME](#)

[Charles Roca Nomination](#)

[CG Questions 1](#)

[Public Safety Questions 2](#)

[Memo from Mayor Ray O'Connell regarding Interim Chief of Police](#)

[Appointment - Charles Roca](#)

[Code - Director Appts, Interim Status](#)

[West Park - CR](#)

[Roca Letter](#)

[Resolution #30280](#)

Mayor Ray O'Connell stated that in the city of Allentown in front of you, you have his letter concerning Mr. Roca's nomination. When he ran for City Council many times and ran for Mayor a few times, he always ran with the idea of growing your own. There is no perfect example of growing your own than Charles Roca. Dodd Elementary, South Mountain, Allen his freshman year, and Dieruff his 10th, 11th, and 12th grade year. Attached, you will see his resume. He stated that he has worked with Chief Roca since June 17. He is an outstanding individual. A great leader and great skills.

Interim Chief Charles Roca thanked the Mayor and Council and stated that he is very humbled and honored to be in front of them today to discuss the confirmation of him as Chief of Police in Allentown. It gives him great passion and happiness to be in front of them today. His mother came from Guatemala to the United States in the early 70s and moved into Allentown and made Allentown our home. Many loved ones live in Allentown and surrounding areas. We need consistency in leadership. It is about partnerships. Policing is not done in a silo. It is done in a partnership. It is done by putting our systems together and moving forward. This past 6th of September, there was an incident that our officers were out handling a disturbance in the area of Hall and Turner Streets where two officers observed an individual a few feet or block away fired a gun at them, a couple of rounds and they had to take cover from this individual. They did attempt to take him, but it is never acceptable for our officers to be shot at. The violence that are other people's mind has occurred over the past few months in Allentown is not unique to Allentown. It is a thing that is happening across the nation. We need to look at solutions rather than finger pointing or blaming. One of the things he wants to do is bring them together as a community that says it is not acceptable. His plan is inclusive of our partnerships with people out in the community with the District Attorney's office. With our federal partners. With our state partners. He feels that this is not just a Confirmation about him, it is a Confirmation of the Allentown Police Department. We are very much willing partners to move this city forward. It is not about the buildings. It is about the people. He is a person from the city. He did not grow up with a silver spoon in his mouth. What he has earned in this department were blood, sweat and tears. There were many instances that he has experienced throughout his lifetime and many experiences in his professional life as a police officer and what he brings to the table to them is a uniquely qualified set of circumstances that they can bridge the gaps of parts that may be missing. Oftentimes he hears in the community that the police don't help them or they do not know how to reach the police. He stated that they will change that narrative and move forward so that people know that the police are an advocate in this. When he was a PSA 2 Captain in the west end working the PSA model, one of the things that he would tell the community group is that he is not only the PSA Captain, but an advocate for the city or your section of the city. That is what he wants to bring to light as the Chief of Police in Allentown. We have to be an advocate not only for our residents, but for people coming into our city. It is not a solution of arresting people and putting them in jail, but it is empowering our community and empowering our officers. Putting a good succession plan in our department where we as a community are open and transparent, not only within the city departments, but also to the people in the community who matters or might have some issues that they are working through. He stated that he has come in

contact and worked with many people in the community and always said it does not matter to him what your life status is. You could be unsheltered, dealing with mental health concerns, you could be dealing with a bunch of issues: drug addiction, That issue does not criminalize your behavior activity. What we need is partnerships and how we grow together is part of that piece that he is offering going forward. It is important to know that this is not just about him. This is about the new patrolman on the street. The many fine men and women in the department that we have today. The many fine city employees we have here. This is a partnership of how we are as a city are going to move forward. Getting through this pandemic and making sure that we have the best relationship established. The best community resources put out there and we leverage our partnerships so that the city of Allentown can shine. The true way that he knows that it can be. Oftentimes, we people talk about Allentown, they harken back to a time when you talk about the Hess's Patio Restaurant and getting your strawberry pie or walking down Hamilton Street before they had the overhangs/canopies there and you are walking to different stores and restaurants. But, again, it is about experience. We have a lot of people coming into Allentown. Our census shows that our population is now 125,000, but he will submit to them that the population is a lot more and would venture to guess that there are way more that are uncounted now. It is important that we as a city not only recognize that, but investment in public safety is and an investment in our future and prosperity as well. It is not just about policing and not just about fire, EMS, or city development, but it is about making sure we are a community go forward.

