

MINUTES

Erie County Council

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Terry M. Scutella, Chairman
Chris Drexel, Vice Chairman
Charlie Bayle
Rock Copeland
André R. Horton
Ellen Schauerman
Jim Winarski

Erie County Courthouse
140 West 6th Street, Room 117
Erie, PA 16501

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, December 12, 2023

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Shank led the Pledge of Allegiance.

OPTIONAL PRAYER OR REFLECTION

Mrs. Schauerman recited an inspirational quote.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Chairman Shank, Vice Chairman Scutella, Charlie Bayle, André Horton, Ellen Schauerman, Tom Spagel, Jim Winarski
Others Present: Karen Chillcott, Megan Moore, Solicitor Tom Talarico, Deputy Solicitor Jay Stranahan, Financial Advisors Colin Domowicz and Kenny Bonus, Doug Smith, Paul Lichtenwalter

CITATIONS

A citation was presented posthumously to the following:

Shawn Giles

The family was unable to attend, and the citation would be delivered to them.

A moment of silence was held for Emily Matson.

HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

Jerry Servidio

Jerry Servidio, Millcreek: Mr. Servidio expressed gratitude for the hard work of the Council members. He raised concerns about the proposed EMS tax and suggested that municipalities could enact their own EMS tax, pooling funds to support their respective areas. He apologized for the behavior displayed in a recent meeting and commended the Council for its work. He addressed the recent tax hike of 14% and questioned the sudden change in the county's financial status. He highlighted the impact of union contracts on the budget, emphasizing the dedication of county employees. Criticizing proposed cuts to Pleasant Ridge funding, he questioned other budget allocations, particularly in economic development. He expressed confusion over certain budget items, including travel expenses and professional fees.

Peter Burton	Peter Burton, Girard: Mr. Burton, Mayor of Girard Borough, commended the Council for examining EMS services and expressed concern about taxing residents for emergency services. He emphasized the need for timely ambulance responses and acknowledged financial constraints faced by municipalities.
Freda Tepfer	Freda Tepfer, Erie: Ms. Tepfer addressed issues with microphone orientation during the last council meeting, urging members to make themselves heard. She criticized the lack of online posting of electronic copies of action sheets, limiting public understanding. She provided information on Medicaid renewal and expressed concerns about proposed budget cuts affecting various services.
Mary Rennie	Mary Rennie, Erie: Mrs. Rennie emphasized the importance of creating human capital for economic development. She stressed the role of relationships and education, noting the significant impact of libraries on building strong individuals. She challenged the County Executive's budget plan and urged a focus on supporting libraries.
Others - 3 Minutes	Julie Leonard, Erie: Ms. Leonard, a representative of Keep Our Library Public, spoke passionately about the significance of Blasco Library as an equalizer. She criticized the lack of public input on the Gannon deal, expressed concerns about parking issues, and lamented the lack of transparency in the realty agreement. Jerry Beemer, Erie: Mr. Beemer related his childhood experience at the Newark, New Jersey library, emphasizing the transformative power of libraries in providing knowledge and insight. He drew attention to the significance of libraries in fostering equality and urged the council to recognize their importance, particularly in light of recent challenges to education. He expressed his concerns about the funds allocated for the homeless through the Upper Room Board, emphasizing the critical need to support the most vulnerable members of the community. He implored the Council not to divert funds away from addressing homelessness and to prioritize the well-being of those in need. Issy Lawrie, District 7: Ms. Lawrie, a member of the group "Keep a Library Public," addressed the council for the third time, reiterating the group's plea to rescind the 25-year lease with Gannon for the Blasco Library. She emphasized the negative impact of the lease on public access to library resources and the importance of maintaining the library's space for community use. She urged the council to consider alternative locations for Gannon's research and education center. Anna McCartney, Northeast: Ms. McCartney questioned the Council's decision to pass the lease agreement with Gannon without thorough scrutiny. She highlighted the absence of protective measures for the public library in the lease and expressed disappointment in the lack of transparency. She called on the Council to prioritize the interests of the citizens and the public library over the lease agreement's perceived benefits for Gannon. Juan Goyena, Millcreek: Mr. Goyena, representing the group "Keep Our Library Public," echoed the concerns raised by previous speakers regarding the Gannon lease. He emphasized the historical significance of public libraries as democratic

spaces and urged the council to reconsider the lease, aligning it with the intended purpose of public libraries.

