

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, February 13, 2024

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Scutella led the Pledge of Allegiance.

OPTIONAL PRAYER OR REFLECTION

Mr. Bayle recited an inspirational quote.

ROLL CALL

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

Others Present: Clerk Karen Chillcott, Deputy Clerk Megan Moore, Solicitor Tom Talarico, and Financial Advisor Colin Domowicz

HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

Jennie Hagerty

Jennie Hagerty, Fairview, the Executive Director of the Mercy Center for Women. She expressed gratitude for the chance to speak. Ms. Hagerty noted two key points. Firstly, she emphasized the vital role of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) in impacting lives locally, mentioning recent six-figure gifts to Mercy Center for Women. She stressed ECGRA's accountability through closed-out reports, citing \$77 million in community program funding. Secondly, Ms. Hagerty voiced concern about the \$1 million allocated to Erie ECCM. She felt it a disservice that frontline providers were not part of ECCM discussions. She suggested a joint meeting between the housing community, County Council, and ECCM to plan the funding's use transparently. Ms. Hagerty shared statistics from the 2023 single point-in-time nationwide count, highlighted 25% for first-time homelessness, a local increase. She called for transparency in allocating taxpayer dollars,

contrasting requirements for ARPA funding with the lack of clarity on the \$1 million ECCM allocation. She urged consulting providers for input on the funding's impact and invited attendees to join the Mercy Women's Center in serving the homeless at Perry Square the next day. Ms. Hagerty concluded by emphasizing the need to put aside political and personal agendas for the community's good and to treat homelessness with compassion, not just as numbers.

**Mary Ann
McDanniel- Kulesa**

Not Present

Jerry Servidio

Jerry Servidio, Millcreek, congratulated Mr. Copeland and Mr. Drexel, and the rest of the Council. He voiced support for Rock Copeland's oversight committee proposal. Mr. Servidio raised questions about unclear expenses in the budget, particularly association fees and professional fees. He urged transparency and support for oversight. Reflecting on past salary decisions, he mentioned the treatment of the former County Council Chief Clerk Julie Slomski, and emphasized the need for fairness. Mr. Servidio encouraged maturity and cooperation among Council members for the benefit of Erie County. He also expressed disappointment in a recent decision by Gannon. In closing, Mr. Servidio urged Council members to consider the community's best interests and thanked them for their time.

Joyce Savocchio

Joyce Savocchio, former Mayor of Erie, addressed the Erie County Council, representing multiple roles within the community. As the former Mayor of Erie, a founding member, and former Chair of the Board of the Jefferson Education Society, and as a long-time resident of the City and County of Erie, she voiced her support for ECGRA. Highlighting the importance of partnerships across all sectors of the community, Savocchio emphasized the role of Public-Public and Private-Public partnerships in finding common ground. Drawing from her experience as mayor, she noted that revitalization and progress were achievable through such collaborations, from Main Street to boardrooms and neighborhoods. Savocchio discussed the unique role of government in establishing ECGRA, an autonomous authority created by special state legislation. This legislation allowed for distribution of funds from the casino to the state, and then to ECGRA. She underscored that ECGRA, over its 15 years, had granted funds to 226 recipients, contributing significantly to the revitalization of Erie County's economy. Expressing gratitude on behalf of herself and the Jefferson Educational Society, Savocchio thanked ECGRA's board members, Executive Director, and staff for their dedication. She highlighted ECGRA's national recognition, noted its mention in the book "Our Towns" by James and Debra Fellows. In conclusion, she urged the council to continue supporting partnerships that drive progress for Erie County, emphasized a Chinese proverb: "while the destination is important, it is the companions we travel with that make it worthwhile." Savocchio thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak and for their consideration.

Ray Luniewski

Ray Luniewski spoke to the Council, thanking them for the chance to work with them and the community. He highlighted how ECGRA supported local events like Lake Fanfare, Perry Bicentennial, German Festival, and Holy Trinity, bringing in thousands of visitors and boosting the local economy. Luniewski

mentioned ECGRA's financial support, giving around \$35,000 annually to these events, which helped local businesses through visitor spending. He contrasted this with the cost of a sidewalk project, showing the festivals' economic benefits. He noted that all ECGRA activities were run by volunteers, without any salaries involved. Luniewski discussed ECGRA's transition from bingo fundraising to current support, especially after the casino introduction. Finally, Luniewski mentioned the PAL program, initially funded by ECGRA, which now supported 1,200 students, keeping them engaged in positive activities. He thanked the Council for their attention, emphasized ECGRA's positive impact on the community.

