

MINUTES

Erie County Council

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Terry M. Scutella, Chairman
Chris Drexel, Vice Chairman
Charlie Bayle
Rock Copeland
Ellen Schauerma
Jim Wertz
Jim Winarski

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

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 26, 2026

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The meeting was called to order at 6:13pm.

OPTIONAL PRAYER OR REFLECTION

A reflection was offered by Mrs. Schauerma.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Terry Scutella — Chair, Chris Drexel — Vice Chair, Charlie Bayle, Rock Copeland, Ellen Schauerma, Jim Wertz, and Jim Winarski

Others Present: Karen Chillcott, Megan Moore, Tom Talarico, Esq., Jay Stranahan, Esq., and Colin Domowicz, Financial Advisor

REPORT FROM THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

County Executive Vogel reported on updates, meetings, and events in the administration and throughout the County of Erie. She also noted the meeting with the U.S. Marshals Service; the Marshals Service was amenable to continue with changes to the contract, but there was no new contact currently.

HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

Elizabeth Stanton, Harborcreek Township: Ms. Stanton commented with support for Ordinance Number 18, 2026 and how the contract affects the City of Erie rating as a “welcoming city.”

Fred Petrini

Fred Petrini, Wesleyville Borough: Mr. Petrini commented against Ordinance Number 18, 2026 and loss of revenue without the contract.

Arin Misner

Arin Misner, District 2: Ms. Misner commented that Council members need to use their microphones, in support of Ordinance Number 18, 2026 but with immigrant and refugee voices amplified in the decisions, on the body-worn cameras that Council approved funds for in the budget, and the need for a clear policy and procedure in regard to the cameras.

Dave Dennis

Dave Dennis, No Municipality Specified: Mr. Dennis commented on community support for Ordinance Number 18, 2026 and the meaning of Council’s individual votes.

Wuji Ahmad	Wuji Ahmad, City of Erie: Ms. Ahmad commented with support for Ordinance Number 18, 2026 and the fear and distrust caused by allowing the County prison to participate in ICE detentions.
Michael Podskalny	Michael Podskalny did not speak.
Theresa Imler	Theresa Imler, City of Erie, District 4: Ms. Imler commented on the Marchello Woodard case, proper policy for body-worn cameras, and needed legislative changes.
Tori Kenny	Tori Kenny, Cambridge Springs Borough: Ms. Kenny commented on body cameras worn by law enforcement and clear policy implementation to build trust and ensure accountability. Cindy Treiber, Edinboro Borough: Ms. Treiber commented on the Marchello Woodard case, body-worn cameras for law enforcement, and Council making well-informed decisions.
Others	Dr. Gregory Rys, North East Township: Dr. Rys commented in favor of Ordinance Number 18, 2026, that Erie County was designated by ICE as participating at task force level of the 287(G) program, allowing local law enforcement representatives to be masked and imbedded with ICE, and specifically constables contracted with ICE. Jeremy Biddle, Harborcreek Township: Mr. Biddle commented against Ordinance Number 18, 2026 and deportation statistics of the Obama versus Trump administration. Rev. Ed Schoeneck (Edinboro United Methodist), Millcreek Township: Rev. Schoeneck commented against the racism and racial profiling of ICE and in favor of resistance, but voiced concerns for detainees sent out of state, retaliation for the resistance, and due diligence to put a plan in place. Mimi O'Connor, City of Erie: Ms. O'Connor commented on the Marchello Woodard case, ICE detention centers, and civil rights (Jesse Jackson). Ron Bole, McKean Township: Mr. Bole commented on supporting ICE, loss of revenue without contract, and Minnesota government to blame for deaths. Linda Kennedy, Harborcreek Township: Ms. Kennedy commented against Ordinance Number 18, 2026, the abuse and fraud of immigrants, and operation PARRIS. Margaret Watts, Washington Township: Ms. Watts commented in favor of Ordinance Number 18, 2026, due process and equal protections under the law, and problems with ICE.