Mr. Julio Guridy thanked the Interim Chief and stated that let the record state that we have all Councilmembers here and watching on other media watching in Council Chambers.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that the Public Safety Committee sent Mr. Roca a set of questions as did Councilperson Gerlach. They are all posted on the city website as are two recommendations for Mr. Roca.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated that the website was Allentownpa.gov.

Mr. Ed Zucal thanked everyone for coming. He stated that he and Interim Chief Roca had a couple of conversations since this developed. He wants to direct their attention to those that are viewing or those that are here. It was a memorandum and it supposed to been a cabinet appointment back in June and that did not go through. There were some issues associated with it which he is not getting into. However, there was a Memorandum of Understanding sent to the Mayor from City Council President Guridy and not signed by, but agreed upon the five of the seven members of Council. Now, in the event that somewhere down the road that we are sued as a

result of that of appointment or lack of he will ask the Solicitor Mr. Smith, will this be a discoverable document in that lawsuit. Would you say if you were the plaintiff or defendant, would it be more beneficial to the plaintiff or the defendant. The defendant being Council.

Mr. Julio Guridy stated a memorandum. The same thing.

Mr. Charles Smith stated that it would be discoverable document. He stated that he cannot give an opinion on that. He would have to know the context of the lawsuit.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated to Mayor O'Connell that the Charter says that and he stated he is not saying Mr. Roca does not have these qualifications. The Charter says that the selections should be made on the base of merit selection. Have you considered or thought about anybody else other than Mr. Roca.

Mayor Ray O'Connell stated yes, he had. The individual that you stated that he brought forward. He stated that since that memo was sent to him by five members of City Council. Interim Chief Charles Roca is the first person that he is bringing forth as a nominee from his office.

Mr. Ed Zucal read what the memo says so that everyone is clear. There will be no meetings to Confirm and/or Appoint a Managing Director or Department Head this calendar year. Interim Chief Roca would be considered a Department Head obviously. He state to Mr. Roca that Council sent him some questions and one of those questions came from Mr. Hendricks with regards to the ballot question. This year, it will be on in November about the five mile limit. He asked Mr. Roca should that fail, what is your concerns or are you willing to move into the city. Obviously, it would be a year from your appointment which will be today, possibly. Have you graduated from the Northwestern School of Police Management? Ms. Affa said that Assistant Chief Roca was doing the job as the Chief, but was only receiving the Assistant Chief salary. He stated that there are options under the Charter that City Council can do to adjust either the finances of the Interim position or to extend it. He stated that he does not believe that taken any of it under consideration. Unless, there are going to be taken tonight. She also said that the reality is that many people use this as a stepping stone and the city needs some stability. He stated let me give you some history in terms of stability: Assistant Chief Morris was confirmed to Chief back in 2016, and left in early 2017 for another job. Chief Dorney Interim appointment to Chief on April 2017 to March 2018. That is 11 months and he went to South Whitehall Township. Chief Alsleben was named Interim Chief and remained that for almost 18 months. Now, as you recall they said it was one of the most violent years in 2019 that the city's

ever seen. If you read the papers and follow the facts, we are on a schedule to beat that. He is not saying that is anything to do with Chief Roca. It is about Interim Chiefs to appointment Chiefs. One Mayoral candidate made a statement stated that we need to get him appointed so that the shootings stop. There is no correlation between appointments and crime. Chief Granitz was appointed in 9/11/19 to 6/19/21. Now, however, he was a city resident and now, we bring Mr. Roca. Back in school, in math, there was a common denominator that you can use and so far all he sees here is, except for Mr. Granitz is that none of these folks were Allentown residents. His concern is whether or not he will keep his word about moving in which he feels is a fair concern.