Mary Rennie

Mary Rennie, City of Erie: During the meeting, Mary Rennie went through a list of topics for discussion during the meeting. She talked about her belief in community and working together, mentioning her past as a cheerleader for Erie County. Mary joked about being the "grump librarian" when necessary and stressed the need for fair governance that respects everyone. Mary criticized Brenton Davis' Administration for what she saw as ongoing dishonesty, especially about the Gannon Lease and how they treat people at the Blasco Library. Mary backed up her points with documents, including photos from a protest with around 200 people and a plan for the Blasco Library. She pointed out changes on a map of the library's first floor, noting how the computer lab was moved from an area supposedly not for Gannon's use. Even though her speaking time was up, Mary said she would submit more documents about leases at places like EMTA and the Gannon Lease. She made it clear she was committed to serving Erie County with honesty and transparency.

Freda Tepfer

Freda Tepfer, City of Erie: Freda Tepfer raised concerns about the sale of 17 properties to a Massachusetts firm for \$250 each, which she deemed too low compared to other city property sale rates. She urged collaboration among the school district, city, and stakeholders to find a fairer process for property sales, emphasizing the need to inform locals about available properties and prioritize local buyers over outside speculators. Freda also criticized what she saw as redundancies and a bloated budget in the Economic Development Department. She noted salary discrepancies in the Public Defender's Office, where some employees left for higher-paying outside counsel positions. Regarding the library, Freda highlighted issues with limited space, elevator safety, and the usability of the second-floor computer lab. She mentioned concerns about the effectiveness of collapsible shelves based on feedback. Freda pointed out delays in sharing lease information and criticized Council members for not respecting the process. She echoed concerns about the purchasing code and suggested approving funds discussed in prior meetings. Lastly, she expressed a desire for US funding restrictions to aid the Gazan people.

OTHER SPEAKERS:

Art Leopold, City of Erie: Art Leopold addressed the Council, expressing appreciation for the opportunity to speak. He highlighted the importance of accountability and noted that even the Executive should be held accountable. Art emphasized that allegations should be based on facts rather than assumptions. He criticized the County Executive for what he perceived as premature judgments, stating that such actions create mistrust and hinder

effective governance. Art praised ECGRA as an example of accountability, citing their successful service over the past decade. Art urged the Council to approve funds for homeless assistance, emphasizing the urgency of helping those in need. He mentioned his previous request to table the vote on the library in October, expressing disappointment that it was not done. In conclusion, Art commended the Council for their efforts and thanked them for their time.

Stephanie Ciner, City of Erie: Stephanie Ciner spoke about her experience with repository sales in the county. She mentioned purchasing her home and two vacant lots to grow food, one through the redevelopment authority and the other through repository sales. Stephanie found the process challenging for the lot owned by an LLC, as there was limited information available. She had to visit the courthouse and city hall, navigate paperwork, before eventually purchasing the lot. Now using the land for fruit trees and educational purposes, Stephanie emphasized the need to inform residents about these affordable property options, especially in neighborhoods with many vacant lots. She advocated for a more transparent and accessible process for citizens interested in these opportunities.

Ruth Swaney, City of Erie: Ruth Swaney strongly criticized the lease between Erie County and Gannon University, calling it "illegal, immoral, and unethical." She highlighted concerns about the approval process, mentioning a change.org/wronglocation petition against the lease. Ruth reminded Council members of their oath to uphold the home rule charter, criticizing the lack of due process in presenting and approving the lease. She also mentioned concerns raised by Library Advisory Board members to Brenton Davis, alleging they were told not to worry about the space being used. Ruth criticized Gannon University for accepting what she deemed a highly favorable lease offer, accusing them of lacking moral integrity. Finally, she questioned the ethical stance of the Catholic Diocese of Erie, asking how they could justify displacing the poor, homeless, and less fortunate. Ruth concluded by labeling the actions surrounding the lease as unethical.

Laura Domencic, Executive Director of the Erie Art Museum: Laura shared on behalf of herself and, other board members, and the museum president to support for ECGRA. She highlighted the museum's receipt of funding from ECGRA for programs, particularly emphasizing the community benefits of quarterly gallery nights. Laura pointed out that every \$100 spent on museum activities stimulates the economy through increased business elsewhere in the community. She urged the Council to continue supporting ECGRA.

County Clerk Chillcott requested a point of order from Chair Scutella due to disruptions caused by members of the public attending the meeting.

Anna Franz, representing Our West Bayfront, a nonprofit neighborhood group in Mr. Horton's district, discussed the use of ECGRA funds since 2017. She explained how the funds have improved the neighborhood's quality of life, including repairs and beautification. Programs like Renaissance Block and Mission Main Street, with ECGRA's help, benefited 64 residents through matching grants. Anna highlighted the Anchor Building program's role in

restoration projects and its importance in securing matching funds. ECGRA's contributions, totaling over \$44,000, have been crucial for projects like Bayfront Park improvements. She emphasized that these improvements wouldn't have been possible without ECGRA's support.

