

MINUTES

Erie County Council

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

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

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Scutella opened the meeting and led the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:01p.m.

OPTIONAL PRAYER OR REFLECTION

Mrs. Schauerman offered a quote of reflection.

ROLL CALL

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

Others present: Karen Chillcott, Megan Moore, Jay Stranahan, Esquire, and Colin Domowicz, Financial Advisor

HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

Jerry Servidio

Jerry Servidio, Millcreek Township: Mr. Servidio requested that the Council support Pleasant Ridge Manor with Ordinance 9, 2025. He stated that Pleasant Ridge Manor was a place for the residents of Erie County who could not afford in-home care or a private nursing home. He emphasized the greatness of the staff, and stated it was not just employment for them but a calling. He also noted that Pleasant Ridge Manor was a good employer for many residents of Erie County.

Others

Freda Tepfer, City of Erie: Ms. Tepfer referenced the past few Finance Committee meetings, and questioned if the query asked of the Finance Department had been answered and what the state of the property tax bills was since they had been sent out to residents. She also inquired what role Erie County had in the current Erie Convention Center project, or if they would just get stuck with a loan guaranty and no input. She noted the Erie County Facebook page had been changed to County Executive page, and wanted others to know there was a Erie County job page. She hoped those laid off by current

politics would find jobs there.

Art Leopold, Millcreek Township: Mr. Leopold stated he was happy to see the courts had affirmed the Council's legislative power bestowed by the Home Rule Charter. He highlighted the need for funds to be held, so the County Executive was not able to spend them in any way other than appropriated by the Council in the 2025 Budget. He mentioned the County Facebook page and website, and that it should not be under the purview of one, but a bi-partisan and moderated space for information. He stated it should be a vehicle for all to communicate with the public.

Andrea Labowski, Wayne Township: Ms. Labowski voiced concerns over the County's social media policy, or lack thereof. She stated that she requested the county policy on social media through the freedom of information act and was given an employee handbook. She noted there was no information listed regarding the Erie County resource page and how it was managed. She announced that posts prior to November 2024 on the Erie County Facebook page had been deleted and the ability to comment on posts turned off so the people had no voice. She stated the page was a resource of Erie County, established in 2015, and should not be partisan but informational.

Jorge Lorian, Erie County: Mr. Lorian stated he was there to speak with the Council on the subject of the electronic theft of SNAP benefits. He acknowledged that it was a State issue, but had not received answers from anyone at the State level about how they would stop it from happening in the future. He disclosed how the burden became his to bear when his extended family's benefits had been stolen, and he had to make difficult decisions on what bills to pay so he could assist them with food purchases, although he did not receive benefits. He questioned what people were supposed to do when this happened. He remarked that he hoped the Council could reach out to Governor Shapiro's office to get something done to stop this from happening.

Marcus Jacobs, Wesleyville Borough: Mr. Jacobs stated he served as the Manager and Public Information Officer of Wesleyville Borough. As such, he offered support for Ordinance 11, 2025 and acknowledged the importance of communication channels with the public. He stated it was okay for elected officials to put statements on official channels, but with proper credentials attributed to the author. He concluded that county resources should be kept clear and transparent.

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

February 25, 2025 - Regular Meeting

A motion to accept the minutes from the February 25, 2025 meeting was made by Mrs. Schauerma, seconded by Mr. Horton, and carried 7-0.

Yea: 7

Nay: 0

REPORTS OF COUNTY OFFICIALS

County Executive and/or Designee

No report was offered by the County Executive or a designee.

Finance Committee - Mr. Copeland

Mr. Copeland read into the record his letter regarding the discrepancies in the 2025 budget and the items moved to the agenda from the Finance meeting on March 6.



COUNTY OF ERIE
ERIE COUNTY COUNCIL

March 11th, 2024

Subject: 2025 Published Budget Issues

To: County Council Chairman Terry Scutella
CC: County Council

Dear Mr. Chairman,

In the last two Finance Committee meetings, I've addressed issues that have arisen since we were provided with the final published budget document. We spent two months of arduous work disseminating and analyzing the County Executives Budget, sitting through many incredibly long meetings deliberating the contents of the budget Council would later adopt. Now that the Administration has published this adopted budget and loaded it into their accounting software, I'm aghast that the items that appear in this published budget neither reflect the budget that was proposed, nor the budget we adopted. This is a clear usurpation of the powers of County Council and must be addressed with haste.

