

MINUTES

Erie County Council

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

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

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 26, 2024

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Scutella called to order a Regular Meeting of the Erie County Council at 06:00 PM and then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

OPTIONAL PRAYER OR REFLECTION

Mrs. Schauerman recited an inspirational quote.

ROLL CALL

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

Council Staff: Clerk Karen Chillcott, Deputy Clerk Megan Moore, Solicitor Tom Talarico, Financial Advisor Colin Domowicz -Bonus Accounting

HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

Kimberly Hunter

Kim Hunter did not speak.

Gretchen Blough

Gretchen Blough, Edinboro: Gretchen Blough opposed the Gannon and Blasco Library lease, citing ad hominem attacks from the County Executive and Gannon against the public. Gretchen urged the Council to rescind the Lease to support taxpayers.

Jerry Servidio

Jerry Servidio did not speak.

Krista Perry Lamb

Krista Perry Lamb, District 4: Krista Perry Lamb urged the Council to rescind the Gannon Lease. Krista emphasized the Blasco Library's Strategic Plan, which lacked mention of the Gannon Lease and focused on resource enhancement goals.

Lou Aliota & Sherrie – Jo Neu

Lou Aliota and Sherrie-Jo Neu from Millcreek: Lou and Sherrie-Jo voiced dissatisfaction with the Logic and Accuracy testing for Dominion Voting Machines in Erie County, particularly regarding Election Staff responses and the lack of testing result access. They stressed the importance of officials upholding their oath and expressed concerns about potential election fraud. Lou and Sherrie-Jo questioned the transparency of election officials.

Nancy Shea

Nancy Shae, Millcreek-District 1: Nancy strongly opposed the Gannon and Blasco Lease, calling it a "Sweet Heart Deal" marked by controversy and unethical conduct. Nancy urged the Council to vote in favor of rescinding the lease.

Mary Rennie

Mary Rennie, City of Erie: Mary addressed the Council, citing recent falsehoods from the County Executive and discussing the Lease agreement between the Library and the Friends of the Library. Mary questioned taxpayer responsibility for Gannon's Lease and emphasized the importance of investments in people, integration, equity, and access to arts and education in Erie County.

Others

Freda Tepfer, City of Erie and a Judge of Election: Freda defended Erie County's elections against criticism. Freda cited an editorial about the Great Lakes Research Lab's plans within the Library to reason for opposition to the Gannon and Blasco Lease.

Sam Talarico, City of Erie: Mr. Talarico, Chair of the Erie County Democratic Party, addressed the Council, rejecting allegations of voter fraud in Erie County and defending the integrity of Elections Department staff. Sam denounced such claims as baseless and suggested they serve only to intimidate.

Jeff Gross, North East: Jeff supported rescinding the Gannon Lease, emphasizing the Library's importance for vulnerable populations. Jeff raised concerns about potential impacts on services for people with disabilities.

Member of the public discussed the refugees and immigrants of Erie, brought up the Polish Library, and presented eastern European egg decorations.

Ruth Ann Scanzillo, District 2: Ruth aimed to influence the Council, proposing a hypothetical scenario comparing the Blasco Library space to a Council Member's living room occupied by a lab. Ruth Ann emphasized their opposition to the Gannon and Blasco Lease.

Sarah Ewing, Provost and Vice President of Student Experience at Gannon University-District 2: Sarah outlined the goals and purpose of Gannon's Great Lakes Research Lab at the Blasco Library, emphasizing the partnership between Gannon and the Library. Sarah expressed optimism about the potential benefits and opportunities that the lab will bring.

Chair Scutella has to call for order in the meeting and maintain decorum.

Jacob, Edinboro: Jacob supported Project NePTWNE but opposed the Gannon Lease with the Blasco Library due to concerns about environmental justice and potential dangers posed by the lab. Jacob believed that rescinding the Lease would prevent long-term losses.

Ruth Swaney, District 2: Ruth expressed opposition to the Gannon and Blasco Lease and requested that it be rescinded.

