

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, June 3, 2025

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Scutella opened the meeting and led the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:00p.m.

OPTIONAL PRAYER OR REFLECTION

Mrs. Schauerman read a 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, Tom Talarico, Esq., Jay Stranahan, Esq., and Colin Domowicz, Financial Advisor

HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

Christine Riehl

Christine Riehl, not stated: Ms. Riehl addressed the Council on the matter of Ordinance Number 27, 2025. She acknowledged her work with immigration as a foreign service officer for the United States Department of State. She stated that beyond the moral argument and the value of immigrants, there were broader problems: the promises made by the United States government. She noted specifically those that helped America during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; they were deeply vetted and given asylum with temporary protective status, which the Trump Administration has now revoked. She stated the Taliban would remember them. She remarked that the second issue at hand was the "blood money" to hold not legally arrested but detained immigrants. She discussed that the contract had not been seen by the Council and no formal accounting was shared, and different amounts were presented. Lastly, she noted that the problem was a rogue executive who the legislative body could not control, and the Council could be held legally responsible.

Meredith Blake

Meredith Blake, Millcreek Township: Ms. Blake commented that she was a descendant of immigrants and was there as a professional researcher in migration and cities. She shared her educational background, a Master's Degree in International Migration and Public Policy from the London School of Economics and a Master's Degree in Architecture from the University of Virginia. She emphasized her information was rooted in research, understanding data, and making policy decisions, not based on politics. She offered counterarguments to the Davis Administration and its supporters' arguments on immigration and economics. She stated that despite not receiving the benefits of social programs, undocumented immigrants contribute to Social Security, Medicare, and Unemployment Insurance. She reported that undocumented immigrants generate \$523M in tax revenue for the state and local governments; that undocumented immigrants pay a 9% rate while the top 1% of taxpayers only pay a 6% rate in taxes. She also highlighted that if undocumented immigrants were granted legal status, that revenue would increase to \$667M. She professed her wish that Mr. Davis and those Council members following his ignorance would realize a detainee generating \$99 a day was nothing compared to the value and contributions they would provide with legal working status. Ms. Blake concluded that if they cared about the county, and sustaining and growing it, they would absolutely support undocumented immigrants and not detain them.

Arthur L. Fuller, Jr.

Mr. Fuller did not speak.

Others

Mary Rennie, City of Erie: Ms. Rennie spoke with regard to Ordinance Number 27, 2025. She concurred that federal reimbursement was not new, and the Council was limited to their options because they did not oversee contracts or what happened in the prison. She noted that there were roughly 11M undocumented immigrants in the United States, but illegal was not the same as criminal. She reported many were in a complex court system trying to achieve legal documentation. She noted international adoptees were undocumented because of the failure of the legislature to pass laws. She stated that ICE reported they were going after criminals: murderers, rapists, and pedophiles. She noted that no one wants people like that on the street, but they were detaining good community members, as well as other collateral arrests like U.S. citizens. She also noted that ICE looked like a secret police force with their face coverings, and it was uncertain at best if due process was afforded to the people detained. She concluded that, regardless of politics, people believe in the U.S. Constitution, the rule of law, and government of, by, and for the people.

Alice Edwards, Millcreek Township: Ms. Edwards expressed her gratitude for the informational session Rock Copeland had held on Ordinance Number 27, 2025. She noted the County Executive's Facebook post calling the session misinformation, but did not find that to be true and thought it was bad practice that the citizens could not respond. She asked the Council to vote against Ordinance Number 27, to not be complicit in the overreach of power by ICE. She commented on how the Department of Homeland Security had increased its daily quota of detainees to 3,000 per day and that it would increase the need for

space by ICE. Furthermore, she questioned how it looked to those who came to Erie, a welcoming city for immigrants and refugees, to have an ICE detention center supported by the county government.

Cole Schenley, City of Erie: Mr. Schenley stated that he agreed with the previous speakers, and this was a moral and economic issue with many nuances. He noted the problem had been continued because the federal government did not address it or take it seriously, and now it was a moral issue. He asked for a solution that was humane and had dignity for everyone.

Karis Turk, Lawrence Park Township: Ms. Turk addressed the situation with Ordinance Number 27, 2025. She stated that it was understood the funds could help, and that the handling of immigration and how to respond was rapidly changing. She questioned how confident the Council was that those detained had not had their rights violated. She remarked that she knew the vote would not stop the housing of detainees, that the contract existed before that political moment, and the money had to come from somewhere. She proposed that the Executive should have dealt with the prison's lack of funding previously. She stated the policies that bring forth this funding were not supported by her and others in the room.