Krista Perry, City of Erie: Krista shared how her son and his friends use the Blasco Library as a place to meet and read manga, comics, and classic literature. She emphasized the library's role in broadening her son's interest in classic literature beyond graphic novels. Krista pointed to media articles supporting the importance of libraries for younger generations, especially in an age of technological fatigue. She noted the rise in library use and the impact of classic literature on younger people's lives, with younger authors drawing inspiration from classic authors. Krista highlighted the library's role in encouraging reading, borrowing books, and supporting local bookstores. She opposed a 25-year lease for the library, fearing it might limit its ability to adapt to future generations.

Mark Tanenbaum, City of Erie: Mr. Tanenbaum, Executive Director of Performing Artists Collective Alliance (PACA), expressed his strong support for ECGRA in a brief speech. He highlighted PACA's journey from a building that was 75% empty and in need of extensive repairs when they moved in. Through their efforts, they cleaned up the building, improved heating and electrical systems, and began hosting shows. Over time, they invested in downtown Erie before other organizations joined, paid prevailing wages, hired union companies, and used local materials. PACA was also the first to be on the historical register in the downtown area. Mark mentioned that PACA pays 100% of school, county, and city taxes voluntarily, aiming to be a community asset. They now house 50 full-time artists and provide space for immigrants and other residents. They host multiple public events each week, contributing to the cultural vibrancy of Erie County. Mark praised ECGRA for their support, mentioned that their funding process is rigorous and involves inspections of the work done at PACA. Despite facing challenges in the application process, he fully supports ECGRA for their assistance with PACA's project.

Seth Trott, City of Erie: Seth Trott, speaking on behalf of an economic organization and as a board treasurer, expressed strong support for ECGRA (Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority). He highlighted ECGRA's recent distribution of \$1.6 million to 19 organizations in the community for various impactful projects. Seth emphasized that ECGRA was created to be insulated from politics, ensuring expertise in utilizing gaming funds effectively for community benefit. He warned against disbanding ECGRA, cited potential losses such as non-political funding, successful initiative funding, and long-term economic development plans. Seth illustrated with an example of a grant matching program for homeowners that could significantly improve neighborhood values over time. Seth emphasized that ECGRA's overhead costs are essential for its continued success, ensuring long-term commitment and completion of projects that benefit the community.

Marti Martz, Edinboro: Marti thanked the Council for their support of ECGRA and highlighted its positive impact in the town. She mentioned ECGRA's funding for projects in Edinboro, such as renovating town buildings and organizing events like the Arts and Music Festival. As the Co-founder of the Edinboro Market, Marti discussed how ECGRA funds supported the market, which has helped 80 small businesses and contributed over \$1 million to the local economy. She also talked about a recent ECGRA-funded project which match funds from Appalachian Regional Commission, "Cultivating the AGRA Culinary Industry in NWPA," which aims to promote sustainable agriculture and youth involvement in the food industry. Marti asked the Council to continue supporting ECGRA, emphasizing its role in driving economic growth and supporting local initiatives.

Charlene Kerr, North East: Charlene Kerr, representing Downtown North East and North East in Bloom, expressed strong support for ECGRA (Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority). She mentioned how their organizations have received over \$1 million in ECGRA funds, which they have matched with an additional \$2 million. This funding has supported over 50 building and business owners, providing assistance through programs like Mission Main Street. Through special events and arts and culture programs, they have attracted over 20,000 visitors to North East, some of whom have expressed interest in moving to the area. Charlene emphasized the importance of ECGRA funding for maintaining murals, plans, and gateways in North East. She praised ECGRA's grant process as thorough, nonpolitical, and a breath of fresh air. With her 40 years of experience in city planning, she believes no government agency could be as effective as ECGRA in solving community problems. She concluded by stating that Erie County needs ECGRA and expressed gratitude for their responsive, honest, and accountable staff.

Marcy Bencivenga, District 7: Marcy Bencivenga highlighted the connection between the library and ECGRA (Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority). She mentioned the Beehive Grant, a grant from ECGRA provided to the library. This grant supports individuals with product ideas by allowing them to use the Idea Lab, which was built with ECGRA funding and is located at the Blasco Library. Marcy urged the Council to reconsider the lease but also emphasized the importance of supporting ECGRA and recognizing the benefits its funding brings to the community. She concluded by encouraging support for both ECGRA and the library.

Patrick Gehrlein, Fairview: Mr. Gehrlein Borough Manager for North East, discussed the impact of ECGRA (Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority) on their community. He highlighted ECGRA's dollar-for-dollar matching and tangible gains for the community. Patrick emphasized ECGRA's apolitical nature and efficient approach. He praised ECGRA's leadership for doing what's right without expecting favors in return. Patrick mentioned the support from various groups and the role ECGRA plays in Erie's recovery. He urged continued support for ECGRA, noted their consistent funding and importance to Erie County's progress. Patrick asked the Council to show the same leadership in supporting ECGRA moving forward.