Interim Chief Charles Roca stated that he is prepared to move into the city. He stated that he discussed it with his wife and family. He stated yes, sir. He stated that he has, Northwestern Police School. He stated to Mr. Zucal, thank you for bringing that up. In his statement here is one of the things that he have noticed that is consistent with the Allentown leadership in the past is that it is inconsistent. That is something that he wants to change. One of the things about moving to the city and living in the city which you don't mention is that he was living here for several years before and there is a lot of factors that come into a persons personal life that requires a move or different changes, but in speaking with his family and you talking about keeping his word, the one the things he feels strongly about is his integrity. That is what he brings to the table as well. He doesn't just say listen to his words, but watch him by his actions. He hopes that the faith that they will have in him as the Chief of Police would to be to put that trust into him and see by his actions what he can do and what he can accomplish.

Mr. Julio Guridy asked if there were any further questions Mr. Zucal. He asked if there were any other comments from Council.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that he is going to follow up on Mr. Zucal. One of the issues is a resolving door. In the position in which you seek tonight. It is most important and our citizens need assurance that they have a consistent team of leadership within our Police Department. The most important to that end is the position of Chief. He asked Mr. Roca to commit to that request and pledge to remain in this position for at least the near term.

Interim Chief Charles Roca stated absolutely. One of the things that shows this is that he stepped into the role. He could have no, when asked to become Interim Chief, but he didn't. He wanted to step into this role so that he could add that stability. He is not Glenn Granitz, Tony Alsleben, Glenn Dorney, or Keith Morris. He is Charles Roca. Born in the city of Allentown, son of immigrants that came here from Guatemala and to

establish a better life. He knows how it is to speak a different language and not understand the community. He is about building bridges and breaking down barriers in communications. One of the things that he wants to stress to Council is that it is not just about him. This is about what is best for the department. We are in this together. He considers the Allentown Police Department his family. We may not always agree and be on the same step, but we are in this together. We are going to make sure as we move forward, we are doing it together. If there are issues that arise, we talk about it, communicate and move forward. His passion is this city. He worships here, goes to many of the restaurants here, and plan to move in here. My passion is this city. He worships here and go to many of the restaurants and plan to move in here. That is not something that he will tell them, not be just his words, but by his actions.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that he spoke to a number of officers over the last month or so and almost to a T everyone said only good things about you, support this position and you becoming the permanent Chief.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that he hit the nail on the head when he said he was Charles Roca. We need to look at the man we are Confirming tonight. All the citizens and all up here get upset when we lose great leaders. We just lost one of the paramedics. This happens, but she wants people to be aware of the fact that we are Confirming Charles Roca. Along with what Mr. Hendricks has said, she spoke to officers and the same thing. Several of them said they need stability. They want stability as soon as possible. We just went through the records of how many we lost. For the safety of the citizens and the men that you are going to lead, she believes this is the time. She was quoted in the paper, but also was quoted in the paper about the memo. She was also quoted in the paper saying it was too broad. We made a mistake by making it that broad. She stated that she thinks the city needs a Chief of Police and thinks we need one now. She stated that she believes he is the man for the job.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated concerning process. With the memo and the questions Mr. Zucal asked the Solicitor, she wants to make sure that by us Confirming anyone to a Department Head position that we wouldn't be in a legal situation in the future. If there were other folks that were potentially going to be appointed and that memo came out and they were not. She wants to make sure that legally we are good because she knows some of the concerns of those on Council. Our current Mayor is going into full retirement soon in 2022. Appointing someone to a permanent position was not appropriate for that other individual. It turns out from the Solicitor that if something were to come up legally, that document would be pertinent. Bringing it out of the realm of hypothetical and bringing it to more concrete.

Mr. Charles Smith stated that the question is whether it would be discoverable. He is trying to imagine a situation or litigation where in which it would arise and someone would do a standard request for document that would be relevant. You are asking if there were other folks who were. The question resides as a result of this memo.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that if she worked for the city and was being considered by the Mayor for a position and then Council wrote a memo and Council said no, you are not doing that and not too far after, there is now a Confirmation Hearing for another Department Head. She said that she would have some red flags especially if that person is in a protected class.