Katie Kretz (Multicultural Community Resource Center), Fairview Township: Ms. Kretz commented on repeated requests to meet with Council regarding Ordinance Number 18, 2026, lack of collaboration or due diligence by Council, and pausing decisions until more discussion was had.

Sayed Sayedzada (Multicultural Community Resource Center): Mr. Sayedzada commented on the work of the MCRC with immigrant communities and the need to treat people with respect.

Cole Schenley (Erie Democratic Socialists of America), City of Erie: Mr. Schenley commented in favor of Ordinance Number 18, 2026 and not accepting “blood money.”

Jerry Beemer, Fairview Township: Mr. Beemer commented in favor of Ordinance Number 18, 2026 and the president politicizing immigration causing division and hate which was already in our community due to it.

Anna Mashika, Harborcreek Township: Ms. Mashika commented on the difficulty obtaining and renewing needed legal documents, and against Ordinance Number 18, 2026 to keep family members close by.

Julie Hirt, Millcreek Township: Ms. Hirt commented in support of Ordinance Number 18, 2026, that the contract had not changed but ICE and DHS did, body-worn cameras for all law enforcement in the county.

Anne McCarthy, OSB, Harborcreek Township: Sr. McCarthy, on behalf of Benedictines for Peace, commented with support for Ordinance Number 18, 2026, the immorality of enhanced enforcement, current lack of accessibility to detainees, and lack of trustworthiness that ICE will follow any contract.

Shane Talberg, City of Erie: Mr. Talbert commented on the lawlessness of the identification of ICE officers and all people are endangered by ICE.

Maria Chalevitch, City of Erie: Ms. Chalevitch commented on former Governor Ridge, first secretary of DHS, increasing the population with immigrants, a moratorium on ICE and data centers, and infrastructure funds.

Mary, City of Erie: The speaker commented on the need to stop gun violence, more safety assistance for people with mental and physical disabilities.

Carla Arnone, Millcreek Township: Ms. Arnone commented on the Marchello Woodard case, body cameras, and support for Ordinance Number 18, 2026.

Dr. Heidi Storer, Fairview Township: Dr. Storer commented on the fear felt by people of color with ICE, the lack of de-escalation and loss of revenue in Minneapolis compared to Erie, and the demeaning language allowed at the meeting toward immigrants.

Martha Nwachukwu, City of Erie: Ms. Nwachukwu commented on the history of Black people and slavery compared to the new legalized human trafficking-ICE, the continued racism against Black people, body-worn cameras, and ending the ICE contract.

Freda Tepfer, City of Erie: Ms. Tepfer commented in support of Ordinance Number 18, 2026, the issues for immigrants attaining legal status, and constables.

Michael Woodard, City of Erie: Mr. Woodard commented, on behalf of Enough Blood Official, about law enforcement involved automobile crashes and a county-wide study, Justice for Chello, and body-worn cameras.

Deonte Cooley, City of Erie: Mr. Cooley commented on constables and their roles and authority, the plan of action for ICE in the community, and the work done, or not, by Council.

Mary Rennie, City of Erie: Ms. Rennie commented in favor of Ordinance Number 18, 2026, the work of MCRC and Ms. Kretz, and the people affected by ICE beyond undocumented immigrants.

Joe Gianamore, City of Erie: Mr. Gianamore commented on the mentality of the people of the country, extremism, complicity, as was allowed in Gaza, and that the people were problem.

Cathay Kramer, City of Erie: Ms. Kramer commented that “no one was illegal on stolen land.”

Eric Peterson, Millcreek Township: Mr. Peterson commented in favor of Ordinance Number 18, 2026, government officials rejected at facilities, and acceptance of “blood money” was a bad idea.

Scott Rastetter, Girard Township: Mr. Rastetter commented that the responsibility for contracts lay with the executive branch, but it was important to listen to the public, and weigh the benefits and repercussions.