Geri Cicchetti, City of Erie: Geri Cicchetti, representing the Erie County Historical Society, emphasized the significant impact of ECGRA's support. ECGRA's funding has enabled the Historical Society to grow, including the consistent support for one position. This support has helped attract over 1000 visitors annually to Erie, contributing to the local economy. Geri highlighted the collaboration between ECGRA and Erie's county-led assets in efforts to create a more vibrant and culturally rich community.

Rich McCarty, Millcreek: Rich McCarty, interim President of Academic Affairs at Mercyhurst University, spoke about the importance of ECGRA (Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority) funding for the Mercyhurst Institute for Arts & Culture (MIAC). He mentioned the vital role of MIAC in supporting both cultural enrichment and stimulating the local economy. Established in 2011 and expanded into a performing arts program in 2017, MIAC has become a world-class arts and entertainment resource. Rich highlighted MIAC's contributions to entertainment and education, hosting various world cultural and art performances. Due to ECGRA's support, MIAC can offer events and classes by world-class performers and artists for free. He mentioned that two-thirds of MIAC's funding comes from fundraising and support from ECGRA. Rich emphasized that MIAC's existence and the opportunities it provides for Erie County residents and students would not be possible without ECGRA's support. In conclusion, Rich expressed the desire to support the Council because of their support for ECGRA, recognized the impact it has on bringing world-class performances and cultural educational opportunities to the community.

Emily Fetcko, Millcreek: Emily Fetcko, CEO of Erie Downtown Partnership, emphasized ECGRA's crucial support for their nonprofit organization. She highlighted the numerous events and activities they host, such as yoga sessions and fall festivals, totaling 140 activities with 80,000 participants. None of this could happen without ECGRA's funding. Emily mentioned ECGRA's commitment to improving public spaces and collaboration with organizations. She reiterated ECGRA's "First in Funding" role in the community. Emily emphasized that ECGRA's grant-making isn't just about funds but about community building. She expressed belief in the county's support for their mission and the need for more tools to continue their work. In conclusion, Emily expressed full support for ECGRA and its vital role in the community.

Kelly Stolar, City of Erie: Kelly Stolar, Executive Director of Inner-City Neighborhood Art House, expressed gratitude to the County Council and Board of Directors for their support. The Art House received a 2023 revitalization grant from ECGRA to replace its roof, costing \$160,000 to \$180,000. ECGRA's assistance allowed them to not only repair but replace the roof, addressed leaking issues. The Art House offers programs for children and adults, fostering skills and knowledge regardless of age. They collaborate with other organizations and welcome 80 to 100 students daily, experiencing a 62% growth in program offerings. Through the Art House, they contribute to a happier and healthier community, offering comprehensive art programs. Kelly expressed hope for another 30 years of operation, made possible by ECGRA's support.

An Erie City Police Officer expressed gratitude to the County Council, both current and past, for their support of the Police Athletic League (PAL) through ECGRA. When the vision for PAL was pitched, funding was a major concern. The officer recalled the first time hearing about ECGRA and how they were the first to come to mind for grants. Without knowledge of grants or grant writing, the officer expressed immense thanks to ECGRA for their support. PAL started with 35 kids in the first year, and with the help of an ECGRA grant in the second year, they expanded to 19 different locations. Soon, they will be branching out to the entire county, not just in the city of Erie. ECGRA's support has been instrumental in teaching PAL how to run a nonprofit and grow the program to its current success. Despite initial doubts, ECGRA's support helped PAL succeed where others did not believe in them. The officer expressed immense pride in the program's success, attributing much of it to ECGRA's support. They highlighted ECGRA's investment in people as amazing and thanked them for the invaluable help provided to PAL.

Heath Caspar, City of Erie: Heather Caspar, Executive Director of the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network, highlighted the vital support provided by ECGRA to their organization. The Neighborhood Network serves 6 census tracts across the city of Erie, receiving funding from various grantors, with ECGRA being among the best. ECGRA's funding requires matching, which they have always exceeded. These funds are primarily used to support small businesses in the area. Heather emphasized the impact of ECGRA's support on local businesses and farms, many of which sell produce at the farmers' market. She also mentioned the significant role ECGRA played in the creation of large murals in the city and in providing donated bicycles to immigrants in Erie. She concluded by stressing the importance of ECGRA continuing to provide funding to the community at this level of support, underlining the invaluable contributions made possible by ECGRA's assistance.

Kathy Lutz, District 1: Kathy began by quoting Margaret Mead, emphasizing the importance of community action. She expressed support for various community projects, including Project Minerva and efforts to maintain the public nature of the Library. While not opposed to the NePTWNE project, Kathy argued that it does not belong in the Library, as it was not part of the Blasco Library's master plan. She highlighted the Library's role as an anchor in the Bayfront revitalization, emphasizing its significance to the community. Kathy urged reconsideration of the lease with Gannon University, suggesting that their project could be pursued elsewhere without impacting the Library's core mission of knowledge creation. She concluded by appealing for the lease to be rescinded in light of community concerns.

