

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 30, 2024

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Scutella led the Pledge of Allegiance.

OPTIONAL PRAYER OR REFLECTION

Mrs. Schauerma recited an inspirational quote.

ROLL CALL

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

Others Present: Clerk Karen Chillcott, Deputy Clerk Megan Moore, Solicitor Tom Talarico, Deputy Solicitor Jay Stranahan, and Financial Advisors Kenny Bonus and Colin Domowicz.

HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

Krista Perry Lamb

Krista Lamb, City of Erie - Krista Lamb expressed her gratitude to the Council for allowing her to speak at the meeting. She emphasized the multifaceted role of libraries, highlighting their importance beyond just books, including movies, music programming, and classes, as well as serving as repositories of local history. Lamb shared a personal anecdote about her son's love for films and how it began at the Blasco Children's Library. She drew parallels between certain movies, such as "Jaws" and "Terminator 2 Judgment Day," and the importance of safeguarding public interests against short-term economic gains. She voiced her opposition to the lease agreement between Gannon University and the Blasco Library, expressing concerns about its impact on future generations and the community's access to resources. Lamb referenced the historical philanthropy efforts by Andrew Carnegie, to underscore the importance of public access to libraries and their role in democracy. She criticized the allocation of pandemic funding to private institutions and raised questions about the long-term implications of the lease agreement for taxpayers. In conclusion,

Lamb asserted her commitment to advocating for her son, future generations, and the community's access to a thriving library system. She emphasized the library's role as a public institution that belongs to the people and called for careful consideration of the lease agreement's consequences for the community's future.

Freda Tepfer

Freda Tepfer, City of Erie - Freda Tepfer began by addressing concerns regarding National Fuel's proposed rate increase and ongoing investigations by the PUC. She shared that information related to these matters was publicly available on her Facebook page for the Council's reference. Tepfer then shifted focus to resolutions discussed by the council, expressing concern over the lack of certification of funds by the Executive. She urged the Council to pass resolutions demanding clarity on available funds, drawing parallels to federal government practices regarding immigration bills. Tepfer questioned the allocation of funds for the homeless project, advocating for direct distribution to benefit the homeless population rather than dispersing funds throughout the County, as suggested by Brenton Davis. Moving on to library matters, Tepfer shared insights from correspondence between Library Board members and the Executive, expressing concerns about the loss of valuable library space and accessibility issues, particularly for individuals with disabilities. She questioned the practicality of consolidated shelving and raised concerns about the relocation of computers, highlighting potential challenges for library users, especially those who are homeless or have mobility issues. Tepfer concluded by urging Council members to take a firm stance against actions by the Executive they disagree with and emphasized the importance of advocating for the interests of the community.

Mary Rennie

Mary Rennie, City of Erie District 3 - Mary Rennie shared her concerns regarding recent developments at the Library, describing the sudden dismantling without warning as a disruption to both patrons and county employees. She expressed her belief that this action was intended to be punitive and a display of power. Mrs. Rennie then delved into the history of the Blasco Library, which began in 1990 and opened in 1996 after seven years of planning. She emphasized the library's significance as a cornerstone for the next century, akin to the main library in Perry Square built in 1897. She refuted claims about the Library occupying valuable commercial property, citing its role in leading the way to the Bayfront and economic development when there was minimal interest prior to the Blasco Library. She recounted the joint plan proposed for a Library Museum Complex supported by various organizations, including the State Representatives, NW PA Port Authority, and PA Electric Company. The project aimed to develop the Bayfront area and received backing from influential entities like the PAHMC, Port Authority, Penelec, and the Governor's Advisory Board for the Flagship Niagara. Mrs. Rennie highlighted the pivotal role of Dr. Raymond Blasco, who pledged significant funds for the Library's construction, including an auditorium. When budget constraints forced discussions of reductions in the project, Dr. Blasco expressed deep disappointment, emphasizing his vision for a comprehensive library facility. His legacy included not just the Blasco Library, but also libraries in Fairview,

Edinboro, and Lawrence Park, supported by his fortune left to the Erie Community Foundation.

In conclusion, Mrs. Rennie urged the council to uphold stewardship of County resources, cautioning against hasty decisions that could jeopardize the legacy and vision of Dr. Blasco. She emphasized the importance of clarity, defined goals, and careful planning for the future of the library and other County projects.

The timer for speaking alarmed, as Mrs. Rennie wrapped up her remarks with statements regarding the next project being the Millcreek Library and questioned who would want to take such a risk by investing in projects with a lack of professional planning and guidelines. She concluded with a call to preserve the integrity and foresight of Erie County's resources.