Mary Jo Campbell, Washington Township: Ms. Campbell, representing the HRC, addressed the Council, emphasizing the vital role played by the HRC in providing services to diverse groups in Erie County. She stressed the importance of maintaining funding for the HRC to support the community's needs and urged the council to reconsider proposed budget cuts.

Jenny Tompkins, Meadville: Ms. Tompkins, a campaign manager for Clean Water Advocacy with PennFuture, commended the community's engagement in environmental issues and the library's role in promoting civic action. She called on the Council to override the proposal to eliminate Blasco Library staff positions, emphasizing the library's significance in fostering community engagement.

Rock Copeland, Erie: Mr. Copeland expressed his support for the community, particularly regarding concerns about Blasco and the Gannon lease. He emphasized his solidarity with those addressing those issues. He mentioned watching the online meeting and acknowledged the challenges faced by the Council during the budget deliberations. Despite not agreeing with all decisions, he called for unity among the Council members to uphold the group's decisions. He urged support for HRC funding and maintaining Pleasant Ridge facilities.

Carl Anderson, Erie: Mr. Anderson shared his concerns about the divisive actions of the County Executive, Brenton Davis. He emphasized the need for unity and criticized the intentional behavior that creates disunity. He highlighted the importance of community services, expressed disappointment in the lack of funding for various projects, and urged the Council to work together for the benefit of the community.

Veronica Rexford, Millcreek: Ms. Rexford expressed concerns about the impact of budget cuts on the library and the Human Relations Commission. She shared a personal anecdote about her connection to the library, emphasizing its role in her education and career. She urged the Council to consider the needs of Erie County residents.

Doris Cipolla, Harborcreek: Ms. Cipolla voiced concerns about potential cuts affecting the library, labeling it an attack against democracy. She expressed disappointment in the current leadership and encouraged the Council to reconsider the decisions that may hinder essential services.

Emily Manino, Waterford: Ms. Manino spoke about the importance of the library and raised questions about reducing access. She questioned the impact of these decisions on Gannon University and urged the Council to consider the broader consequences of education and cultural enrichment.

Cole Schenley, Erie: Mr. Schenley expressed concerns about recent developments, from the removal of the pride display to cuts affecting library

staff. He cautioned the Council about aligning with divisive actions and urged them to reconsider their approach, emphasizing the importance of community resources.

Kelly Ryan, Millcreek: Ms. Ryan, Executive Director of the HRC, expressed surprise and concern regarding the letter outlining potential budget cuts. She highlighted the vital role of the commission in supporting vulnerable community members and urged the Council to reconsider the proposed changes.

Jacob Chemsak, Edinboro: Mr. Chemsak addressed concerns about the optics of placing a private religious institution, Gannon University, in a public space. He highlighted the unity among library patrons against the decision, emphasizing the poor stewardship of public resources by the County Council.

Marcy Bencivenga, McKean: Ms. Bencivenga, a constituent and a member of the Friends of the Erie County Library, raised concerns about the organization's dilemma. She emphasized that despite having funds raised for programs and services; there might be a lack of staff to run them. She urged the Council to consider supporting essential library staff.

Matthew Texter, Erie: Mr. Texter criticized the open mic format as akin to a comedy night, stressing the need for truth and transparency. He discussed the importance of resources like the library for his children and called for keeping the library public.

Sandra Ebert, Harborcreek: Ms. Ebert shared childhood experiences with the library and criticized the decision to lease the library property to Gannon University. She implored the Council to prioritize the needs of the community over external interests.

Kimberly Hunter, Erie: Ms. Hunter expressed gratitude to the Council for their hard work and acknowledged the challenges they face. She emphasized the need for respectful communication, discouraging personal attacks on Council members. While she disagreed with some decisions, she urged constructive dialogue.

Kathy Lutz, Millcreek: Ms. Lutz, a member of "Keep the Library Public," voiced concerns about the impact of the library lease on collaboration rooms. As an advocate for families with children with disabilities, she highlighted the importance of the library's safe and free space for meetings.