Matt Texter, City of Erie: Mr. Texter lauded the town hall meeting hosted by Rock Copeland. He noted there were many issues in the county with budgets and shortfalls. He spoke about how concentration on orthodoxy and law overshadowed acting right (grace), and he wanted a county and country of grace, a theme he had read in a book by a Quaker. He noted the recent court opinions and the audit of ECGRA always had the Executive on the wrong side of winning, and he hoped that it would continue in the fall.

Paige Bosnyak, District 2: Ms. Bosnyak registered her opposition to Ordinance Number 27, 2025. She stated that complicity with the situation was immoral and possibly illegal, not affording people due process, and would put Erie on the wrong side of history. She commented that it was the opposite of what a county should do with a welcoming city, and the history of the area was built on immigrants building a better way of life for their families. She concluded that time and resources should be spent on uplifting the community and not collaborating on things that could hurt them.

Karl Ebert, Franklin Township: Mr. Ebert discussed that everyone could tie their roots to a different hemisphere, and everyone was an immigrant. He stated that as a retired accountant, he strongly advised that the revenue from the contract have a clean audit trail and not be muddled in the general fund. He also emphasized that accounting procedures within the county should be better established. He discussed the way that the county could become a 'sanctuary county', as others were in the Commonwealth.

Art Leopold, Millcreek Township: Mr. Leopold expressed gratitude for the town hall meeting and said more communication was needed, not less. He noted in

conjunction with Ordinance Number 27, 2025, that documented citizens were also being detained, and that habeas corpus was in jeopardy. He suggested that the funding be used to help take care of the immigrants. He stressed that the money due to ECGRA should be paid, and a more formal agreement used. He commented on the varying tax rates and suggested a town hall meeting to inform taxpayers.

Deonte Cooley, City of Erie: Mr. Cooley remarked on the support for detained immigrants that was shown by the community. He questioned where that support was at other times when trying to get funding and help for the neighborhoods where black and brown people lived. He stressed how immigrants, and the services available to them, were all on the east side of town. He countered that it would be great for them to be released but questioned what happened then and where everyone would be with their support. He noted they lack support in redevelopment, housing, and advocacy from a 'room full of people in Districts 4 and 2. He stated it set people up for failure not to have opportunities for them.

Anna McCartney, North East: Ms. McCartney shared her story of immigrating to America after WWII with her family, and being undocumented until citizenship was secured. She illustrated the terrors that her family had endured by the Nazis and how her grandfather had taught her how lucky they were to be in America. She expressed her deep distress at the treatment of immigrants and what America had become.

Carlos Mora, Summit Township: Mr. Mora described how America was described to him in his youth: the land of opportunity with hard work, the American dream. He stated that after nine years in America, it was even better than the dream. He shared an immigrant story of a mother and daughter traveling to America by foot, the hard work as a dishwasher, and being afraid to walk on the streets. He stated that it was still a better life than where they had come from, a failed country of democracy. He discussed the ideals of the Republican Party in the 80s and 90s, America as the country on the hill, a beacon of light, fiscal conservatism, and improving minimum wage, and stated that now they are a mob attacking and dehumanizing a group of people. He stated that the current administration wanted to paint them as bad people because they were brown.

Margaret Watts, Washington Township: Ms. Watts proclaimed her befuddlement at an ordinance for a supplemental appropriation based on a speculative assessment, and the difference in amounts given at finance committee meetings. She called for transparency and receipts when appropriating funds. She stated that as elected officials, the Council had fiduciary responsibility and power of the purse. She stated the Executive and Administration should be required to provide answers before appropriations were addressed. She discussed the cost of all the lawsuits caused by the County Executive and the possibility of more if due process was not given to detainees. She asked more questions about the process of detainees and stated the Council

should include conditions and specifications in the ordinances.

Scott Rastetter, Washington Township: Mr. Rastetter approved the support shown to the immigrant detainees. He discussed the results of the audit on ECGRA and stated they were the same that he found seven years ago. He determined Perry Wood to have unbelievable talent for the job and his finger on the pulse of the needs of the county. He suggested that the Executive could be an asset as well, but was only disruptive and chaotic, which in turn made the county look bad and uninviting. He concluded that the county needs more population and less radicals.