Others

3 MINUTE SPEAKERS:

Abdullah Washington, District 2 - Mr. Washington shared insights into the historical challenges faced by the black community, particularly concerning financial independence and access to resources. He recounted the system of sharecropping in the South, where landowners paid workers with script rather than money, limiting their ability to understand and manage their finances. Washington highlighted the impact of this practice, especially during the Civil Rights era and the Great Migration. He then shared a personal anecdote from his childhood, recalling the significance of handling a food stamp, which featured the image of Constitutional Hall. He relayed the lesson he learned at a young age, that "rich people will do anything to give poor people anything, except money." Transitioning to the present, Washington discussed ideas for utilizing the ARPA funds, particularly focusing on Member of Council Horton's proposal to allocate funds to those in the community with the greatest needs. He expressed frustration over the prolonged discussions and lack of action regarding the distribution of those funds, emphasizing the importance of addressing long-standing inequalities. In a straightforward plea, Washington repeated the phrase "Put my money in my hand," underscoring the need for direct support and tangible benefits for his community. He concluded his remarks with gratitude.

Anna McCarthy-North East: Anna presented a timeline of key events based on obtained emails. She highlighted a meeting on August 24, 2022, discussing parking issues with PENDOT officials, where Karen Pierce expressed concerns about the Library's Bayfront location. McCarthy also mentioned a productive meeting on January 9, 2023, regarding Project NePTWNE, and subsequent developments, including a read-in event on June 26, 2023, advocating for children's library displays. She concluded with Brenton Davis finalizing a deal for the water resource center build-out on August 2, emphasizing that the agreement was made without broader participation.

Doris Cipolla, Harborcreek - Doris provided a condensed timeline of events based on Right-to-Know requests. Notable points included an announcement during an advisory board meeting on August 17, 2023, about the relocation of children's librarians due to Bayfront construction. There was no mention of NePTWNE at that time. On August 18, 2023, Doug Smith instructed Karen to investigate bookshelves mentioned by Brenton Davis. Discussion about involving the County Council began on September 14, 2023, with plans for Gannon officials to present at the Finance Committee meeting. However, the resolution was postponed for the September 21 meeting due to incomplete information. The resolution was later added to the October 17th County Council

meeting agenda by Ellen Schauerman. Doris highlighted minimal discussion and the absence of public questions or comments during the Finance Committee meeting. On October 13, 2023, Library Advisory Board members expressed concerns to Brenton Davis about the Water Research Center relocation, suggesting the possibility of a public hearing.

Kathy Lutz, Millcreek - Kathy Lutz continued the narrative from Doris' timeline, focusing on events from October 12 and 13, 2023. She highlighted concerns raised by Library Advisory Board members Adam Groves and Kara Murphy to Brenton Davis about relocating the Water Research Center to Blasco Library, advocating for public hearings to assess the center's impact. Despite their concerns, Davis assured them no library space loss. Kathy expressed frustration at being unable to print her comments due to library resource limitations. She referenced Right to Know documents and conversations, indicating Davis' early discussions on the Gannon lease with the Library Director. She mentioned the initial Gannon lease discussions following a Children's Room Read-In protesting LGBTQ display removal. Kathy emphasized the lack of impact studies on the Water Research Lab's effect on library staff and users. Concerned about a perceived conspiracy involving Doug Smith, Council Members, and Gannon Leaders, Kathy noted uncertainties about changes affecting library collections, services, and programs. She pointed out relocations of services, including the computer lab, and Gannon's advantageous first-floor space allocation. Kathy cited an October 4, 2023 incident where Gannon's Doug Oathout inquired about the lease being added to the Finance Committee meeting agenda, despite not being publicly advertised. Doug Smith responded, outlining the meeting format and advising Oathout on potential objections. As her time concluded, Kathy thanked the Council for their attention.

Dave Miller, Millcreek - Mr. Miller stated that he was in Mr. Scutella's district and then inquired about the County's inventory of machinery and hazardous materials that would be used in the proposed NePTWNE lab project, specifically mentioning substances like flammable, radioactive, and toxic materials commonly found in university laboratories. Dave emphasized that this was a straightforward yes or no question. Although murmurs were heard from the dais, no specific council member provided a direct response. Dave then added, "Would any of you please request one and make it public?"

Vice Chair Drexel responded, stating "Yes" to the request to obtain this information and make it public. Dave thanked Mr. Drexel and chose to forfeit the remainder of his speaking time.