Jessie Collura, City of Erie: Jessie Collura is the Executive Director of Young Artists Debut Orchestra (YADO), highlighted the importance of ECGRA funding in supporting their mission of providing musical education to children aged 6-18. She emphasized their commitment to inclusivity, diversity, accessibility, and equity in music education. Jessie referenced concerning statistics indicating below-average English and math scores in Erie, emphasized the need for solutions to improve educational outcomes.

Drawing from a study on the Harmony Project in LA, which provides music programs for low-income children, she pointed out the positive effects of music training on children's brain performance and academic success. Jessie advocated for the benefits of music programs, citing evidence that shows improved academic performance and reduced dropout rates among students involved in music education. She urged support for ECGRA funding to continue providing these valuable opportunities for children in Erie.

Gretchen Blough, Edinboro: Gretchen addressed what she considers misinformation regarding the Library lease. She countered claims that opposition to the lease is against change or education, stating that the Library needs space to evolve, which the lease would limit. She disagreed with the assertion that computers were moved due to COVID-19, clarifying that it was part of the Library's master plan. Blough criticized ageism and insults from the executive, emphasizing that any threat to democracy should be taken seriously regardless of who is involved. She highlighted concerns about omissions in information and the lack of comments from the Executive Director on Right-To-Know requests, suggesting it is challenging to address issues when the facts are not transparent.

Cathay Kramer, City of Erie: Cathay expressed her concerns about the apparent disconnect between the tight financial management of ECGRA and the Gannon Lease. She emphasized that while many witnesses praised ECGRA's fiscal responsibility, she believes that it's essential for the Council to also run a tight financial ship and avoid making what she perceives as bad deals, such as the Gannon Lease.

Scott Rastetter, Washington Township: Mr. Rastetter thanked the Council for recent positive developments regarding the formation of committees and collaborative work, noted that this had not been done for some time. He mentioned the elimination of "Walking Around Money" (WAM), a process that he sees as money used for political favors. Scott commended ECGRA for removing this practice, stating that he had researched the organization and found no reason for its bad reputation. He praised ECGRA for its effective structure, clear plan for fund distribution, and dedication to the community's future, emphasizing that it promotes honesty and eliminates political waste through its funding approach.

Issy Lawrie, District 7: Issy Lawrie raised questions during the Council meeting regarding the library and the Gannon lease. She mentioned her frequent use of the library, particularly for computer access. Issy recounted interactions with library patrons concerned about the Gannon project. She then posed two questions: First, regarding the collapsible bookshelves mentioned in the "Right To Know" requests, she questioned why bookshelves were being adjusted to give Gannon more space if they are not leasing shelving space. Second, she questioned the arrangement where individuals working in the Idea Lab have offices on the second floor but their workspace is on the first floor, questioning the purpose of this setup. Issy emphasized the need for clarification on these matters, representing concerns from library users who may not have been able to attend the Council meeting.

Arthur Gamble, City of Erie: Arthur Gamble expressed concern about the city's reputation and division. He highlighted the negative perceptions of Erie's Eastside and the need to dispel these stereotypes. Arthur emphasized the importance of utilizing resources and including all members of the community, especially those who have been historically excluded. He mentioned the potential of Erie's waterfront and the need to capitalize on these assets for the benefit of everyone. Arthur called for unity and collaboration to create a more inclusive and prosperous Erie.

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

**January 2, 2024-
Organization Meeting**

**January 16, 2024-
Regular Meeting**

REPORTS OF COUNTY OFFICIALS

**County Executive and/or
his Designee Finance**

Chris Carroll, Executive Designee, reported on recent efforts in Washington D.C., highlighting County Executive Davis's role in an Economic Development Task force. The team lobbied on Capitol Hill to bring funds back to Erie County, emphasizing the need for bolstered economic development. Chris defended the travel expenses, stating that these trips could benefit the county's future. Regarding contracts like the Blasco Library, Chris explained the process of crafting contracts, involving the Administration and County Solicitor, with a focus on transparency. He mentioned improvements in services like the Veteran's Affairs office due to Executive Davis's forward-thinking approach. Chris assured that all assets and improvements belong to the taxpayers, emphasizing the democratic process of bringing contracts to the County Council for review and approval. He expressed eagerness to join Gannon and the Blasco Library to serve the community and utilize the beauty of Lake Erie.

**Finance Committee –
Mr. Copeland**

Mr. Copeland reported that the Finance Committee met on February 8, 2024, and submitted to the agenda New Business: A-C and Old Business: A-F and K-II.

**Personnel Committee –
Mr. Winarski**

Mr. Winarski reported that the Personnel Committee met on February 8, 2024, and submitted to the agenda New Business: C, D, & E.