Brad Peganoff, Millcreek: Mr. Peganoff extended holiday wishes and touched upon the responsibility of the Council to maintain a fair balance in the budget and appointments. He urged reconsideration of re-appointments to the airport board if they are not fulfilling their duties.

Paige, District 2: Paige, an introvert and library user, highlighted the growing opposition to the library lease with Gannon University. She stressed the significant public support, including thousands of signatures. She urged the

Council to rescind the lease, considering it a social justice issue.

Marty Nachukwu: Ms. Nachukwu criticized budget cuts affecting education and public access to books, framing it as part of a broader national movement. She expressed concern about the impact on the elderly, library workers, and homelessness programs. She requested an end to the lease agreement with Gannon and an end to what she perceived as an assault on working-class people.

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

A motion to approve previous meeting minutes was made by Mr. Scutella, seconded by Mrs. Schauerman, and passed 7-0.

November 2, 2023- Public Budget Hearing

November 14, 2023- Public Budget Hearing

REPORTS OF COUNTY OFFICIALS

County Executive and/or his Designee

Finance Committee - Mrs. Schauerman Mrs. Schauerman reported that the Finance Committee met on December 7th, and submitted to the agenda New Business: A-C, Q-S, and Z-CC.

Personnel Committee - Mr. Scutella Mr. Scutella reported that the Personnel Committee met on December 7th and submitted to the agenda Old Business A and B, and New Business D, Q-P, and T-Y.

Other

OLD BUSINESS

Second Reading of Ordinance Number 116, 2023 "Approval of the 2024 Erie County Non-Bargaining Employees Pay Plan" (First Read 11/28/23) (Personnel Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 116, 2023 "Approval of the 2024 Erie County Non-Bargaining Employees Pay Plan". A first was made by Schauerman, seconded by Spagel, and passed 6-1. (Horton)

Second Reading of Ordinance Number 117, 2023 "Approval of Amendment to the Agreement between the County of Erie and AFSCME Local 2666 (Professional) Increasing Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 117, 2023 "Approval of Amendment to the Agreement between the County of Erie and AFSCME Local 2666 (Professional) Increasing the Salaries of Public Health Nurses". The first was made by Schauerman, seconded by Spagel, and passed 7-0.

**the Salaries Of Public
Health Nurses" (First Read
11/28/23) (Personnel
Committee)**

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Scutella made a motion to move items A-P to a second read. This was seconded by Schauerman and passed 7-0.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 118, 2023 "First 2023 Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities Services Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$8,415,302 for Receipt of Additional Revenue for Calendar Year 2023" (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 118, 2023 "First 2023 Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities Services Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$8,415,302 for Receipt of Additional Revenue for Calendar Year 2023". A motion was made by Schauerman, seconded by Bayle, and passed 7-0.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 119, 2023 "Approval of Waiver to the Bid Requirements under the Purchasing Code and Approval of Sole Vendor Contract between Erie County and South Western Communication, Inc" (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 119, 2023 "Approval of Waiver to the Bid Requirements under the Purchasing Code and Approval of Sole Vendor Contract between Erie County and South Western Communication, Inc." A motion was made by Schauerman, seconded by Scutella, and passed 6-1. (Horton)

First Reading of Ordinance Number 120, 2023 "Eighteenth 2023 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$222,651 for Camera System Upgrade in Erie County Prison" (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 120, 2023 "Eighteenth 2023 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$222,651 for Camera System Upgrade in Erie County Prison."

Mr. Horton voiced his reservations about the proposed quarter-million-dollar expenditure related to a prison. Despite acknowledging the importance of the matter, he highlighted the untimeliness of presenting such an expense a week after the latest budget had been finalized. He expressed concern about the frequency of these occurrences, emphasizing that a quarter-million-dollar expenditure adds complexity to the existing budgetary challenges. Although he anticipated the proposal's passage and acknowledged its significance, he officially registered a protest vote of no.

A motion was made by Schauerman, seconded by Bayle, and passed 6-1. (Horton)

First Reading of Ordinance Number 121, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary"

Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 121, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - Director of Administration." A motion was made by Schauerman, seconded by Winarski, and passed 7-0.