Council Member Horton paused the public speaking for a brief moment to clarify the matter raised by the last public speaker, Dave Miller. It was clarified that Mr. Miller's request was for the County Council to obtain information on all material data, including any toxins or chemicals to be used in the NePTWNE lab project. Mr. Miller affirmed that this indeed was the request of the Council in obtaining the material data list for the project and sharing the information with the public.

Ruth Swaney, City of Erie - Ruth expressed concerns about the lease agreement between Brenton Davis and Gannon University for space at the Raymond Blasco Memorial Library. She criticized the lease terms, citing the county's payment of over \$20 per square foot for nearby office space compared to Gannon's \$7 per square foot rate for 25 years, which she called fiscally irresponsible. Emphasizing that the library's funding, including \$8 million from a County bond and \$2 million from local citizens, came from Erie County homeowners and landowners, Ruth questioned the decision to rent a public building to a tax-exempt private entity at a reduced rate. Ruth

proposed relocating the county satellite office to the library's available space and letting Gannon rent the vacated space at the market rate. She highlighted Raymond Blasco's contributions, including a \$500,000 donation for the auditorium and a \$2 million endowment for the Library through the Erie Community Foundation. In conclusion, Ruth urged the Council to consider the library's heritage and legacy, questioning the change in its mission and name less than 30 years after dedication. Although her speaking time ended, she expressed intent to share words spoken at the dedication.

Matt Texter, City of Erie - Matt expressed concerns about public funds allocated to private institutions without clear public benefit. He highlighted the 6.5 million ARP funds awarded to Gannon's NePTWNE and Behrend's lab, intended for communities hit the hardest by the pandemic. Matt also questioned the veto of Joyce Savocchio Park's revamp and reduced DEI funding, vital for affected communities. He urged unanimous approval of \$1 million for the homeless and \$1.5 million for the DEI commission. Regarding the Blasco Library lease with Gannon, Matt mentioned resident concerns and limited details from Right-to-Know findings. Disappointed with Gannon's response, he questioned their claim of good faith. Emphasizing inclusiveness and social responsibility, Matt called for a reevaluation of the lease to maximize space use. He emphasized the importance of protecting public Bayfront space for all and expressed optimism about development without altering the Blasco Library. Matt concluded with a song quote, urging action on community concerns.

Dr. Ricardo Escajadillo (Dr. Rock E.), Millcreek - Dr. Escajadillo, appointed by Jim Winarski of District 4, spoke to the County Council as the chair of the Erie County Diverse Equity and Inclusion Commission. He highlighted the Commission's mission to foster inclusivity for all people of color in Erie County. Despite facing challenges akin to the BIPOC community, they had shown resilience. Dr. Escajadillo emphasized their compliance with County Council requests and praised Gary Lee's leadership. Excited about upcoming initiatives in homeownership, healthcare, and education, he addressed health disparities like hypertension and obesity. Stressing the impact of Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes (TLC), he appealed for continued Council investment in the DEI Commission, stressing the urgency of their work. Dr. Escajadillo thanked fellow commissioners, urging collaboration for lasting community changes, ending with "Mucho Gracias."

Gary Lee, City of Erie - Gary Lee, Chief Administrative Officer for Diverse Erie, expressed gratitude to Chairman Scutella, Councilmember Horton, and the County Council for their commitment to improving Erie County residents' lives. He highlighted key initiatives, including the Small Business Loan Program, which invested \$500,000 to leverage up to \$1.6 million for BIPOC small business infrastructure. The Generational Impact Grant program received significant interest, with nineteen applications totaling \$6.4 million in the first round. Five applicants received \$1.1 million, and three received \$300,000 in the second round from nineteen applications requesting \$4.6 million. Lee emphasized the need to move away from divisive rhetoric regarding DEI efforts, urging a focus on shared values and mutual benefit for all. He quoted Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., saying, "The time is always right to do the right thing," and called on the Council to invest in Diverse Erie for community-wide improvement.

Chairman Scutella asked if Mr. Lee could introduce his commissioners. Mr. Lee then introduced Chairman Dr. Rock E., Commissioner LaVette, Commissioner Dr. Carter, Commissioner Wells, Commissioner Saeed Taraky, and Commissioner Cortes, who all stood for their introductions.

Council Member Horton noted that DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) also included Devan the office manager.

Cathay Kramer, City of Erie - Cathay Kramer emphasized the crucial need to keep the Library public. With heartfelt sincerity, she recalled her childhood memories of the library and its impact. Cathay highlighted the changing landscape of the city, noting the shift away from public accessibility in many institutions. Despite her age, she emphasized the importance of ensuring that future generations, including her own family and neighbors, had access to the library for reading and learning, regardless of their financial status. She closed with gratitude.