Freda Tepfer, City of Erie: Ms. Tepfer shared her experience of working with refugees at the Bureau of Blind and Visual services, and noted their aide only lasted six months. She stated the most disturbing thing she had heard was a lawyer working with an immigrant, and then they were gone. She noted the money received because of the contract should go to the Community College, Public Defender's Office, or refugee organizations. She stated these immigrants were contributing members of the community.

Nathan George, Fairview Township: He was grateful for the informational meeting. He stated the funding did not have to be appropriated for Ordinance Number 27, 2025. He argued the root causes of crime needed to be addressed, such as food deserts, social inequality, and unemployment and underemployment. He stated giving money to work with ICE to further militarize the police force within the county was not the solution and asked the Council to vote no or table the ordinance.

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

May 6, 2025 - Regular Meeting

A motion to accept the minutes from the May 6, 2025, meeting was made by Mr. Horton, seconded by Mr. Copeland, and carried 7-0.

Yea: All
Nay: None

REPORTS OF COUNTY OFFICIALS

County Executive and/or Designee

The County Executive or a designee offered no report.

Finance Committee - Mr. Copeland

Mr. Copeland reported on the items from the Finance Committee that were moved to the Council's meeting agenda.

Personnel Committee - Mr. Winarski

Mr. Winarski reported on the items from the Personnel Committee that were moved to the Council's meeting agenda.

Other

Mr. Copeland commended the staff and board of ECGRA for their performance in their audit. He noted that the money due to ECGRA, determined by the audit, was not informal but due to state gaming law.

Chair Scutella stated Brenton Davis and the lawmakers who called for the audit should write a letter of apology to the board of ECGRA. He noted that the Council appoints those members and had faith in the job they did.

OLD BUSINESS

Ordinance Number 23, 2025, "Fourth 2025 General A motion to approve Ordinance Number 23, 2025 was made by Mrs. Schauerma, seconded by Mr. Horton, and carried 7-0.

Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$125,228 for Release of Restricted Fund Balance of Adult Probation Supervision Fees" (First Read 5/6/25) (Finance Committee) Yea: All
Nay: None

Ordinance Number 27, 2025, "Eighth 2025 General A motion to approve Ordinance Number 27, 2025 was made by Mrs. Schauerma, seconded by Mr. Bayle, and failed 2-5.

Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$433,620 for Housing Immigration Detainees" (First Read 5/6/25) (Finance Committee) Mr. Copeland stated thanks to Attorney Iwanenko for speaking at his town hall meeting. He highlighted there was no misinformation at the event and emphasized that the Council had no jurisdiction over the people at the facility, the contract had existed before, and ICE detainees had been hosted previously. He noted there were times that deportation was necessary, but worried about the 'denaturalization department' created by the Trump Administration.

Mr. Horton stated as he said before, it was blood money and immoral and his vote was 'hell no.'

Mr. Bayle stated his vote was yes. He relayed that his family came from immigrants, but they came here legally, and that was the point with which he took issue. He questioned if people cared about this issue, then why hadn't anything been done in the last four years as illegal aliens came in unchecked and unvetted criminals; he stated he was sure millions were great people and millions were criminals. He noted he did transport as a trooper and documentation must be provided, and he has no worries about paperwork being done here. He defended ICE wearing masks because their lives were threatened every day, and you can't have a country without borders and laws and rules. He stated that lots of things the public speakers were saying put county employees in danger. He concluded that these people may not all be criminals, but they were all illegal.

Mr. Drexel stated he wanted the information to be accurate, and it was statistically impossible for millions of criminals to come into the country. He remarked that nothing the Council members said or did was meant to put employees at the county prison in danger, but Council members cared about the immigrant members of the community. He stated misinformation like 'millions of criminals' put the entire community at risk as it caused division among

people, and it needed to stop. He noted you can't tell who was in the country legally or illegally, or born here, by looking at them, and people would get into fights and cause bigger issues. He said people needed to stop making up stories that humans were going to get us because they were illegal aliens, it was just stupid.

Mr. Winarski stated he loved people, and people don't agree all the time like Council members or his constituents. He noted his family came as immigrants of Poland and Italy, but they came legally. He stated he did have a heart and would vote no, but coming to the country without the proper paperwork was criminal. He stated there were enough lawyers out there to help them. He noted immigrants made America and he'd vote no.

Mrs. Schauerman stated the warden had told them that he has not and will not allow anyone in the prison without the proper documentation.

Mr. Horton spoke again and said that America was built on the backs of slaves.