Other

Mr. Horton addressed several points, starting with the celebration of Black History Month. He mentioned his vote against the Gannon lease and questioned the allocation of 1.5 million APRA funds intended for those most affected by Covid-19, calling for Penn State and Gannon to return these funds. Expressing support for NePTWNE but not at the library, Mr. Horton clarified his stance on inaccurate statements and emphasized the importance of accuracy. He highlighted his work with the homeless population before joining the County Council and refuted claims that the Council does not consider "boots on the ground" perspectives. Mr. Horton emphasized that funds are not solely for people on the streets but also for prevention efforts. He praised ECCM's role as a coordinator for individuals seeking shelter and highlighted their recent national recognition from the White House. Finally, he discussed the certification process, noting that the Finance Director provides monthly updates on remaining funds. Mr. Horton concluded by urging the County executive to release funds without negatively impacting marginalized communities.

Mr. Copeland shared a personal story about finding solace and a sense of belonging in his school library during challenging times in junior high and high school. He learned to play guitar there and found it to be a sanctuary, especially since his home life was similar to his life at school. The library became a home for him, fostering social growth along with educational opportunities. Expressing support for the library, Mr. Copeland explained his efforts to find a compromise for NePTWNE, aiming to find a suitable home for the project. He emphasized his complete trust and faith in ECGRA, highlighting his recent attendance at a Build Erie meeting, where he witnessed ECGRA's role as a community glue that utilizes resources to improve the community.

Mr. Drexel spoke about his recent experiences with receiving numerous emails and calls supporting ECGRA. He highlighted the vital role ECGRA plays in supporting many in his district, emphasizing that he chose to move to Erie and raise his family there because he believes in the importance of caring for people and supporting the arts. Expressing his admiration for ECGRA's transparency, Mr. Drexel mentioned that he has received more financial information and disclosure on ECGRA funding than on any matter in the Administration. He noted that ECGRA eliminates political divides, serving as a non-partisan entity that cannot be replaced by County government.

Mr. Scutella began by reiterating his stance on the library issue. Shifting to ECGRA, he recounted an incident where, as the liaison of the Council, he had to miss a meeting. Upon asking about the attendees, he learned that the County Executive was sitting at the board table, which he interpreted as an act of intimidation. Mr. Scutella expressed his views on bullying, stating that cowards resort to such tactics. He emphasized that they are not going to back down from the fight. Referring to the signing of money, he suggested that if the authority was left to the County Council and executive, it could lead to favoritism. He hinted that he believes the Council has the necessary votes to support ECGRA staying.

Drexel moved to amend the agenda to move C and D from New Business to a Second Read and combined K-FF. This was seconded by Copeland.

Mr. Horton contributed to a discussion prior to the vote, stating he will vote to support but he doesn't like it.

A roll call vote carried in a 7-0 vote.

OLD BUSINESS

Second Reading of Ordinance Number 5, 2024, "First 2024 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$60,000 For Computer Software in Register of Wills" (First Read 1/30/24) (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 5, 2024, "First 2024 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$60,000 For Computer Software in Register of Wills" A motion was made by Winarski, seconded by Bayle and carried on a 7 - 0 vote.

Second Reading of Ordinance Number 6, 2024, "Second 2024 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$133,000 for Computer Software in Prothonotary" (First Read 1/30/24) (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 6, 2024, "Second 2024 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$133,000 For Computer Software in Prothonotary" A motion was made by Winarski, seconded by Bayle and carried by a 7 - 0 vote.

Second Reading of Ordinance Number 7, 2024 "Amending 2024 General Fund Budget" (First Read 1/30/24) (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 7, 2024, "Amending 2024 General Fund Budget". A motion was made by Winarski, seconded by Bayle and carried by a 7 - 0 vote

NEW BUSINESS

First Reading of Ordinance Number 9, 2024 "Waiver of Purchasing Code and Approving a Single Vendor Contract and Renewal of Three Year West Library Maintenance Agreement for County Law Library and Court Library" (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave a First Reading of Ordinance Number 9, 2024, "Waiver of Purchasing Code and Approving a Single Vendor Contract and Renewal of Three Year West Library Maintenance Agreement for County Law Library and Court Library"

First Reading of Ordinance Number 10, 2024, "Third 2024 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$9,270 for Correction of Court Budget Oversight of Court Solicitor Wages" (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave a First Reading of Ordinance Number 10, 2024, "Third 2024 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$9,270 for Correction of Court Budget Oversight of Court Solicitor Wages"

First Reading of Ordinance Number 11, 2024, "2024 Appointed Official's Salary Ordinance Full Time Assistant Public Defender" (Personnel Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 11, 2024, "2024 Appointed Official's Salary Ordinance Full Time Assistant Public Defender" A motion was made by Winarski, seconded by Bayle and carried by a 7 - 0 vote.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 12, 2024, "2024 Appointed Official's Salary Ordinance Full Time Assistant Public Defender" (Personnel Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 12, 2024, "2024 Appointed Official's Salary Ordinance Full Time Assistant Public Defender" A motion was made by Winarski, seconded by Copeland and carried in a 7 - 0 vote.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 13, 2024, "2024 Appointed Official's Salary Ordinance - Director of Administration" (Personnel Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave a First Reading of Ordinance Number 13, 2024, "2024 Appointed Official's Salary Ordinance - Director of Administration"

Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 5, 2024 "Approval of the Settlement Agreement

Ms. Chillcott gave a reading of the Possible Adoption of Resolution Number 5, 2024, "Approval of the Settlement Agreement Between the County of Erie (the "County"), Millcreek Township (the "Township"), the Millcreek Township School District (the "School District"), and the Millcreek Township General

Between the County of Erie (the "County"), Millcreek Township (the "Township"), the Millcreek Township School District (the "School District"), and the Millcreek Township General Authority (the "Authority")" (Finance Committee)

Authority (the "Authority")" A motion was made by Copeland, seconded by Bayle and carried in a 7 - 0 vote.

Possible appointment of Sandy Morrow to the Erie County Land Bank. Term to expire December 31, 2028. (Winarski)

Ms. Chillcott gave a reading of the possible appointment of Sandy Morrow to the Erie County Land Bank. Term to expire December 31, 2028 (Winarski). A motion was made by Horton, seconded by Winarski and carried in a 7 - 0 vote.

Possible appointment of Ejay Fyke to the Erie County Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission. Term to expire December 31, 2027 (Copeland)

Ms. Chillcott gave a reading of the possible appointment of Ejay Fyke to the Erie County Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission. Term to expire December 31, 2027 (Copeland). A motion was made by Copeland, seconded by Horton and carried in a 7 - 0 vote.

Possible appointment of William D. McLaughlin, Jr. to the Erie County Planning Commission. Term to expire December 31, 2027 (Copeland)

Ms. Chillcott gave a reading of the possible appointment of William D. McLaughlin, Jr. to the Erie County Planning Commission. Term to expire December 31, 2027 (Copeland). A motion was made by Copeland, seconded by Horton and carried in a 7 - 0 vote.

**Exoneration of
Delinquent Property
Taxes at Parcel
Number: 14-011-
007.0-
100.51**

Ms. Chillcott gave a reading of the Exoneration of Delinquent Property Taxes at Parcel Number: 14-011-007.0-100.51. A motion was made by Winarski, seconded by Copeland and carried in a 7 - 0 vote.

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for
Unsold Property at
Index Number: 18-
050-092.0-211.00**

Ms. Chillcott read that all items K-FF, were to be one vote, as amended by Drexel and seconded by Copeland. A motion by Copeland for the vote, seconded by Schauerman.

Mr. Horton reiterated concerns about recent property purchases by out-of-town entities at low prices. He expressed frustration, mentioning ongoing discussions on this issue for over a year. Mr. Horton suggested exploring recourse options, possibly involving other tax bodies or the Assessment office. He indicated a desire to withhold approval until further clarity in his statement, Mr. Horton suggested that, if given the choice, he would not consider offering another piece of property until the situation resolved.

Roll call vote and carried in a 4- 3 vote. (Horton, Winarski, Scutella)

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for
Unsold Property at
Index Number: 14-
010-013.0- 401.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 14-010-
022.0- 210.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 15-020-
026.0-246.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 15-020-
031.0-214.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 14-010-
021.0- 127.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 14-010-
039.0-114.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 18-050-
006.0- 211.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 18-050-
022.0- 123.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 18-051-
023.0- 119.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 18-051-
023.0- 120.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 18-051-
023.0- 121.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 18-051-
024.0- 221.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 18-051-
025.0- 104.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 18-051-
025.0- 202.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 18-051-
025.0- 222.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 18-051-
025.0- 227.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 19-062-
020.0- 110.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for
Unsold Property at
Index Number: 18-
051-027.108.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 18-051-
034.0- 139.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 19-060-
006.0- 217.00**

**Possible Sale of a
Parcel from the
Repository for Unsold
Property at Index
Number: 19-062-
014.0- 114.00**

**Appointment of a
Purchasing Code
Committee**

Mr. Copeland provided background information, stating that the Administration had previously presented a responsible contract ordinance for consideration, a measure he supported and wished to explore further. He mentioned that the Solicitor advised a revision of the purchasing code to ensure alignment with this ordinance. Mr. Copeland emphasized the need to establish working groups to facilitate this alignment and ensure the purchasing code reflected the principles of the responsible contract ordinance. A motion was made by Copeland, seconded by Drexel, and carried by a 7 - 0 vote.

**Appointment of a
County Council
Procedure Committee**

A motion was made by Copeland, seconded by Drexel and carried by a 7 - 0 vote.

**Appointment of an
Erie County
Economic
Development
Department
Committee pursuant
to Article II, Section 5
of the Home Rule
Charter**

A motion was made by Copeland, seconded by Drexel. Chair Scutella opened the floor for discussion prior to a roll call vote.