In these last two finance meetings, when I directly questioned the Director of Finance as to the reasons behind these discrepancies, all members of Council witnessed the Director feign ignorance of the topic, decline to answer questions or request those questions in writing. I find it difficult to believe that I have been able to speak extemporaneously on these topics, but those who applied these changes to the budget are unaware of those issues. More likely, they wish to avoid public discussion and transparency around these topics. For this reason, I am sending this letter to enter into the record the issues we've discussed. They are as follows:

- On page 246 of the final budget document, in Grant to Other Organizations, the EMTA Grant, line 006216, has been reduced by \$105,400. Despite being listed as a council action, there was no vote, deliberation, or any council action to reduce this line item. Per our agreement with the City of Erie during the negotiations surrounding the renewal of their charter, the County is obligated to pay a percentage portion of the local EMTA match. This is an illegal reduction of a line item.
- The proposed budget listed a revenue of \$2,141,976 as a transfer from gaming on page 246. It also listed a duplicate revenue on page 251. In the proposed gaming budget only one transfer is shown. Council voted to eliminate the duplicate revenue on page 251, which Davis attempted to illegally veto. This veto was struck and added to our litigation. But now, under the gaming fund budget, there appears under council action:

- o The addition of \$1,536,744 of revenue from fund balance appropriated
- o A reduction of municipal projects of \$605,232
- o An addition of \$2,141,976 transfer to the general fund

Council took NONE of these actions. The administration has not only vetoed to add appropriation in one ordinance but has the audacity to suggest that their veto in one ordinance can create a fund balance appropriation, a new expense transfer, and the reduction of spending in a line, in an entirely separate ordinance. All of this despite never being proposed, deliberated or voted on by Council.

- During the budget process I pointed out that there were 5) sections of the budget where the underlying line-item totals did not match the roll-up totals. This caused an underreporting of expenses, meaning that expenses were greater than the proposed revenue. This is the definition of an unbalanced budget. This is a concrete fact, despite how many times the administration has claimed otherwise. For each of these sections, they have now changed the proposed and final line-item values so that the line items add up to the originally proposed totals. These line-item changes were made without any action by the council.
 - o Under the proposed budget for the County Solicitor, the roll-up page originally showed a value of \$294,295. The budget section only listed line items totaling \$288,106.00. On page 39 of the final budget, the professional fees line was adjusted from the original proposed value of \$206,311 to \$212,500.00. This arbitrary increase was done so that the section total now matches the roll-up value. This is despite the council taking no action on this line item. This is an illegal increase.
 - o The proposed budget for the Sheriff showed a roll-up value of \$4,321,517. The budget expense total was \$4,950,429. This delta was "made up" by reducing eight-line items for wages and fringes on page 167. Despite council action INCREASING wages fringes by \$211,896, the new wages are still \$417k LESS than the proposed budget.

Line Item	Original Listed Proposal	"Updated" Admin Proposal	Delta
001020 - BARGAINING WAGES	\$2,308,840.00	\$1,959,493.00	-\$349,347.00
001200 - FICA	\$196,940.00	\$170,215.00	-\$26,725.00
001210 - LIFE INSURANCE	\$3,726.00	\$2,622.00	-\$1,104.00
001220 - HOSPITALIZATION	\$781,671.00	\$644,815.00	-\$136,856.00
001221 - PRESCRIPTION DRUGS	\$195,415.00	\$161,201.00	-\$34,214.00
001230 - WORKER'S COMPENSATION	\$62,794.00	\$53,453.00	-\$9,341.00
001240 - RETIREMENT	\$446,411.00	\$384,041.00	-\$62,370.00

001250 - OTHER HEALTH AND WELF	\$44,251.00	\$37,126.00	-\$7,125.00
001260 - UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENS	\$12,761.00	\$10,931.00	-\$1,830.00
			-\$628,912.00

- o Under Adult Probation the proposed budget roll-up listed \$8,005,168 as the proposed expenses. The department budget section listed \$8,045,972. This difference was made up by adjusting the 9 line items without council action.

Line Item	Original Listed Proposal	"Updated" Admin Proposal	Delta
001010 - NON-BARGAINING WAGES	\$1,159,067.00	\$1,133,338.00	-\$25,729.00
001200 - FICA	\$305,954.00	\$303,985.00	-\$1,969.00
001210 - LIFE INSURANCE	\$18,255.00	\$18,117.00	-\$138.00
001220 - HOSPITALIZATION	\$1,024,669.00	\$1,018,493.00	-\$6,176.00
001221 - PRESCRIPTION DRUGS	\$256,163.00	\$254,619.00	-\$1,544.00
001230 - WORKER'S COMPENSATION	\$91,000.00	\$90,977.00	-\$23.00
001240 - RETIREMENT	\$690,452.00	\$685,854.00	-\$4,598.00
001250 - OTHER HEALTH AND WELF	\$57,772.00	\$57,372.00	-\$400.00
001260 - UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENS	\$18,522.00	\$18,294.00	-\$228.00
		Total:	-\$40,805.00

I formally request that our current litigation be amended to include these issues.