Carolyn Hedley, Millcreek Township: Ms. Hedley commented on the lack of trust in ICE to follow a contract or rules.

The meeting was recessed at 8:06 p.m. and was called back to order at 8:20 p.m.

MINUTES

February 10, 2026 - Regular Meeting

A motion to accept the minutes was made by Mrs. Schauerman, seconded by Mr. Wertz, and carried 7-0.

Yea: All

Nay: None

REPORTS OF COUNTY OFFICIALS

Finance Committee - Mr. Drexel	Mr. Drexel reported on the items from the Finance Committee moved to the Council agenda.
Personnel Committee - Mr. Copeland	Mr. Copeland reported on the items from the Personnel Committee moved to the Council agenda.
Other	Mr. Drexel motioned to move Ordinance Number 20, 2026 to a second reading. The motion was seconded by Mr. Copeland and carried 7-0. Yea: All Nay: None Mr. Drexel motioned to move Ordinance Number 23, 2026 to a second reading. The motion was seconded by Mr. Copeland and carried 7-0. Yea: All Nay: None

OLD BUSINESS

Ordinance Number 16, 2026, "Ordinance to Amend Article II, Section 7 of the Administrative Code of Erie County, the Erie County Public Library" (First Read 2/10/26) (Finance Committee)	A motion to adopt Ordinance Number 16, 2026 was made by Mrs. Schauerma, seconded by Mr. Winarski, and carried 7-0. Yea: All Nay: None
Ordinance Number 17, 2026, "First 2026 Gaming Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$249,990 for Participation in the Erie 250 Community Grant Program" (First Read 2/10/26) (Finance Committee)	A motion to adopt Ordinance Number 17, 2026 was made by Mr. Copeland, seconded by Mr. Wertz, and carried 4-3. Mr. Bayle commented that while American 250 should be celebrated the amount was too much, as ECGRA would match for a total of \$500,000, and that it wouldn't be for the county but a select few. Mr. Copeland stated that Erie County had been participating in American 250 since 2024 and the point was to allocate to small organizations to include historical education and cultural enrichment throughout every municipality across the county. He also offered support to ECGRA as the grant agent because that was their purpose and was non-partisan. Mrs. Schauerma commented that she agreed with Mr. Bayle, and that it was pushed through too fast without looking for funds elsewhere. Mr. Winarski stated there was discussion in Committee to change the amount of funding with additional funds possible later if needed.. He motioned to amend the amount to \$100k. The motion died with no second. Yea: Copeland, Drexel, Scutella, Wertz Nay: Bayle, Schauerma, Winarski

**Ordinance Number 18,
2026, "Termination of the
Services of the U.S.
Immigration and Customs
Enforcement and Border
Patrol (ICE) Under the
Intergovernmental Service
Agreement with the United
States Marshals Service,
Office of Detention
Services" (First Read
2/10/26) (Finance
Committee)**

After the second reading, a motion to table was offered by Mr. Winarski, who proceeded to give his explanation for the motion to table and noted the need for more discussion and a final contract.

Mr. Copeland called for a point of order, that it was a motion to table not for discussion.

Mr. Talarico spoke out that he wanted to explain to Council what they were voting on with this ordinance and for the public, as it was not read in entirety. He stated the ordinance did not terminate the contract with the United States Marshals Service, it terminated the services of ICE within the contract.

Mr. Winarski reiterated that after statements from the County Executive, who was still in discussions with the Marshals Service, he preferred to table the ordinance until an agreement had been reached and put the motion forward again.

Mr. Copeland called for a point of parliamentary inquiry again, as the ordinance had a second reading, but no motion was made.

Mr. Copeland made a motion with Mr. Wertz offering the second.

Mr. Copeland stated it was now time for discussion.

Mr. Winarski then restated his reasoning and made a motion to table.

Mrs. Schauerma seconded the motion to table. The motion failed 3-4.