Mr. Bayle raised concerns about the formation of an investigative committee, questioning the process and emphasizing the need to understand the reasons behind it before voting. He also discussed economic development, highlighting similarities between proposed initiatives by Governor Shapiro and existing efforts by the County Executive. Mr. Bayle emphasized the importance of conducting investigations based on evidence of impropriety rather than personal biases and suggested that focusing on ECGRA would be more relevant than broader Economic Development Department inquiries. He also mentioned his review of online financial postings, particularly noting the extensive use of the ECGRA credit card for Amazon purchases.

Mr. Horton interjected with a point of order.

Mr. Horton suggested focusing the discussion on the specific items at hand, noting that none of them are related to ECGRA. He emphasized the need to limit the discussion to the topics outlined in the agenda.

Mr. Bayle interjected with a point of order, reminding Mr. Horton of his preference not to be interrupted while speaking.

Mr. Horton raised a point of order, referencing previous points he had made.

Mr. Bayle expressed his frustration at not being able to discuss the investigation committee further.

Chair Scutella clarified that ECGRA's purchases were regularly approved each month and emphasized that the committee's focus was not on ECGRA. He expressed trust in the individuals he had appointed to the board and stated that it was not within the Council's purview to interfere in their operations. Returning to the topic of the Economic Development Department, Mr. Scutella expressed a desire to understand the Council's role in these efforts. He mentioned learning more about the Economic Development Department from Chris during the meeting than from any previous sessions. Mr. Scutella indicated that if the Administration was making progress and moving forward, he had no objections. However, he noted that if any issues arose, the Council should have the means to request information. He clarified that the issuance of a subpoena would only be considered if the Administration refused to provide the necessary information. Mr. Bayle reiterated his point, stating that he had requested information from ECGRA but had not received it. He questioned whether, as a Council Representative overseeing a County entity, he should have the right to access that information.

Mr. Copeland called a point of order, noting that the discussion had strayed from the current agenda items.

Mr. Scutella expressed his concern, stating that he had looked into the matter.

Mr. Bayle was referring to the matter of receipts. He mentioned his belief that it was inappropriate to request information from any organization under the Council's control.

Mr. Horton interjected, addressing the Chair. However, Mr. Scutella requested to speak and expressed his preference for the Council to collectively request information rather than individuals doing so independently. He suggested that, if necessary, the Council could vote on the matter. Mr. Scutella raised concerns about the potential repercussions if each Council member were to request the same information separately.

Mr. Bayle reiterated his request for Amazon receipts or an itemized list of expenses, noting that it would only take a few minutes to provide.

Mr. Horton again called for a point of order, asked to return to the current agenda.

Mr. Scutella stated that he had shared his opinion on the matter.

Mr. Horton expressed his perspective, stating that he did not possess extensive law enforcement investigative experience but did bring other investigative expertise to the table. He emphasized caution, suggested that the current discussion might have been premature as the board had not yet been established, and legal counsel guidance had not been sought. Mr. Horton recommended against proceeding with the topic in a public forum at that time.

Mr. Copeland provided his input, noted that some of the language under discussion originated from his own experience with investigations. He advocated for a thorough exploration of the topic within the forum, suggested that it would have been wise to delegate responsibilities among the group to gain a comprehensive understanding. He proposed the formation of an oversight committee, likening it to breaking off a part of the body to delve into a specific issue.

Mr. Copeland recalled an action sheet proposing the wholesale elimination of the Economic Department. He expressed his belief that this might not be the best course of action, as allowing the Economic Development Department to present its achievements could reveal positive outcomes. He emphasized the importance of seeking information as mandated by the Home Rule Charter, citing instances where Council members had voiced concerns about insufficient information. Mr. Copeland stressed the prudence of exercising the Council's authority to request necessary information, particularly in anticipation of budget sessions, to avoid potential gaps that could lead to larger tax increases for taxpayers.

Mr. Drexel contributed to the discussion with a need to focus on tangible outcomes. He expressed a genuine interest in understanding the accomplishments of the Economic Development program, including ongoing grants and initiatives. Mr. Drexel clarified that his intent was not punitive; rather, he believed that economic and community development were interconnected and essential for overall growth. Regarding ECGRA (Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority), he acknowledged the transparency in their reporting and communication of their activities. He concurred with Mr. Copeland's perspective, highlighted the importance of ensuring that taxpayer dollars were effectively utilized to avoid unnecessary tax increases. Mr. Drexel suggested that Economic Development Department might serve as a crucial area to evaluate in this regard.

Roll call vote and carried in a 7 - 0 vote.

ADJOURNMENT

Horton moved to adjourn at 08:40 PM.

***The next Finance/Personnel Committee Meetings are Thursday, February 22, 2024, at 4pm in room 114A, Erie County Courthouse or via Zoom.**

***The next Regular Meeting of County Council is Tuesday, February 27, 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.**