Rock Copeland

Erie County Councilman - District 3
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 Office: 814-451-6304
 Cell: 814-969-1081



Personnel Committee - Mr. Winarski Mr. Winarski announced the agenda items from the Personnel Committee meeting on March 6, 2025.

Other

Mr. Copeland motioned to amend the agenda and move Ordinance 12 to a second reading. The motion was seconded by Mr. Horton and carried 7-0.
 Yea; 7
 Nay; 0

OLD BUSINESS

Ordinance Number 9, 2025, "An Ordinance of the County of Erie, Pennsylvania Authorizing and Directing the Execution and Delivery of a Guaranty Agreement for the Benefit of Pleasant Ridge Manor and Compliance with the Provisions Thereof and Incurring Nonelectoral Debt Thereby; Approving a \$700,000 Letter of Credit Agreement from Pleasant Ridge to First National Bank of Pennsylvania; Directing the Proper Officers of the County to Take Necessary Action; and Repealing All Inconsistent Ordinances" (Finance Committee) (First Read 2/25/25)	A motion to adopt Ordinance 9 was made by Mrs. Schauerman, seconded by Mr. Horton, and carried 7-0. Yea: 7 Nay: 0 For discussion, Mr. Copeland clarified that the Guaranty did not fund Pleasant Ridge Manor, but was a line of credit because they could not incur debt for worker's compensation or anything like that. He noted they had not been properly funded in the last few years, as was brought up by Mr. Servidio earlier in the night.
Ordinance Number 10, 2025, "First 2025 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$227,789 for Line Items in Adult Probation" (Finance Committee) (First Read 2/25/25)	A motion to move Ordinance 10, 2025 to the floor was made by Mrs. Schauerman, seconded by Mr. Winarski, and carried 7-0. Yea: 7 Nay: 0
Ordinance Number 11, 2025, "An Ordinance Amending the Erie County Administrative Code to Establish Restrictions on the Use of County Resources and to Limit Their Use to Official Government Business" (Finance Committee) (First Read 2/25/25)	Ordinance 11, 2025 was moved to a vote by Mrs. Schauerman, seconded by Mr. Copeland, and carried 7-0. For discussion, Mr. Drexel stated it was an all-time low that the County Executive stopped people from commenting on the County Facebook page and deleted all prior posts before 2025. He questioned if the Executive would restore the County Facebook page and take his political fight to his political campaign page as others have done. He stated the Executive could restore some dignity to his office by restoring the County Facebook page. He noted the executive hijacked a resource that should be non-political and delivered information to the citizens. He explained that the Executive stole the county page after people did not follow his personal page during bad weather that winter. He stated row offices having to all start their own pages would cost taxpayers more in the long run. Mr. Copeland stated a lot had changed since the first reading of the ordinance,

and wished it had more specific items contained in it. He continued that it still set forth that no county or government resources should be utilized for partisan political concerns. He stated that the Executive changed a county resource into a personal resource to avoid enforcement of the ordinance and additional legislation may be needed to specify public resources. He noted this was a bi-partisan effort for elected officials to not use county resources for political ends that should be supported by both sides.

NEW BUSINESS

Ordinance Number 12, 2025, "Second 2025 General Fund Supplemental Appropriation of \$138,793 for Revised Revenue and Expenditures in the Courts Computer Bureau" (Finance Agenda) As amended previously, the ordinance was introduced as a second reading by Ms. Chillcott. A motion was made by Mr. Copeland and seconded by Mrs. Schauerman. The vote carried 6-1.
Yea: 6
Nay: 1 (Bayle)

Ordinance Number 13, 2025, "Amending Ordinance 89, 2023 and Approval of Memorandum of Agreement for Public Safety Telecommunicators in the AFSCME Clerical/Technical Labor Agreement" (Personnel Committee) The ordinance received a first reading from Ms. Chillcott.

Possible appointment of Jill Seus Starr, MA, LPC, CCDP-D to the Erie County Drug & Alcohol Advisory Board. Term to expire December 31, 2027. (County Executive) Mrs. Schauerman motioned to approve the appointment. The motion was seconded by Mr. Winarski and carried 7-0.
Yea: 7
Nay: 0

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Horton motioned to adjourn, and the meeting ended at 6:32pm.

***The next Finance/Personnel Committee Meetings are Thursday, March 20, 2025.**

***The next Regular Meeting of County Council is Tuesday, March 25, 2025.**