Yea: Bayle, Schauerma, Winarski

Nay: Copeland, Drexel, Scutella, Wertz

Mr. Copeland requested further discussion. He stated there was no obligation to the contract. He also noted that the prison was not designed to hold the large number of extra detainees, nor had the staff to patrol them. He admitted to not talking to everyone, as time did not permit. He concurred there was more work to do.

Mr. Wertz thanked citizens, on all sides, for speaking. He commented on the historical immigration that built Erie, people that were seen as outsiders when they arrived. He noted that as industrialization declined, it was the immigrant population that bolstered the community. He explained that the ordinance did not end cooperation with federal criminal law enforcement or prevent prosecution of crimes at any level, nor would it create a budget gap, but that the local taxpayer funded jail would not be used in an unruly federal immigration detention system. He voiced hope that the vote would show governance over grievance and restore dignity to the rule of law.

Mr. Bayle stated it was a difficult topic. He noted that Ms. Kretz was thanked and the expert, but not listened to by anyone. He repeated the words from a speaker "that you can't reason with people breaking the law," and stated coming into the country or not leaving was breaking the law. He stated it was an overreach of the Council, and should have remained a resolution, as it was the County Executive's prerogative. He stated this would not stop anything.

Mr. Drexel thanked people for attending. He noted that Ms. Kretz was pointed out as the local expert, but that she was one source of information, and multiple sources should be examined which he had done. He stated they did not want to be complicit with ICE and had been reviewing the situation for a year. He noted he voted as his constituents asked.

Mrs. Schauerma n stated she also heard from her constituents, and nine out of ten in her district, just as passionate, said to vote no for reasons, such as the people chose to come here illegally, it was a burden for the taxpayer, and others examine it according to whom it impacts and how. She stated a decision had to be based on all these factors. She noted that the ordinance would not stop ICE from coming or apprehending people, nor deter their behavior when here, but did take people away from family and friends immediately when apprehended. She affirmed that the Warden does not take people without proper documentation and the detainees had access to interpreters, visitors, medical and legal assistance. The crowd disrupted her speaking. She replied that they had time to speak, and this was her time. She commented there have been assurances by people that the detainees were receiving services, and she was more comfortable with them housed here than elsewhere. She noted the mental health issues with moving detainees elsewhere, and that few were listening to their side. She stated that the ordinance did not stop ICE, detentions, or their behavior, but did have detrimental effects for those impacted, the detained and taxpayers. She affirmed to vote no.

Mr. Scutella stated his concern was getting rid of the Marshals Service, which would be a big hole and cost money, but they were in the prison business and would fill the hole. He stated he thought the County Executive needed more time and contacted three of his colleagues to table the ordinance. He noted after the solicitor stated the Marshals Service would remain and ICE gone, he felt more comfortable and did not vote to table. He stated the County Executive had 30 days for a good deal with the Marshals Service, which was good for the county, and he wouldn't want to kick it down the road more than 30 days. He affirmed his yes vote.

The motion to adopt passed 4-3.

Yea: Copeland, Drexel, Scutella, Wertz

Nay: Bayle, Schauerma n, Winarski

Ordinance Number 19, 2026, "Fourth 2026 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$47,141 for Elimination of Internet and Social Media Position (002810-008) and Creation of the Community Engagement Officer Position (002410-003) in the Department of Administration; and Waiver of Section 9 of the Human Resources Code Relating to Salary of the New Hire" (First Read 2/10/26) (Personnel Committee)

A motion to amend Ordinance Number 19, 2026 was made by Mr. Winarski to change the salary from \$85,000 to \$75,000. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Schauerma n and passed 5-2.

Mr. Bayle commented that a similar position was terminated during the previous administration with less pay and questioned bringing the job back now for more pay. He stated he would be amenable to the position's pay at the terminated position's rate, and that it was a political and personal vote to terminate previously.