Graham Mashner, Girard: Graham opposed the Gannon and Blasco Lease,

citing concerns about fairness in the bidding process for the Blasco Library space. Graham highlighted potential legal ramifications of granting privileges to Gannon and urged caution to prevent future disputes.

Doris Cipolla, Harborcreek: Doris expressed opposition to the Gannon and Blasco Library Lease. Doris cited quotes from church officials and members who disagreed with citizens protesting near Catholic churches. Doris emphasized the importance of keeping the Library public.

Juan Llarena, Millcreek: Juan opposed the Gannon Blasco Lease, citing concerns about its cost and duration, and shortchanged taxpayers. Juan referenced the separation of church and state. Additionally, Juan argued that a water lab would be incompatible with the Library's purpose. Juan called for a veto-proof majority from the Council.

Mulnah Dovat, City of Erie-District 2: Mulnah opposed the Gannon and Blasco Lease, stressing the significance of co-lab rooms in the Library and raising concerns about accessibility due to the cleared first-floor space for Gannon's use.

Charlotte Scalise, City of Erie: Charlotte voiced concerns about ARPA funds allocated to colleges instead of low-income populations and urged rescinding the Gannon and Blasco Library Lease.

Mike, Millcreek Township: Mike supported the Gannon and Blasco Library Lease and highlighted potential benefits of rental income. Mike raised concerns about legal fees associated with rescinding the Lease, suggesting they could outweigh the benefits of the Gannon project.

Lucy John, City of Erie: Lucy opposed the Gannon and Blasco Lease and recommended that those with concerns about voting machines attend poll worker training for insights.

Kathy Perry, District 5: Kathy voiced opposition to the Gannon and Blasco Lease. Kathy mentioned that while gathering signatures for a petition to rescind the Lease, Kathy did not encounter a single person who supported it.

Arin Misner, City of Erie-District 2: Arin voiced opposition to the Gannon and Blasco Lease, raising suspicions about its timing following an LGBTQ+ display protest at the Library. Arin highlighted concerns about potential retaliation against the LGBTQ+ community by the Executive and reiterated opposition to the Lease agreement.

Matt Texter, District 3: Matt opposed the Gannon and Blasco Lease, noting the Chamber Growth and Partnership's support of the Lease. Matt urged individuals to contact board members and emphasized the importance of rescinding the Lease.

Beverly Potts, City of Erie: Beverly posed questions to the Council, seeking information about the Lease. Beverly expressed strong opposition to the Gannon and Blasco Lease.

Anna McCartney, North East: Anna voiced opposition to the Gannon and Blasco Lease and highlighted the significant support for rescinding the Lease. Anna noted the effort of a small group in collecting thousands of signatures for the petition.

Paige Bosnyak, District 2: Paige expressed opposition to the Gannon and Blasco Lease and frustration with feeling unheard regarding the reasons for opposing the Lease, especially concerning the impact on services.

Cathay Kramer, City of Erie: Cathay expressed opposition to Gannon and the Blasco Lease; asked Council to rescind the Lease.

Woman: Discussed a personal experience when being on vacation and visiting a local library to support their opposition to the Gannon and Blasco Lease.

Scott Rastetter, Washington Township - Former Council Member from District 6: Mr. Rastetter expressed opposition to the Gannon and Blasco Lease, emphasizing concerns about the length of the agreement. Scott urged Council to rescind the Lease or consider shortening its duration.

Brad Peganoff, Millcreek: Brad discussed being confused and needing clarification on an Ordinance trying to over a Resolution. Brad asked that there be a more lawful way to complete these procedural actions.

Pam Tilley, City of Erie: Pam discussed previous conversations with Brad and attempted to inquire about tabling the Blasco and Gannon Lease agreement, but answers were unavailable during the meeting. Pam then requested the County Executive's presence at County Council Meetings in the future.

REPORTS OF COUNTY OFFICIALS

County Executive and/or his Designee

Finance Committee - Mr. Copeland Mr. Copeland reported on the items that were moved forward from the Finance Committee meeting.