Marcy Bencivenga, McKean District 7 - Marcy addressed the Council, sharing her deep connection to the Erie County Library as a Gannon Alumni and lifelong user. With 40 years of volunteering history, she recalled early days assisting the Friends of the Library with book sales, including challenges with water and setting up tents on Park Row. Marcy emphasized the library's evolution into a vital hub for learning, community connection, and personal growth. Following a recent tour led by former director Karen Pierce, she expressed her newfound political engagement.

Mr. Horton motioned for the meeting to recess due to an emergency alarm.

7:20PM-The meeting went to recess due to an emergency in Erie County Court House, requiring the building to be evacuated.

Return from recess at 7:38PM

Chairman Scutella opened the meeting again for Marcy to continue her right to address the members for three minutes.

Marcy Bencivenga, following an evacuation interruption, expressed her deep concern about the leasing of public and staff space to Gannon for their research and education center. She emphasized the critical uses of this space, including public computers essential for tasks such as renewing registrations and applying for benefits. Marcy highlighted the importance of collaboration rooms for job interviews, counseling sessions, and community events like small business workshops. She noted the Library's diverse adult services, such as resume building classes and financial wellness programs. Marcy firmly believed that the current lease arrangement primarily benefited Gannon at the expense of the public. She urged the County Council to reconsider and rescind the lease agreement.

Issy Lawrie, Girard, District 7 - Issy Lawrie stated she was a member of Keep Our Library Public, addressed the Council, emphasizing that the lease issue was nonpartisan. While she noted their support of Project NePTWNE, she believed the Library was the wrong location. Issy raised concerns about misinformation, citing three points she considered misleading. First, she disputed claims of underused space in the Library, noting her recent six-hour visit where all spaces were used. Second, she corrected assertions that water testing must be done at the waterfront, sharing her experience as a water test volunteer with PLEWA. Lastly, Issy refuted statements that the public was involved in developing the lease, highlighting that the public only learned of it at the Finance meeting on October 12 without prior notice. She urged the Council to reconsider these points of misinformation.

Charlotte Scalise, City of Erie - Charlotte Scalise addressed the Council, highlighting a

missing part of the timeline. On October 23, 2023, discussions began about briefing certain Council members on the project to avoid surprises between Doug Smith and Brenton Davis. "We should bring in some of the Council members to brief them on the project, so they are not surprised, Ellen, Charlie, Jim and give Brian a separate meeting." Charlotte expressed concern about the lack of documentation regarding these discussions in August. She criticized the fiscal responsibility regarding the lease to Gannon, citing the Veteran's Administration lease at the intermodal for \$15 per square foot compared to \$7 per square foot for Gannon for 25 years. She raised questions about the Gannon location and the use of ARPA funds, demanding answers regarding the Gannon and Blasco lease.

Juan Goyena, Millcreek - Juan Goyena thanked the Council for their service and welcomed the new members. He expressed his opposition to the Gannon and Blasco Lease, citing his experience as a veteran. Juan emphasized the importance of the Council rescinding the lease and urged them once again to do so.

Julie Leonard, City of Erie - Julie expressed concerns about transparency between Gannon and the County. She mentioned Mr. Davis' social media post with his face superimposed on the Grinch, which she saw as mocking public opposition. Julie also pointed out instances of misinformation from Mr. Davis and Dr. Iwanenko. She voiced frustration over the removed computer lab and emphasized her commitment to accurate information. Julie questioned the lease costs compared to other County office leases and their impact on taxpayers.

Mr. Horton addressed the question, confirming its accuracy. He stated that it was the appropriate time, as the senior Council member, for him to mention that they generally do not engage in back-and-forth dialogue. He emphasized that the meeting was not a question- and-answer forum and called for respect and decorum.

Darryl Lyons, City of Erie - Darryl Lyons, also known as "Salvation," shared his heartfelt experience since moving to Erie last June following his release from incarceration. He expressed gratitude for the invitation to the meeting, emphasizing the importance of discussing the Library. The Library played a pivotal role in his reintegration, providing crucial resources such as computer access and meeting rooms when he lacked them. Darryl expressed sadness about the relocation of the first-floor computer lab, highlighting the support he received from library staff and Mental Health Association volunteers. He credited much of his progress to the Library's resources and thanked the Council for the opportunity to share his story.

Rob Davis, City of Erie - Rob Davis highlighted his personal connection to the library and Erie County Care Management, underscoring their role in shaping his life. Coming from poverty, he emphasized the library's vital role in providing opportunities for those without college access. Rob expressed concern that Gannon assuming control would limit resources, depriving individuals like himself of crucial opportunities. He advocated for directing funds to serve the homeless and strengthen the community rather than benefiting private institutions. Rob urged the council to rescind the lease to safeguard opportunities for future generations.