Mr. Copeland commented that the position was eliminated in 2025, and that it was personal and political. He stated that a county employee was paid to routinely argue with the Council in meetings and the media, and it was a shame the former County Executive made that position intensely political and routinely abused Council members. He stated there were consequences for the behavior, and the people's money was not appropriated to attack one body of government.

Yea: Copeland, Schauerma n, Scutella, Wertz, Winarski,

Nay: Bayle, Drexel

A motion to adopt Ordinance Number 19, 2026, as amended, was made by Mr.

Copeland, seconded by Mr. Winarski, and carried 5-2.
 Yea: Copeland, Schauerman, Scutella, Wertz, Winarski
 Nay: Bayle, Drexel

NEW BUSINESS

First Read Ordinance Number 20, 2026, A motion to adopt Ordinance Number 20, 2026 was made by Mrs. Schauerman, seconded by Mr. Copeland, and carried 7-0.

"Approval of Waiver of Bid Requirements Under the Yea: All
Purchasing Code and of Nay: None

Sole Vendor Contract Between Regional Science Consortium (RSC) and Erie County Department of Health (ECDH)" (Finance Committee)

First Read Ordinance Number 21, 2026, "First 2026 Drug and Alcohol Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$156,060 and Creation of New Line Items for Additional PA Opioid Response Funds" (Finance Committee) Ordinance Number 21, 2026 received a first read.

First Read Ordinance Number 22, 2026, "Amendment of Resolution Number 10, 2026, 'Approval of the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Grant Application and the Cooperation Agreement Among the Erie County General Authority, Julia House, and the County of Erie' to Numeration as Resolution 14, 2026" (Finance Committee) Ordinance Number 22, 2026 received a first read.

First Read Ordinance Number 23, 2026, "Fourth 2026 General Fund Budget Supplemental A motion to adopt Ordinance Number 23, 2026 was made by Mrs. Schauerman, seconded by Mr. Copeland, and carried 7-0.
 Mr. Bayle commented on the request not being included in the budget but was satisfied with the presentation brought forth and would be beneficial.

Appropriation of \$175,484 for Creation of New Bureau (Re-Entry Program) with Five New Positions in the Adult Probation Department" (Personnel Committee)

Mr. Copeland concurred with Mr. Bayle.

Yea: All

Nay: None

Resolution Number 15, 2026, "County Council Approval of the 2026 CCAP Electors" (Personnel Committee)

A motion to adopt Resolution Number 15, 2026 was made by Mr. Copeland, seconded by Mrs. Schauerman, and carried 5-2.

Mrs. Schauerman explained her vote was a protest vote due to the unfair representation of political parties.

Mr. Copeland stated that the resolution existed because of their disenfranchisement previously, when their voting rights were wrongly removed by the former County Executive.

Yea: Copeland, Drexel, Scutella, Wertz, Winarski

Nay: Bayle, Schauerman

Possible appointment of Lauren Shoemaker, PhD to the Erie County Library Advisory Board. Term to expire December 31, 2028. (Wertz) (Personnel Committee)

A motion to reappoint Lauren Shoemaker, PhD was made by Mr. Wertz, seconded by Mr. Copeland, and carried 7-0.

Yea: All

Nay: None

Possible reappointment of Scott Harris to the Erie County Land Bank. Term to expire December 31, 2030. (Wertz) (Personnel Committee)

A motion to reappoint Scott Harris was made by Mr. Wertz, seconded by Mr. Winarski, and carried 7-0.

Yea: All

Nay: None

Possible appointment of Mapu Boayue to the Erie County Planning Commission. Term to expire December 31, 2029. (Wertz) (Personnel Committee)

A motion to reappoint Mapu Boayue was made by Mr. Wertz, seconded by Mr. Copeland, and carried 7-0.

Yea: All

Nay: None

ADJOURNMENT

The next Finance/Personnel Committee Meetings are Thursday, March 5, 2026.
The next Regular Meeting of County Council is Tuesday, March 10, 2026.

The meeting adjourned at 9:11pm.