Executive Director's Report
For
April 2019
ECGRA Funding Enhances Local Communities, $175,515 Invested in Erie County Special Events

45 Erie County Festivals, Performances, and Parades Support Local Economies, Civic Pride

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ERIE, PA (March 21, 2019) - Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) awarded $175,515 in Special Events grants today to 45 local non-profits in support of special events that improve quality of place for Erie residents. Special events include parades, performances, and festivals that promote community spirit and inclusiveness and generate economic impact in localities across Erie County.

“Supporting local events helps support the economies, residents, and businesses in small and large communities across Erie County,” said Perry Wood, Executive Director, ECGRA. “Events like parades and festivals are part of the social fabric that enhance the attractiveness of a region, while elevating our pride in Erie County. Special Events grants are driving tourism, attracting talent to the region, and helping sustain some quintessential Erie traditions that have helped make Erie County a special place to visit and to call home.”

About Special Events Grants
ECGRA Special Events Grants fund up to 5% of events that take place within Erie County, are open to the general public, and promote the region economically and culturally. Applicants must be a 501(c)3 organization, municipality, or authority headquartered in Erie County and provide a 1:1 cash match. Grantees
must demonstrate how their event(s) creates a targeted economic impact on Erie County by attracting attendance to the region and impacting local quality of place.

--COMPLETE LIST OF 2019 SPECIAL EVENTS GRANTS BELOW--

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Name</th>
<th>Name of Event</th>
<th>Amount Awarded</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievement Center</td>
<td>Over the Edge &amp; Trivia Night</td>
<td>$1,449.48</td>
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<td>Albion Area Fair</td>
<td>Albion Area Fair</td>
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<td>AmeriMasala</td>
<td>The AmeriMasala</td>
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<td>Asbury Woods Partnership, Inc</td>
<td>Maple Festival, Honey Harvest, Scary Creature Feature and Winter Wonderland</td>
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<td>Borough of North East</td>
<td>Light Up North East</td>
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<td>Borough of Union City</td>
<td>Annual Fireworks Extravaganza</td>
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<td>CAFE</td>
<td>CelebrateErie 2019</td>
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<td>Corry Area Arts Council, Inc.</td>
<td>4th of July In the Park</td>
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<td>Crime Victim Center of Erie County, Inc.</td>
<td>March Against Crime, Victims' Rights Speaker Series and Conference, Moonlight on the Bay</td>
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<td>Downtown North East, Inc.</td>
<td>North East Area Chamber of Commerce Events 2019</td>
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<td>Dr. Gertrude A Barber Foundations</td>
<td>Barber Events 2019: 12th Annual Art Show and Sale; 7th Annual Barber Beast on the Bay; 55th Annual Christmas Ball</td>
<td>$9,626.09</td>
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<td>Edinboro Highland Games</td>
<td>Edinboro Highland Games &amp; Scottish Festival</td>
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<td>Edinboro University Foundation</td>
<td>Centennial Celebration/Art 100</td>
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<td>EHCA Foundation/Erie Homes for Children and Adults</td>
<td>EHCA 2019 Special Events</td>
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<td>Erie Asian Pacific American Association</td>
<td>Asian Festival 2019</td>
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<td>Erie Contemporary Ballet Theatre</td>
<td>Regional Dance America Northeast Dance Festival 2019</td>
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<td>Erie Downtown Partnership</td>
<td>Erie Downtown Event Programming</td>
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<td>Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership</td>
<td>Erie Regional Chamber 2019 Events</td>
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<td>French Creek Council, BSA</td>
<td>2019 Scouting Series</td>
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<td>Harborcreek Township</td>
<td>Harborcreek Community Concert &amp; HC Light Up Night</td>
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<td>Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church</td>
<td>26th Annual Zabawa Polish Heritage Festival</td>
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<td>Jefferson Educational Society</td>
<td>JES Programming/Global Summit</td>
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<td>Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier (LEAF)</td>
<td>2019 LEAF Events</td>
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<td>Lake Erie Fanfare, Inc.</td>
<td>36th Annual Drum Corps Competition; 23rd Annual German Heritage Festival</td>
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<td>Lake Erie Greek Cultural Society</td>
<td>Annual Greek Festival</td>
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<td>Organization</td>
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<td>Mercy Center for Women</td>
<td>Celebration of 25 Years Serving Women and Children on the Road to Recovery</td>
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<td>Preservation Erie</td>
<td>Independence Hill District Flea Market</td>
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<td>Presque Isle Partnership</td>
<td>2019 Special Events</td>
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<td>Roar on the Shore Inc</td>
<td>2019 Roar on the Shore Bike Week</td>
<td>$17,421.75</td>
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<td>SafeNet</td>
<td>Scrabble Tournament, Garden Party, Intimate Partner Violence Conference, Big Backyard Children’s Parties</td>
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<td>Saint Joseph Church Bread of Life Community</td>
<td>Oktoberfest 2019</td>
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<td>Saint Patrick’s Church</td>
<td>Erie Irish Festival</td>
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<td>ServErie</td>
<td>ServErie Saturdays, ServErie Spring Soiree, ServErie School Initiative</td>
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<td>Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network</td>
<td>Saint Paul’s Annual Italian Festival</td>
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<td>The Goodell Project, d/b/a Goodell Gardens &amp; Homestead</td>
<td>2019 Schedule of Educational and Cultural Events</td>
<td>$810.00</td>
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<td>The Iroquois School District Foundation</td>
<td>Erie Food Truck Festival</td>
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<td>The Nonprofit Partnership</td>
<td>Nonprofit Day 2019</td>
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<td>Tom Ridge Environmental Center Foundation</td>
<td>Sunset Celebration</td>
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<td>Union City Pride, INC</td>
<td>Gathering at French Creek</td>
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<td>Waterford Community Fair Association</td>
<td>2019 Waterford Community Fair</td>
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<td>Wattsburg Agricultural Society. Inc.</td>
<td>Wattsburg Agricultural Society Inc. 2019 Erie County Fair at Wattsburg</td>
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<td>WQLN Public Media</td>
<td>Sounds Around Town Summer Concert Series and TV &amp; Radio Broadcasts</td>
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<td>YMCA of Greater Erie</td>
<td>2019 Special Events</td>
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<td>Young Artists Debut Orchestra</td>
<td>Four Seasons Performances</td>
<td>$2,214.54</td>
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<td>Youth Leadership Institute of Erie</td>
<td>Global Youth Service Day “Say it, Say it Loud”</td>
<td>$505.80</td>
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Trump’s unrealistic promises to the Rust Belt may come back to haunt him