Gretchen Blough, Edinboro - Gretchen Blough, a Gannon alum, highlighted what she considers misinformation from the county executive regarding the Gannon lease. She

noted the thousands who have signed petitions against the lease, contrasting the few actively protesting. Gretchen clarified that opposition is not against the NePTWNE project itself but its library location. She criticized giving public space to a private religious institution, noting Dr. Iwanenko's statements that the labs will not be public, despite claims of enhanced family-friendliness. Gretchen challenged the notion of unused space, citing staff use for program planning. She questioned the need to relocate computers if space was truly unused and criticized the lack of collaboration, suggesting the lease might be perceived as retaliation, especially after a PRIDE Display demonstration. Gretchen emphasized the library's significance, advocating against its treatment as rental property.

Brandy Cortes, City of Erie - Brandy Cortes, representing the BIPOC community, stressed the importance of funding the DEI commission. She thanked the council and urged the allocation of the requested 1.5 million dollars, emphasizing its potential to create opportunities for people and businesses, benefiting the city. Brandy spoke for those unable to attend, urging consideration of the impact on taxpayers, homeowners, and business owners. She invited council members to DEI meetings for more insight, offering details upon request.

Paige Bosniak, District 2 - Paige Bosniak reiterated her opposition to the Gannon-Blasco library lease, emphasizing its need for rescission. She also highlighted concerns about ARPA funds, suggesting a reconsideration of allocations for more suitable projects. Paige supported allocating \$1.5 million to the DEIC and requested \$1 million for homeless community services.

Cole Schenley, City of Erie - Cole raised concerns about the Library space lease and treatment of Library staff. He noted instances of silencing dissent, like the removal of the Children's Library Pride display, causing anxiety among union members. Regarding Project NePTWNE, Cole questioned the need for County investments, citing recent tax increases. He criticized the lease agreement with Gannon, highlighting the \$1.5 million allocation and the lease of prime waterfront real estate for \$2,200 a month for 25 years without rental increase provisions. Cole urged the Council to reconsider, stressing responsible use of taxpayer money.

Pamela Tilley, City of Erie - Pamela Tilley expressed her agreement with a written statement regarding the rental of Library space, emphasizing her disagreement with the notion that the Library should function as a rental property. She highlighted the discrepancy in rental rates, citing examples of Gannon paying significantly less per square foot for Bayfront space compared to what the County pays in other locations. Pamela strongly urged the Council to rescind the lease, reiterating this multiple times throughout her statement.

Shawn Held, Millcreek - Shawn Held called for the removal of Brenton Davis from office, citing concerns about his impact on various communities in Erie. He emphasized the need for someone of high moral character, multicultural competence, and genuine care for the community to take charge. Shawn mentioned the negative impact on the homeless, children, and minority communities, particularly highlighting issues such as the treatment of children in care and allegations of lack of transparency. He urged the Council to unite and find a replacement for Davis, asserting that he does not embody the qualities of a leader as the County Executive.

Brian Graff, City of Erie - Brian Graff expressed gratitude for the opportunity to speak and addressed Article 5, Section 8, and Item C of the Erie County Administrative Code, which allows to limit the number of persons addressing the County Council on the same

matter and appoint a spokesperson for a group. He recounted an incident from the December 18, 2023, Council meeting where this rule was applied without warning, leading to individuals being removed and their voices unheard. Brian questioned the fairness of this action, highlighting that attendees came as individuals, not a group. He noted the wasted time during the meeting and suggested that deleting this rule from the Administrative Code would prevent such occurrences in the future.

Scott Rastetter, Former Council Member from District 6, Scott Rastetter expressed his gratitude to new and old Council members. Drawing inspiration from a PBS series on Benjamin Franklin, he likened the Library to the Congress of the USA, emphasizing its importance as part of the establishment. He highlighted Franklin's contributions to democracy, drawing parallels to the DEIC and stressing the need for inclusivity. Rastetter encouraged a move away from partisan mindsets to accomplish more for the community.

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Horton moved to approve the minutes from the December 18, 2023, Regular Meeting. This was seconded by Schauerman and carried in a 7-0 vote.

DATE - Regular Meeting

REPORTS OF COUNTY OFFICIALS

County Executive and/or his Designee

Finance Committee - Mr. Copeland

Mr. Copeland reported that the Finance Committee met on January 25, and submitted to the agenda Old Business: A-D and New Business: A-C and E-G.