Yea: Bayle, Schauerman

Nay: Copeland, Drexel, Horton, Scutella, Winarski

Ordinance Number 28, 2025, "Approval of a Waiver of the Bid Requirements under the Purchasing and Sales Procedures of the Administrative Code and Approval of a Sole Vendor Contract between FirstMatch and County of Erie Juvenile Probation" (First Read 5/6/25) (Finance Committee)

A motion to approve Ordinance Number 28, 2025 was made by Mrs. Schauerman, seconded by Mr. Winarski, and carried 7-0.

Yea: All

Nay: None

Ordinance Number 29, 2025, "Amending the Erie County Administrative Code to Remove Erie County Care Management, Inc. and All References Thereto from Article II, Section 5(B) of the Code, Including Removal of All Provisions of Subsection (1)(a) of the Code, on the Condition that Section 12 of Its Articles of Incorporation, Regarding Distribution of Its Property to the County of Erie in the

A motion to approve Ordinance Number 29, 2025 was made by Mr. Horton, seconded by Mrs. Schauerman, and carried 5-2.

Mr. Copeland stated he had issues with this ordinance, and relinquished control of the organization, but he wanted it to flourish and be successful and would therefore vote yes.

Mrs. Schauerman added she was not opposed to this happening, but was not happy with the procedure of it, and would vote no on the principal.

Mr. Horton said ECCM was top class and recognized. He noted they were transparent and did an amazing job. He added they helped those in the margins, homeless, intellectually challenged, and losing their homes. He stated to not be swallowed up by an outside entity and have a local say, his vote was yes.

Yea: Copeland, Drexel, Horton, Scutella, Winarski

Nay: Bayle, Schauerman

**Event of Its Dissolution,
Shall Not be Amended or
Deleted; and Repealing All
Inconsistent Ordinances"
(First Read 5/6/25) (Finance
Committee)**

NEW BUSINESS

**Ordinance Number 31,
2025, "Second 2025 Library
Fund Budget Supplemental
Appropriation of \$15,915
for Donation from the Erie
Regional Library
Foundation by the Esher
Klugiewicz Library Fund"
(Finance Committee)**

A motion to move Ordinance Numbers 31, 32, and 33, 2025, was made by Mr. Copeland, seconded Mrs. Schauerman, and passed 7-0.

A motion to approve Ordinance Number 31, 2025 was made by Mrs. Schauerman, seconded by Mr. Winarski, and carried 7-0.

Yea: All
Nay: None

**Ordinance Number 32,
2025, "Third 2025 Library
Fund Budget Supplemental
Appropriation of \$2,500 for
Donations received from
Riverview Intermediate
Unit and UPMC" (Finance
Committee)**

A motion to approve Ordinance Number 32, 2025 was made by Mrs. Schauerman, seconded by Mr. Winarski, and carried 7-0.

Yea: All
Nay: None

**Ordinance Number 33,
2025, "Fourth 2025 Library
Fund Budget Supplemental
Appropriation of \$1,000 for
Additional Grant Funds
from the PA Humanities
Council" (Finance
Committee)**

A motion to approve Ordinance Number 33, 2025 was made by Mrs. Schauerman, seconded by Mr. Horton, and carried 7-0.

Yea: All
Nay: None

**Possible appointment of
David Cannon to the Erie
Metropolitan Transit
Authority. Term to expire
December 31, 2029.
(County Executive)
(Personnel Committee)**

A motion to approve the appointment of David Cannon was offered by Mrs. Schauerman, seconded by Mr. Winarski, and carried 7-0.

Yea: All
Nay: None

**Possible appointment of
Paul Causgrove to the Erie
County Mental Health and
Intellectual Disabilities**

A motion to approve the appointment of Paul Causgrove was offered by Mrs. Schauerman, seconded by Mr. Winarski, and carried 7-0.

Yea: All

**(MH/ID) Board. Term to
expire December 31, 2027.
(County Executive)
(Personnel Committee)**

Nay: None

**Possible appointment of
Sean C. Su, M.D. to the
Erie County Mental Health
and Intellectual Disabilities
(MH/ID) Board. Term to
expire December 31, 2027.
(County Executive)
(Personnel Committee)**

A motion to approve the appointment of Sean C. Su was offered by Mrs. Schauerman, seconded by Mr. Winarski, and carried 7-0.

Yea: All

Nay: None

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Copeland. The meeting adjourned at 7:25pm.

***The next
Finance/Personnel
Committee Meetings are
Thursday, June 12, 2025.
*The next Regular Meeting
of County Council is
Tuesday, June 17, 2025.**