Mr. Charles Smith stated that he would imagine that the Mayor would feel that question whether there were people or other candidates who were being considered stepped aside as a result of this memo. This is the first time hearing there could have been potential of other people who enthusiasm might have been chilled as a result of this.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked about process. The School District whenever they selected a Superintendent there is a big community process. There are meetings on the eastside, westside, southside, and all over the city. There are surveys that go out because it is an important position. The Chief of Police is an important position. What that looks like? What process from the administration was followed that you came to the conclusion that we are going to keep him? How many community groups did you speak with? How many attendees.

Mayor Ray O'Connell stated that he does not have the data, but can tell her he lives in Allentown on the westend. He did not have formal meetings on the eastside, westside, southside or Center City. He talked to police officers, community leaders, nominees who may become the future Mayor, Mr. Tuerk and Mr. Ramos. He had informal conversations with many, many people in the city of Allentown. He came to his decision in bringing Charles Roca to the Interim status to the permanent status.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach is it a way to extending the Interim with the pay raise so that they can have time so that we can have time for the community input.

Mayor Ray O'Connell stated that his answer is no. His batting average is a little bit better than the school district's batting average. He lives on his integrity, character and bringing forth the best person for the permanent Chief in the city of Allentown. We don't need an Interim Chief for five more months. We need a permanent Chief tonight.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach thanked Mr. Roca for answering her questions and stated that it is pretty clear that they will regardless of what your title is will have some disagreements now and again. She appreciates his answer to one of the last questions she asked about the history of policing and how it stems from slave catching and the fact that you acknowledged that.

Mr. Charles Roca stated that it is very enlightening of what is taught in school and what is taught on the outside. It was an enlightened trip for him to go to Savannah, Georgia and learn some of the Black History in America. He takes that very seriously. We as a nation, need to understand where our culture comes from. He always talks about the bridge to diversity that give us the strength to our city. We as a nation needs to understand where our culture comes from and that builds us up. He always talks about the rich diversity that gives them the strength in our city. Although, we come from different backgrounds, at the end of the day, we want what's best for our families and our neighborhoods and everything like that. He believes strongly that the rich culture that we have in the city and we have a city made up of many different people that added the positive flavor towards that mix that makes it that much special. You can talk about conversation. You can talk about culture. You can talk about having that appreciation for that clarity of self with the question #9. It is important to understand people's viewpoints. He may not ascribe to it. He understands it and sees where it is coming from. It is also good to go forward and have that consideration of a person's perspective and not just be closed minded to it.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that she does not think it is a secret that she believes that there are some calls that police should not respond to and other personnel should respond to. Right now, the Allentown Police Department has a relationship with Pinebrook where the Social Workers go in and speak with residents where the activity occurred and connect them to services. This is not about defunded. It is about having the right person to help that individual in front of that individual. It is not about hating cops or defunding cops. It is not about Blue Line or BLM. It is about helping people. Do you see a future with time and planning that you would have a police officer with a Crisis Intervention Workers at a scene that is not violent.

Mr. Charles Roca stated time and planning. They have to explore what is going to work right for Allentown based on the data. We had conversations about the analytics and these things take time. He sees it evolving, but he wants it safe. With our Community Intervention Specialist in conjunction with our CIT officers and in conjunction with our officers on the street. All this data is seeing truly if Allentown is doing the right thing. We can make an adjustment in the future.



Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated that a citizen provided information from another police department to reach out to. Everyone is worried. What if a Crisis Worker shows up and there is a shootout and the Crisis Worker is murdered. There are liability issues that people are worried about. There are other police departments. She asked by hearing from Mr. Roca that he is committed to having those conversations with those police departments to see how we can craft the model that can work for us eventually.

Mr. Charles Roca stated that he is willing to work with any police department in achieving something that is legally sound and safe for everybody involved. At the end of the day, treats that individual and provides the best service possible.