Personnel Committee - Mr. Winarski

Mr. Winarski reported that the Personnel Committee met on January 25 and submitted to the agenda New Business: D, H, & I

Other

Mr. Horton addressed the Council, reflecting on the passionate discussions about the Library and its intersectionality with broader issues. He referenced Pennsylvania's history, mentioning the gradual abolition act and the struggle for freedom. Mr. Horton shared personal experiences, noting his military service and the historical significance of libraries for oppressed communities.

Expressing concern for the homeless, he described visits to shelters and the conditions faced by those in need. Mr. Horton questioned the allocation of funds, highlighting discrepancies in budgeting for higher education and community needs. He emphasized his support for libraries but suggested that the NePTWNE project could find a more suitable location. While unsure of the legal implications, he criticized the lack of transparency in the lease process and urged discussions that were more open. Mr. Horton expressed pride in the community's engagement, appreciated the feedback, and emphasized the ongoing struggle against discrimination and inequality. In conclusion, Mr. Horton underscored the need for thoughtful consideration of the NePTWNE project's impact and

urged transparency. He also highlighted the continued presence of Jim Crow laws and the connection between NePTWNE funding and redlining, concluding with a call for action to address systemic discrimination.

Chairman Scutella shared his perspective, stating his position on the NePTWNE project and the associated lease. He mentioned that he would not have voted on the project had he known the lease was part of it. Acknowledging the varied opinions among Council members, Scutella emphasized the importance of honorable disagreement. He expressed gratitude that the meeting remained respectful and civil, noting the lack of personal attacks. Regarding the emails received, Scutella mentioned receiving about two hundred emails, with only two in favor of the lease. One of these emails was from a brewery, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to generate income. He noted the complexity of some emails, explaining why he may not have responded to at all. Scutella clarified that the County was collecting rent from Gannon but will not realize profits until after the 25th year. He highlighted ongoing efforts to find a suitable arrangement for Gannon.

OLD BUSINESS

A motion to amend the agenda to move Ordinance 8, Item D under new business to a second reading was made by Drexel, seconded by Horton, and carried by a 7-0 vote.

A motion was made by Schauerman to amend the agenda in Old Business with Items C-D, to comply with recommendations from the solicitor, to have the ordinances funds restricted and was seconded by Bayle.

Mr. Copeland addressed the motion presented by Mrs. Schauerman, expressing his frustration with the allocation of ARPA funds at various government levels. He emphasized the need for these funds to uplift communities during times of struggle, highlighting a historical trend where the wealthy benefit disproportionately. Acknowledging the current opportunity to effect change, Mr. Copeland urged the Administration and Council members to take action. He emphasized the importance of certifying the funds, stating that this step could make a significant difference in improving people's lives.

Mrs. Schauerman addressed the Council, expressing her support for the allocation of funds as outlined in the ordinances. However, she emphasized the importance of following proper legal procedures in the process. Mrs. Schauerman clarified that her concern lied in ensuring that the allocation of funds was carried out correctly and in accordance with legal guidelines.

Mr. Horton spoke, indicating his agreement with the solicitor's opinion on the matter. He highlighted that the solicitor had presented three different options, one of which involved voting the proposal up or down. Mr. Horton, aligned with Mr. Copeland, suggested that this method of voting was the best course of action. He emphasized the need for the Administration to make the appropriate choice and requested a straightforward vote on the

issue.

Mrs. Schauerman added to the discussion, stating that if the motion to amend does not pass, she will not support either of the items. Her decision was not based on the allocation of funds but on the procedural guidance provided by the solicitor.

Mr. Horton expressed his need to rebut Mrs. Schauerman's statement, emphasizing the importance of the Council's role in decision-making. He highlighted that while the solicitor provided valuable opinions, he was not the eighth member of the Council. Mr. Horton urged the Council to fulfill their elected duties by demonstrating courage and voting either up or down on the matter at hand.

Roll call vote to amend the agenda, failed 2-5 (Schauerman, Bayle)

**Second Reading of
Ordinance Number 1, 2024,
"First 2024 Library Fund
Budget Supplemental
Appropriation of \$70,000 for
Carryover of Unspent 2023
County Coordination Aid
Funds for Procurement of
New Delivery Van" (Finance
Committee)**

Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 1, 2024, "First 2024 Library Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$70,000 for Carryover of Unspent 2023 County Coordination Aid Funds for Procurement of New Delivery Van" A motion was made by Schauerman, seconded by Winarski, and passed 7- 0.

