

## MINUTES

### Erie County Council

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

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

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

**Tuesday, January 2, 2024**

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

County Clerk Chillcott led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### OPTIONAL PRAYER OR REFLECTION

Mrs. Schauerma recited an inspirational quote for the new year.

### ROLL CALL

Members Present: Terry Scutella, Andre Horton, Rock Copeland, Jim Winarski, Chris Drexel, Charlie Bayle, Ellen Schauerma

Others Present: County Clerk Karen Chillcott, Deputy Clerk Megan Moore, and Council Solicitor Tom Talarico, Esq.

### HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

#### OTHER SPEAKERS - 3 MINUTES

Freda Tepfer, Erie: Ms. Tepfer formally welcomed the recently elected Council members, Chris Drexel and Rock Copeland. She underscored the significance of the Council maintaining an awareness of past events, specifically the Gannon lease of the library. She recommended a resolution be passed to end the lease, and urged the County Council to assert their authority over the County Executive. She noted the requirement to register for voting by mail, and emphasized that it was a presidential election year.

Anna McCartney, Northeast: Ms. McCartney expressed the hope that the Council would thoroughly listen to their constituents from the past year and refrain from overlooking their concerns. She emphasized that the community represents itself, not Brenton Davis. She urged the Council to consider this, as doubts were raised about Davis's alignment with the best interests of Erie County. McCartney discussed the library lease with Gannon and conveyed attempts to engage Gannon on the matter, asserting that the community's actions contradicted widely recognized principles. She plead for the Council to endorse a resolution or take appropriate measures to rectify the improper handling of the situation. McCartney contended that the Council's involvement appeared belated, citing

evidence obtained through the Freedom of Information Act. The final ask was for the Council not to be manipulated and to act in the best interest of their constituents.

Art Leopold, Millcreek: Mr. Leopold welcomed the new and returning Council members. He expressed a wish to have more revenue, acknowledging the Council's potential need for additional resources while recognizing the necessity of working within existing constraints. Mr. Leopold encouraged the Council to adopt a considerate approach towards constituents and emphasized the specific purposes of ARPA funds, notably the Justice 40 campaign. Highlighting the separation of powers, Leopold underscored the Council's role within the judicial branch. He encouraged them to reclaim legislative authority and stressed the importance of maintaining this separation in making policies and budget oversight. In conclusion, he wished the Council success in the new year, advising them to take personal responsibility for their duties and avoid delegating them to the executive branch.

**NEW BUSINESS Home Rule Charter Article II Section 2(A) The County Council shall organize within the first ten (10) days of January of each year. The County Council, at this organization meeting, shall elect from its membership a Chair and a Vice Chair. The Chair, or in the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair shall preside and vote at all meetings of the County Council.**

Ms. Chillcott stated nominations were now in order for the 2024 Erie County Council Chairman.

**Nomination of Council Officers; Chair and Vice Chair**

Ms. Chillcott asked for the nomination of officers.

Mr. Horton made the motion to nominate Terry Scutella for Chair, seconded by Chris Drexel, and passed 7-0.

Ms. Chillcott moved the position of Chair to Scutella for the remainder of the meeting.

Mr. Horton made the motion to nominate Chris Drexel as Vice Chair, seconded by Rock Copeland and passed 7-0.

**Comments by the Chair and Members**

Mrs. Schauerma warmly welcomed new members and congratulated both the Chair and Vice Chair on their approved nominations.

Mr. Horton welcomed new colleagues and talked about the large amount of work still to be done to move Erie County forward. He mentioned the recent increase in taxes and said the Administration expects a similar situation this year. He stressed the importance of being careful about what gets put on the agenda and how taxpayer money is spent.

Mr. Scutella thanked his colleagues for their support and acknowledged the positive discussions they have, even when they disagree. He mentioned some specific concerns, like the NePTWNE vote, lease agreements, and statements made by the president of Gannon and the Bishop in a Sunday paper. Mr. Scutella emphasized the need to protect the local body of water and expressed a willingness to discuss these matters with the Council or Gannon.

Talking about transparency, Mr. Scutella shared worries about how quickly information reaches the County Council office. He stressed the importance of open communication and encouraged the Administration to contact him in non-emergency situations for meaningful discussions about items that do not make the agenda deadline. Mr. Scutella also highlighted the diversity of opinions within the Council, saying each member is unique, but they all work together with the administration for the benefit of the people of Erie County. He encouraged Council members to express disagreements with policies in an intelligent and meaningful way and hoped the County Executive would consider their input in the future.

Mr. Horton noted the time and dates of the next meetings.

Chairman Scutella announced his intention to appoint Jim Winarski as the Personnel Committee Chair and Mr. Bayle as the Vice Chair, both of whom accepted the positions. Additionally, he appointed Mr. Copeland as the Finance Committee Chair and Mr. Horton as the Vice Chair. Chairman Scutella informed the members that a list of vacant positions had been distributed, urging them to identify suitable individuals to fill each position within their respective districts by the upcoming meeting.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Scutella adjourned the meeting at 01:21pm on a motion from Horton.

**\*The next Finance/Personnel Committee Meetings are Thursday, January 11, 2024, at 4:00pm in room 114A, Erie County Courthouse or via Zoom.**  
**\*The next Regular Meeting of County Council is Tuesday, January 16, 2024, at 6:00pm in room 117, Erie County Courthouse or streamed live at the link provided on the County website.**

**\*Members of the public wishing to speak at an upcoming Regular Meeting of Council or those requiring specific accommodation are encouraged to call or email the Council Office at (814) 451-6303 or [councilrequests@eriecountypa.gov](mailto:councilrequests@eriecountypa.gov), no later than the end of business 5 days prior to the meeting. The public must be present at the meeting to speak.**