Mr. Joshua Siegel committed on the nature of the memo which he did not sign. The most valuable thing to do as a Council is to recognize that the Mayor of Allentown regardless who they are is the Power of the Mayor's office until their term expires. That means that they have the full power and wherewithal to bring forth whomever they please to nominate for a full position in this city whether it be the Managing Director or Department Head. We as the legislative body are the oversight body. Our responsibilities is to vote up or down. It is as simple as that. We have no right as the legislative body to put out a memorandum or a memo that contravenes the power of the Mayor by the city Charter alone, the Mayor of Allentown is permitted to bring forth a nominee up until the last day he is in office. If he so pleases. It is our right as Council to make a determination of whether or not we believe it is appropriate or not. In this case, he applauds Mayor O'Connell because he reached out to both Mayoral candidates. Whoever will take the office and they both confirmed and stated that Chief Roca is the individual that they would want to lead the Department over their tenure. On that matter alone, the most appropriate thing for Council to do is to continue to follow that process throughout. He stated that he don't think they should ever attempt, whomever the Mayor is to contravene their powers. it is not our responsibility, our right. He is the Mayor of Allentown. He is the Mayor until his powers expire and therefore he has the right to bring forth whoever he pleases until the minute his powers expire. He stated that is the most appropriate path forward if we want to remove ourselves from any potential legal entanglements. Whoever the Mayor brings forth and whoever he feels is best fit to run a department until the minute his oath of office expires. Let's respect the Mayor's office. Let's respect the power and privilege and the responsibility that comes with the Mayor's office and show respect by voting up or down based on our own personal convictions and whether or not we believe the person has the

merits, responsibly or capacity to run a department. He stated that he and Ms. Gerlach have been the most constructively critical about where we think law enforcement should be. On the matter of Chief Roca, he wants to make sure that they do define him as his own individual. The suggestion of him not being committed to Allentown is an unfair categorization. Not only was he born here, but the only department you have ever worked for was the Allentown Police Department. He asked if that was correct. He gave credit when credit is due. Chief Roca has been throughout his career committed to be an APD officer. He has worked his way up the ranks from the very bottom as a Patrolman and worked your way up. He stated that he has no doubt about his committed to the city. He would never impugn or dispute whether or not your love the city. He is glad that Chief Roca plans to move in should you receive the nomination. He wants to echo the comments of Ms. Gerlach. His intention is that they are unfairly categorized anti law enforcement because of stances that we take or we are critical of law enforcement in an unfair way. He stated that he will always give credit where credit is due. He asked questions on procedure and policy. He asked if Mr. Roca was familiar with Dallas Police Chief David Brown. You might remember in Dallas there was a shooting where several Dallas Police Officers were killed by a gunman. The first statement that he made to the press conference is that society pushes all of its ills. All of its failings. All of its inequities on the police and asked law enforcement to be the wherewithal to solve everything. In his words, and he paraphrased it that we ask too much of our police. He asked if that is a fair characterization that we put too many burdens on you and we ask too much of you. It detracts from your ability to focus on what he thinks that many of them argue most pressing public safety concerns.

Interim Chief Charles Roca stated that is correct, sir. Thank Mr. Siegel for the question and one of the things he wanted to get across and he appreciates how he put it constructively critical. It is important for the community to voice sometimes their concern and find out the issue. To answer your question, if it ask to much for the police. At times, and even more pronounced by the pandemic that we were going through if it was from home or stay at home. The police dealt with everything that was out in the street along with all the essential workers and public safety entities that were out there. It became apparent that we do take on a lot of calls. If there is a possibility to take a look at some of the calls we do right now and possibly feed them to other agencies and entities that could address it. There is a possibility, but we will have to explore what that is and again, ensure at the end of the day that safety for all is a concern. He talked a little bit about when he opened his conversation with Council about the shots fired incident at police. It is never acceptable and I agree with the Chief from Dallas. That is never an incident. No officer signs up to get shot at. No officer signs up to be disruptive to the community. What we do, do is