Personnel Committee - Mr. Winarski Mr. Winarski reported on the items that were moved forward from the Personnel Committee meeting.

Other

Mr. Horton, Chair of the Erie County Election Board, addressed the Council and the public, expressing a need to speak on behalf of the staff, who have been described as the gold standard of employees in the Commonwealth when it comes to elections. It was emphasized that there would be no tolerance for individuals making false and accusing statements without evidence during County Council meetings who do not represent Dominion, such as two individuals did today. Horton clarified he will continue to discourage anyone from making false claims.

OLD BUSINESS

Vice Chair Drexel motioned to table the possible reappointment of Dean Curtis to the Erie County Conservation District from New Business, seconded by Schauerman.
Roll Call Vote 7-0.

Scutella-Y	Drexel-Y
Bayle-Y	Copeland-Y
Horton-Y	Schauerman-Y
Winarski-Y	

Vice Chair Drexel motioned to table the reappointment of Julie Leonard to the Erie County Conservation District from New Business, seconded by Copeland.
Roll call vote 6-1.

Schauerman interrupted to ask for clarification on the previous roll call vote motion asking for calcification.

Copeland clarified it was to table the Possible reappointment of Julie Leonard. Schauerman requested that County Clerk Chillcott to change her vote to Yes.
Vote carried 7-0.

Scutella-Y	Drexel-Y
Bayle-Y	Copeland-Y
Horton-Y	Schauerman-Y
Winarski-Y	

Copeland motioned to table Ordinance Number 17, 2024, "Fifth 2024 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$50,000 for Shared Costs between the Planning Department and the County GIS Office", from Old Business, seconded by Horton. Roll call vote 5-2.

Scutella-Y	Drexel-Y
Bayle-N	Copeland-Y
Horton-Y	Schauerman-N
Winarski-Y	

**Ordinance Number 13,
2024, "2024 Appointed
Official's Salary Ordinance
- Director of
Administration"(First
Read 2/13/24)(Tabled
2/27/24)(Finance
Committee)**

Ordinance 13, 2024 was tabled during a previous vote on 2/27/24.

Second Reading of Ordinance Number 17, 2024, "Fifth 2024 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$50,000 for Shared Costs between the Planning Department and the County GIS Office"(First Read 3/12/24) (Finance Committee)

Ordinance 17, 2024 was tabled during a previous vote.

Second Reading of Ordinance Number 18, 2024, "Approval of Waiver of the Bid Requirements under the Purchasing Code and Approval of the Sole Vendor Contract between Erie County and SOE Software Corporation dba SCYTL as Recommended by the Erie County Board of Elections" (First Read 3/12/24)(Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave a second reading of Ordinance Number 18, 2024, "Approval of Waiver of the Bid Requirements under the Purchasing Code and Approval of the Sole Vendor Contract between Erie County and SOE Software Corporation dba SCYTL as Recommended by the Erie County Board of Elections". This was moved by Schauerma, seconded by Horton and carried in a 7 - 0 vote.

Scutella-Y	Drexel-Y
Bayle-Y	Copeland-Y
Horton-Y	Schauerma-Y
Winarski-Y	

Second Reading of Ordinance Number 19, 2024, "Repeal of Resolution No. 36, 2023 and Rescission of Agreement Between The County of Erie and Gannon University" (First Read 3/12/24)(Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave a second reading of Ordinance Number 19, 2024, "Repeal of Resolution No. 36, 2023 and Rescission of Agreement Between The County of Erie and Gannon University". This was moved by Drexel, seconded by Horton.

Copeland stated that despite his considerations, he ultimately voted in favor of rescinding the Lease due to the diverse reasons expressed by the public.

Chair Scutella emphasized the importance of collaboration within the County Council, acknowledging that not all votes are unanimous. He stressed the Council's commitment to serving the people of Erie County. While expressing support for the project, he raised a concern about the potential discovery of plastics during Gannon's water testing and questioned the subsequent steps and future intentions of Gannon regarding the Library space. The motion carried in a 4 - 3 vote.