By David Ignatius
Columnist

March 19, 2019

When General Motors idled its auto plant in Lordstown, Ohio, this month, President Trump adopted a familiar strategy: He issued a nasty string of tweets blaming other people and promised, in effect, that he would restore the past.

Trump’s angry, backward-looking approach may still appeal to some Rust Belt voters. But in the Ohio and Pennsylvania towns that helped win the presidency for Trump in 2016, his vow to turn back the clock hasn’t worked out very well, and there are signs the Rust Belt may be corroding for him politically.

Lordstown’s struggles, like those of other nearby factory towns, illustrate the harsh fact that manufacturing is a dynamic process. Old jobs are disappearing because of changes in technology and consumer preferences; trying to resist change is usually a fool’s game. Rust Belt communities that are succeeding are the ones that have adapted by embracing new technologies and innovation.

Presidential leadership in this period of technological transition should focus on the future rather than the past. But Trump seems almost a
technophobe. Axios reported this week that he thinks driverless cars are "crazy." He tweeted March 12, after the crash of a high-tech Boeing jetliner: "Airplanes are becoming far too complex to fly. . . . I see it all the time in many products. Always seeking to go one unnecessary step further, when often old and simpler is far better."

Trump’s response to Lordstown was to attack David Green, the United Auto Workers Local 1112 president, implying that he was at fault along with GM, and demanding that he “get his act together and produce.” Green had sent letters to Trump in July 2018 and February 2019 warning about threats to the plant. Trump didn’t respond.

After Trump’s Twitter tirade, Rep. Tim Ryan, the Ohio Democrat who represents the Lordstown area, fired back: “The President’s tweet . . . is offensive and does nothing to help bring back the manufacturing jobs he promised to my district.”

Ryan argued that “the best thing is to help” GM renovate the Lordstown plant and perhaps build electric vehicles there. Local residents said much the same thing to the Vindicator newspaper of Youngstown, Ohio, over the past few weeks: GM or a new owner should focus on new technology and making products people want to buy, rather than restore production of the low-selling Chevrolet Cruze.