give our all. They are many hardworking men and women in this police department. He wants to get across to Council that they are going to do the right thing. We are going to do based upon the data. We are going to be responsive to our citizens. Obviously, there are a lot of quality of life concerns out there. One on top of the list is the dirt bikes. We are taking steps to address that. It might not be visible or to be seen, but I can assure you we are taking steps and measures to do that. As far as the gun violence in his notes, he laid out a plan to deal with that. There is a lot of technology that we can leverage. You may be familiar with the speech that President Biden gave with the Attorney General and they talked about providing gunshot protection technology to the cities and places that are experiencing violence. In that same conversation they talked about providing funds to hire more police officers and provide funds for anti-violence organizations. He is a willing partner to work with anti-violence organizations: Promised Neighborhoods, Cohesion, and Onedos. Different groups that are out there that are doing the hard work. Lehigh Valley Stands Up. To talk about what can we better our community. How can we reach those that might feel disenfranchise. For those that don't view the Police as a helper. One of his things is to reach people that are kind of disconnected from the Police Department. We do have to take steps to have those conversations and sometimes tough conversations. He was part of many tough conversations during the time of the protest of the George Floyd incident that occurred in our very city. One of the things he found is yes, we come to a table, but it is not just about the communications, it's about the actions. He is willing to work to go forward and improve our city in various ways. Coming back to the officers, the officers in the Police Department are like his family. He wants to ensure that they are providing because it is always that relationship.

Mr. Joshua Siegel thanks Mr. Roca for that. He read over his responses and was glad that he mentioned transparency and the importance of good communication. He asked as the city becomes more technologically advance in terms of its deployment of data, what lengths you are willing to go in terms of transparency. On a monthly basis, are we willing to put out a more user friendly interface calls for service. The types of calls for service so we can break it down on a racial level. He asked if it is something Mr. Roca is willing to explore and is open to.

Interim Chief Charles Roca stated that he is open to exploring more transparency and it is important that our community knows what type of calls that are going on. It is important to know what an officer does. He heard Ms. Gerlach state before that some people don't know what the Police Department does. With statistics and data what we do is a lot. Clearly, when he was a PSA Captain and attended the various community meetings in West Park or Muhlenberg Crime Watch Group. They would

have a Report and provide to the members that attended the community meetings. That is something we could possibly explore on how to get there. Another thing was the complaint process and how to better make that more efficient and the complaint compliment process. It is important to note that our officers are doing a good job. Use of Force is another example. He recently received a report from the Lehigh Valley Justice Institute where they provided some research there and they showed a Use of Force dashboard that the NYPD has and he is intrigued by that presentation. That is something that they can show in Allentown. Not only does it show the Use of Force our officers are using and that they are doing it correctly, but also the force that is used on the officers. He is willing to explore that and see how they can go about and providing that information and how that would to see how it needs to be vetted and the information can be released and provided. They will make sure that information can be released and provided.

Mr. Joshua Siegel stated that he and Mr. Roca were at the Fair this weekend and had an opportunity to talk and he was glad that he mentioned a social determinant of crime. He stated that Mr. Roca understands as many of them do is that crime and Public Safety is much more holistic than just the traditional Use of Force or police power. There are a number of things that go into making our community safer. He asked about additional resources for social services. Whether it would be anti-violence platforms which are expensive to administer, but you have seen the research. They have a significant affect on reducing gun homicides which will again make your lives as law enforcement substantially easier. Not to mention the general trauma not to have to deal with a dead 17 year old young child. That is a win for any community who wants to see that or who wants to face that. It is actually awful. He asked if Mr. Charles Roca will be an advocate for them and to be critical of the systems and structures of how they are. We need more money for anti-violence. We need more money for universal pre-k education. He would like Mr. Roca to be an advocate for some of the social investments in the community if we are committed to the social determinants of crime.

Interim Chief Charles Roca thanked Mr. Siegel. He stated that a lot of it has to do with funding and what they are doing right now. He does not know what the Police Department is doing in respons

**Yes:** 7 - Candida Affa, Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Julio Guridy, Ed Zucal, Ce-Ce Gerlach, and Joshua Siegel

Enactment No: 30280

**ADJOURNED: 6:31 PM**