Ordinance - Director of Administration" (Personnel Committee)

First Reading of Ordinance Number 122, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - Director of Finance" (Personnel Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 122, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - Director of Finance." A motion was made by Schauerman, seconded by Bayle, and passed 7-0.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 123, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - Director of Human Resources" (Personnel Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 123, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - Director of Human Resources." A motion was made by Schauerman, seconded by Scutella, and passed 7-0.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 124, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - County Solicitor" (Personnel Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 124, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - County Solicitor." A motion was made by Schauerman, seconded by Spagel, and passed 7-0.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 125, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - First Assistant County Solicitor" (Personnel Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 125, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - First Assistant County Solicitor." A motion was made by Schauerman, seconded by Spagel, and passed 7-0.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 126, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - Two Assistant County Solicitors" (Personnel Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 126, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - Two Assistant County Solicitors." A motion was made by Scutella, seconded by Schauerman, and passed 7-0.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 127, 2023 "Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - Public Defender" (Personnel Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 127, 2023 "Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - Public Defender." A motion was made by Scutella, seconded by Winarski, and passed 7-0.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 128, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - First Assistant Public Defender" (Personnel Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 128, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - First Assistant Public Defender." A motion was made by Scutella, seconded by Spagel, and passed 7-0.

**Public Defender"
(Personnel Committee)**

First Reading of Ordinance Number 129, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - Full and Part Time Assistant Public Defenders" (Personnel Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 129, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - Full and Part Time Assistant Public Defenders." A motion was made by Schauerman, seconded by Winarski, and passed 7-0.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 130, 2023 "Appointed Official's Salary Ordinance Part Time Assistant Public Defender" (Personnel Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 130, 2023 "Appointed Official's Salary Ordinance Part Time Assistant Public Defender." A motion was made by Scutella, seconded by Winarski, and passed 7-0.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 131, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - County Clerk" (Personnel Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 131, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - County Clerk." A motion was made by Scutella, seconded by Spagel, and passed 7-0.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 132, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - County Council Solicitor Retainer" (Personnel Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 132, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - County Council Solicitor Retainer." A motion was made by Schauerman, seconded by Winarski, and passed 7-0.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 133, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - County Council Deputy Solicitor Retainer" (Personnel Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 133, 2023 "2024 Appointed Official Salary Ordinance - County Council Deputy Solicitor Retainer." A motion was made by Scutella, seconded by Winarski, and passed 7-0.

Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 44, 2023 "Approval of the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program Grant Application and the Cooperation Agreement among the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Erie (dba The Erie County Ms. Chillcott read the Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 44, 2023 "Approval of the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program Grant Application and the Cooperation Agreement among the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Erie (dba The Erie County Redevelopment Authority), Saint Vincent Health System (dba Saint Vincent Hospital), Allegheny Health Network, and the County of Erie for the Saint Vincent Hospital Expansion Project." A motion was made by Scutella, seconded by Winarski, and passed 7-0.

Redevelopment Authority), Saint Vincent Health System (dba Saint Vincent Hospital), Allegheny Health Network, and the County of Erie for the Saint Vincent Hospital Expansion Project" (Finance Committee)

Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 45, 2023 "Approval of Tentative Lease Agreement with Township of Millcreek for Office Space Located at 3608 West 26th Street, Erie, Pennsylvania for Magisterial District Judge Laurie Mikielski" (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott read the Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 45, 2023 "Approval of Tentative Lease Agreement with Township of Millcreek for Office Space Located at 3608 West 26th Street, Erie, Pennsylvania for Magisterial District Judge Laurie Mikielski." A motion was made by Scutella, seconded by Winarski, and passed 7-0.

Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 46, 2023 "Approval of Tentative Lease Agreement with Summit Township for Office Space Located at 1230 Townhall Road, Erie, Pennsylvania for Magisterial District Judge Brian McGowan" (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott read the Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 46, 2023 "Approval of Tentative Lease Agreement with Summit Township for Office Space Located at 1230 Townhall Road, Erie, Pennsylvania for Magisterial District Judge Brian McGowan." A motion was made by Scutella, seconded by Winarski, and passed 7-0.

Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 47, 2023 "Approving the 2024 Solicitor Contract for the Office of Erie County Sheriff" (Personnel Committee)

Ms. Chillcott read the Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 47, 2023 "Approving the 2024 Solicitor Contract for the Office of Erie County Sheriff."

Mr. Horton sought confirmation during the meeting, expressing the need to verify that the solicitor had indeed reviewed the contracts in question. He clarified that the contracts were considered standard, with the solicitor confirming that they were consistent across all instances.

A motion was made by Scutella, seconded by Bayle, and passed 7-0.

Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 48, 2023 "Approving the 2024 Solicitor Contract for the Office of the Erie County

Ms. Chillcott read the Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 48, 2023 "Approving the 2024 Solicitor Contract for the Office of the Erie County Clerk of Records." A motion was made by Scutella, seconded by Winarski, and passed 7-0.

**Clerk of Records"
(Personnel Committee)**

**Possible Adoption of
Resolution Number 49,
2023 "Approving the 2024
Solicitor Contract for the
Office of the Erie County
Controller" (Personnel
Committee)**

Ms. Chillcott read the Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 49, 2023 "Approving the 2024 Solicitor Contract for the Office of the Erie County Controller." A motion was made by Scutella, seconded by Spagel, and passed 7-0.

**Possible appointment of
Tim Bogdanets to the Erie
County Land Bank. Term
to expire December 31,
2028. (County Executive)
(Personnel Committee)**

Ms. Chillcott read the Possible appointment of Tim Bogdanets to the Erie County Land Bank. Term to expire December 31, 2028. A motion was made by Scutella, seconded by Winarski, and passed 7-0.

**Possible appointment of
Shane Kline to the NWP
Job Connect Board-
Workforce Development
Board. Term to expire
June 30, 2027. (County
Executive) (Personnel
Committee)**

Ms. Chillcott read the Possible appointment of Shane Kline to the NWP Job Connect Board-Workforce Development Board. Term to expire June 30, 2027. A motion was made by Scutella, seconded by Spagel, and passed 7-0.

**Possible appointment of
Bob Williams to the Erie
County Housing
Authority. Term to expire
December 31, 2028.
(County Executive)
(Personnel Committee)**

Ms. Chillcott read the Possible Appointment of Bob Williams to the Erie County Housing Authority. Term to expire December 31, 2028. A motion was made by Scutella, seconded by Bayle, and passed 7-0.

Mr. Horton pointed out the absence of resumes and expressed an expectation for them to be included in future appointments.

**Exoneration of Taxes on
Parcel 47-007-021.0-018.50
(Finance Committee)**

Mr. Talarico discussed concerns related to the exoneration of taxes. He highlighted that while there was no law providing authority to exonerate taxes, it had become a customary practice over the years, especially when all taxing authorities agreed. He expressed caution about the potential abuse of this practice, emphasizing the importance of understanding the background of each case. He explained that sometimes property buyers, aware of back taxes during a property acquisition, might later seek exoneration. He suggested that the background of these specific cases be provided to the Council for a thorough understanding and evaluation in the upcoming meeting.

Mr. Horton raised concerns regarding the lack of specific information on the four parcels under consideration, highlighting the absence of a physical identification or address, making it challenging to determine size, structures, or back taxes owed. Expressing uncertainty about those aspects, he proposed

tabling the discussion about those parcels and revisiting them in the next meeting. He concluded by formally making a motion to table the matter for further review. The motion was seconded by Spagel and passed 7-0.

**Exoneration of Taxes on
Parcel 46-008-061.0-001.27
(Finance Committee)**

**Exoneration of Taxes on
Parcel 24-004-007.2-012.91
(Finance Committee)**

**Exoneration of Taxes on
Parcel 27-053-213.0-001.30
(Finance Committee)**

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Shank expressed his gratitude to his colleagues, reflecting on shared experiences and collaborative efforts. Acknowledging the diverse projects they worked on, he humorously mentioned his upcoming retirement plans for a new tire for his Harley. He expressed thanks to his colleagues and also thanked the citizens for engaging with elected officials. He expressed confidence that their paths would cross again.

A motion for adjournment was made by Scutella.

**-There will be a
Reorganization Meeting on
Tuesday, January 2, 2024,
in room 117, Erie County
Courthouse. Further details
to follow.**