**Second Reading of
Ordinance Number 2, 2024,
"Approving a Waiver of the
Bid Requirements of the
County Purchasing Code and
a Sole Vendor Contract
between Erie County
Department of Health and the
Regional Science
Consortium" (Finance
Committee)**

Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 2, 2024, "Approving a Waiver of the Bid Requirements of the County Purchasing Code and a Sole Vendor Contract between Erie County Department of Health and the Regional Science Consortium" A motion was made by Schauerman, seconded by Winarski, and passed 7- 0.

**Second Reading of
Ordinance Number 3, 2024
"First 2024 ARPA Fund
Budget Supplemental
Appropriation of
\$1,000,000 to Erie County
Care Management for
Upgrades to the Homeless
Project" (Finance
Committee)**

Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 3, 2024 "First 2024 ARPA Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$1,000,000 to Erie County Care Management for Upgrades to the Homeless Project" A motion was made by Schauerman, seconded by Horton, and passed 7- 0.

Mr. Bayle echoed Mrs. Schauerman's sentiments and agreed with the solicitor's opinion on the matter. He acknowledged the importance of addressing the homeless issue but expressed reservations about the appropriateness of the mechanism proposed. Mr. Bayle mentioned a preference for the funds to go to the Department of Human Services (DHS) rather than Erie County Care Management (ECCM). Due to unanswered questions and the need for further discussion with Mr. Barber of ECCM, Mr. Bayle stated that he would not be supporting the motion.

Mrs. Schauerman reiterated her stance on the importance of following legal procedures and solicitor advice in allocating funds. She expressed her willingness to support the allocation of funds but emphasized the need to do so in the proper legal manner. Mrs. Schauerman stated that she would not be supporting either of the motions without adherence to the legal guidelines and solicitor's advice.

Mr. Horton expressed his views on the importance of following rules and decisions made by the Council, referencing previous instances where the solicitor's advice was not heeded. He highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on marginalized communities, particularly the Black and Brown populations, emphasizing the need to prioritize funding for them. Mr. Horton criticized the allocation of \$5 million to Penn State Behrend, stating it was offensive when considering the needs of impacted communities. He emphasized the importance of addressing issues of injustice and supporting marginalized groups, such as the DEIC and the homeless population. Mr. Horton expressed full support for the motion, highlighting the disparity in funding between higher education institutions and marginalized communities.

A vote was called and carried in a 5-2 vote. (Bayle, Schauerman)

**Second Reading of
Ordinance Number 4, 2024
"Second 2024 ARPA Fund
Budget Supplemental
Appropriation of
\$1,500,000 to Diversity,
Equity, and Inclusion
Commission (dba Diverse
Erie)" (Finance Committee)**

Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 4, 2024 "Second 2024 ARPA Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$1,500,000 to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission (dba Diverse Erie)" This was motioned by Horton, seconded by Schauerman.

Mr. Copeland reiterated his concern about the certification of funds, emphasizing the legislative body's authority over the budget. He expressed confusion about the notion that certifying the funds was optional, noting that every Council member was aware of the funds in the bank account. Mr. Copeland questioned how the Council could exercise its budgetary authority without knowledge of the available funds. He highlighted the administration's lack of comments and expressed frustration with blocking based on process rather than merit, emphasizing the need for transparent public discussions.

Mrs. Schauerman emphasized her support for allocating funds to DEIC but raised concerns about the wording to comply with the solicitor's recommendations. She clarified that her vote against the proposal was based on the need for proper wording and compliance with council procedures. Mrs. Schauerman reiterated her complete agreement with providing the funds to DEIC and expressed a desire to ensure the process was carried out correctly.

Mr. Horton reiterated the history of the funding, pointing out the reduction from the initially promised \$10 million to \$3.5 million. He expressed concern over the delays and the need to ensure the funds reach those in need. Mr. Horton emphasized that County government exists to provide human services, including support for the homeless and those facing challenges. He

questioned the impact of recent decisions on improving lives, questioning the importance of projects like NePTWNE and RESOLVE. Mr. Horton expressed full support for the volunteers and apologized for any disrespectful remarks made towards them, emphasizing the need for constructive dialogue.

Chairman Scutella reflected on his initial experience with the DEI meeting, expressing admiration for Ms. White and highlighting her esteemed reputation in the community. He commented that the DEI 'was getting there' and noted the progress they had made as a commission. Chairman Scutella urged the County Executive to sign the certification of funds as a demonstration of collaborative efforts within Erie County.

A vote was called and carried in a 5-2 vote. (Bayle, Schauerman)

NEW BUSINESS

First Reading of Ordinance Number 5, 2024, "First 2024 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$60,000 For Computer Software in Register of Wills" (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave the First Reading of Ordinance Number 5, 2024, "First 2024 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$60,000 For Computer Software in Register of Wills".