Scutella-Y	Drexel-Y
Bayle-N	Copeland-Y
Horton-Y	Schauerma-N
Winarski-N	

NEW BUSINESS

Copeland motioned for a 5-minute recess.
Chair Scutella called recess at 7:57 PM.
Returned from recess at 8:03 PM.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 20, 2024, "2024 Children and Youth Services Fund Budget Revised Expenditures of \$30,000 for Creation of Expense Line Items Due to Court Ordered Placements" (Finance Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a first reading of Ordinance Number 20, 2024, "2024 Children and Youth Services Fund Budget Revised Expenditures of \$30,000 for Creation of Expense Line Items Due to Court Ordered Placements".

First Reading of Ordinance Number 21, 2024, "Appointed Official's Salary Ordinance Full Time Assistant Public Defender" (Finance Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a first reading of Ordinance Number 21, 2024, "Appointed Official's Salary Ordinance Full Time Assistant Public Defender".

First Reading of Ordinance Number 22, 2024, "Appointed Official's Salary Ordinance Full Time Assistant Public Defender" (Finance Committee) Ms. Chillcott gave a first reading of Ordinance Number 22, 2024, "Appointed Official's Salary Ordinance Full Time Assistant Public Defender".

First Reading of Ordinance Number 23, 2024, "Sixth 2024 General Fund Supplemental Appropriation of \$10,241 for Position Title and Grade Level Reclassification in Human Resources from Talent Acquisition Manager to Human Resource Manager" (Finance Committee) Chair Scutella stated he would like to strike Ordinance Number 23, 2024 from the agenda.

First Reading of Ordinance Number 24, 2024, "Seventh 2024 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$14,653 for Job Reclassification in County Council Office" (Finance Committee)

Ms. Chillcott gave a first reading of Ordinance Number 24, 2024, "Seventh 2024 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$14,653 for Job Reclassification in County Council Office".

Possible reappointment of Dean Curtis to the Erie County Conservation District. Term to expire December 31, 2027. (County Executive)

The reappointment was tabled during a previous vote.

Possible reappointment of Julie Leonard to the Erie County Conservation District. Term to expire December 31, 2027. (County Executive)

The reappointment was tabled during a previous vote.

Possible appointment of Katie Phillips to the Office of Children and Youth Advisory Board. Term to expire December 31, 2027. (Drexel)

Ms. Chillcott announced the possible appointment of Katie Phillips to the Office of Children and Youth Advisory Board. Term to expire December 31, 2027. This was moved by Schauerma, seconded by Copeland and carried in a 7 - 0 vote.

Scutella-Y	Drexel-Y
Bayle-Y	Copeland-Y
Horton-Y	Schauerma-Y
Winarski-Y	

Possible Sale of a Parcel from the Repository for Unsold Property at Index Number: 18-051-012.0-120.00

Ms. Chillcott stated parcel number 18-051-012.0-120.00, brought forth for sale. This was moved by Schauerma, seconded by Horton and carried in a 7 - 0 vote.

Scutella-Y	Drexel-Y
Bayle-Y	Copeland-Y
Horton-Y	Schauerma-Y
Winarski-Y	

**Possible Sale of a Parcel
from the Repository for
Unsold Property at Index
Number: 14-010-028.0-
101.00**

Ms. Chillcott stated parcel number 14-010-028.0-101.00, brought forth for sale. This was moved by Schauerman, seconded by Winarski and carried in a 7 - 0 vote.

Scutella-Y	Drexel-Y
Bayle-Y	Copeland-Y
Horton-Y	Schauerman-Y
Winarski-Y	

ADJOURNMENT

Horton complimented Chair Scutella for his leadership and patience with the public during the meeting.

Horton moved to adjourn at 08:11p.m.

County Council Meetings are documented by action minutes. For a detailed account of the meeting, please view the recording at <https://www.youtube.com/@eriecountypa>

/jk