First Reading of Ordinance Number 6, 2024, "Second 2024 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$133,000 for Computer Software in Prothonotary" (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave the First Reading of Ordinance Number 6, 2024, "Second 2024 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$133,000 For Computer Software in Prothonotary".

First Reading of Ordinance Number 7, 2024 "Amending 2024 General Fund Budget" (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave the First Reading of Ordinance Number 7, 2024 "Amending 2024 General Fund Budget".

First Reading of Ordinance 8, 2024 "Approval of Agreement between the County of Erie and NCEU Local 143 (Prison)" (Personnel Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance 8, 2024 "Approval of Agreement between the County of Erie and NCEU Local 143 (Prison)". A motion was made by Schauerman and seconded by Horton.

Mr. Horton brought attention to the adoption of a contract, highlighting the additional \$1.3 million in expenses that were not accounted for in the previous year's budget. He emphasized the importance of transparency and expressed

concern that such matters should be addressed during the budgeting process. While supporting the contract to benefit working individuals, Mr. Horton noted that the timing, approving funds after the budget cycle, was atypical and should have been considered earlier.

Mr. Copeland shared insights from a conversation with a County prison worker, highlighting concerns about staffing levels and the impact on their work-life balance. He expressed support for the new starting wage and hoped it would address the challenges faced by employees. Mr. Copeland emphasized the importance of responsible budgeting, noting the need for proactive planning in anticipation of contracts and wage adjustments.

A call for a vote and passed 7-0.

Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 2, 2024 "Approving Appointment of Kenny Bonus, CPA and Bonus Accounting LLC as Financial Advisor for Erie County Council" (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott read the Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 2, 2024 "Approving Appointment of Kenny Bonus, CPA and Bonus Accounting LLC as Financial Advisor for Erie County Council". A motion was made by Horton, seconded by Schauerman.

Mr. Horton expressed gratitude towards Mr. Bonus and his firm for their diligent work in financial accounting. He acknowledged the challenges faced during a year without a financial accountant and appreciated how Mr. Bonus and Colin efficiently handled the situation. Mr. Horton thanked them for their efforts, stating that their work enabled the Council to fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

Mrs. Schauerman expressed her agreement with Mr. Horton's sentiments, thanking Mr. Bonus and his firm for their outstanding work on short notice. She acknowledged the tremendous effort put forth and expressed gratitude on behalf of the council.

A call for a vote and passed 7-0

Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 3, 2024 "Re-Appointment of Zelenkofske Axelrod, LLC to Perform an Audit of the County of Erie for Calendar Year Ending December 31, 2023" (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott read the Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 3, 2024 "Re-Appointment of Zelenkofske Axelrod, LLC to Perform an Audit of the County of Erie for Calendar Year Ending December 31, 2023" A motion was made by Schauerman, seconded by Winarski.

Mr. Horton suggested considering the inclusion of a forensic auditor for the upcoming end-of-year audit. He expressed discomfort with the varying numbers presented and emphasized the need for precise clarity. He proposed this addition alongside the amendment of the Administrative Code for further consideration by the Council.

A call for a vote and passed 7-0.

Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 4, 2024

Ms. Chillcott read the Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 4, 2024 "Approval of Tentative Lease Agreement with Corry Federal Credit Union for

"Approval of Tentative Lease Agreement with Corry Federal Credit Union for Office Space Located at 728 Worth Street, Corry, Pennsylvania for Magisterial District Judge Denise M. Buell" (Finance Committee) Office Space Located at 728 Worth Street, Corry, Pennsylvania for Magisterial District Judge Denise M. Buell". A motion was made by Schauerma, seconded by Winarski, and carried 7-0.

Possible reappointment of Dan Heher to the Erie County Signing Region Trust. Term to expire June 30, 2025. (County Executive) A motion to approve was made by Schauerma, seconded by Winarski, and carried 7-0.

Possible appointment of Dave Jeannerat to the Erie County MH/ID Board. Term to expire December 31, 2026. (County Executive) A motion to approve was made by Schauerma, seconded by Winarski, and carried 7-0.

ADJOURNMENT The meeting was adjourned at 08:49pm on a motion by Horton.

***The next Finance/Personnel Committee Meetings are Thursday, February 8, 2024, at 4pm in room 114A, Erie County Courthouse or via Zoom.**

***The next Regular Meeting of County Council is Tuesday, February 13, 2024, at 6pm 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, no later than the end of business 5 days prior to the meeting. The public must be present at the meeting to speak.**