Trump is vulnerable in the Rust Belt because he made such extravagant promises when he successfully wooed voters in 2016. “He won this area — a largely Democratic area — and he has not said a word yet, and that’s just pathetic,” warned Jim Graham, a former union leader at GM
Lordstown, during an interview with the Vindicator back in November, when GM said it planned to halt Cruze production there. Local residents remember Trump’s proclamation at a July 2017 rally in nearby Youngstown: “Those jobs [that] have left Ohio, they’re all coming back . . . Don’t sell your house.” Tommy Wolikow, a former Lordstown worker, told the Vindicator: “I kind of turned into a Trump supporter at that time. I believed what he said. Almost two years later, I’m seeing nothing but job losses.”

Homeowners in Youngstown certainly haven’t seen a boom. According to Zillow, the online realty broker, the median price of homes currently listed in Youngstown is $39,900. The national median price of homes currently listed is $279,000. Browse the real estate ads for factory towns across Ohio and Pennsylvania and you’ll see just how tough it is to be a Rust Belt resident, trapped in a downward cycle.

What’s the right answer for Rust Belt towns where the old manufacturing base has disappeared? An interesting example is Erie, Pa. Most big factories there have closed in recent years, but the city is rebuilding itself around its local universities and a big insurance company. Profits from a big gambling casino in Erie County are funneled partly to “innovation spaces” at four local campuses.

Erie may have lost manufacturing jobs, but it’s above the state average in advanced industries, says Ben Speeggen, a local journalist who helps run a think tank in Erie called the Jefferson Educational Society. “There has been a real shift in understanding that our Rust Belt economy is not solely tied to manufacturing,” he says.
Another key to success is welcoming foreigners. About 10 percent of Erie’s population is refugees, according to James and Deborah Fallows in their recent book, “Our Towns.” One of the 10 characteristics they found in successful local communities adapting to change is that “they make themselves open.”

One more lesson from Erie County, in the heart of the Rust Belt: Trump won there in the 2016 presidential election, but in the 2018 midterm congressional election, the county voted Democratic.

*Read more from David Ignatius’s archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.*
Downtown North East, April 10, 2019 meeting

Invitees:
ECGRA: Perry Wood & Tom Maggio
DNE: Charlene Kerr, Vern Frye, Pat Federici, Chas Wagner
Chamber: Holly Ferruggia
Historical Society: Chas Wagner, Dick Tefft
NR Community Foundation: Billy Lewis, Vern Frye

Agenda:

• Reason for meeting--Char
  ○ Too many empty buildings/storefronts in downtown
  ○ Building owners who are willing to sell are asking prices that are too high
  ○ Buildings are in disrepair; continued lack of maintenance will be catastrophic
  ○ Viable tenants have left because of owner demands—too high cost of repairs
  ○ Vacant or underutilized upper floors due to lack of access/repair needs
  ○ Need for a more aggressive marketing/recruitment effort

• Buildings that are vacant, soon to be vacant, or in dire need of upkeep—Holly

• Potential building vacancy tax--Holly

• One potential solution for upper floors—Char: We have a quote from Bostwick Design Group to study the potential of adding an outside elevator and decking to the back sides of the East Main/South Lake block. This could provide access to all upper floors, making them more accessible and viable. Need $7,000 to fund this study. This concept, if workable, could also be applied to the other two blocks in the future. Issues: How do owners contribute? Electric lines...

• Another solution—Char: Need for an economic development revolving loan fund (ED RLF) to purchase buildings (most likely by DNE in order to be eligible for grants), acquire grants for renovation, then sell or lease the buildings, with proceeds going back into the ED RLF. Need capital to start this fund. Likely several hundred thousand dollars.

• Renovation funds available—Perry/Tom: What can ECGRA assist with?

• What are other sources of funds to get started?

• Discussion—is this worth pursuing? If so, next meeting? Who else should be included?
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<tr>
<th>Funding Opportunities</th>
<th>Awards</th>
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<tr>
<td>Erie School District/Mercyhurst University – PASmart Award</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater Erie Community Action Committee – pre-apprenticeship program</td>
<td>$49,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC Grant – Investing in Appalachia’s Future: ARC 5-year Strategic Plan</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDA – Regional Innovation Strategies Assistance to Coal Communities Program</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Millcreek School District Foundation – tax credit</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
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</tbody>
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**TOTAL:** $1,769,995
Overview

For more than a year, the Ridge Policy Group has looked for any and all relevant state and federal funding opportunities for the county of Erie on behalf of our work with ECGRA. We are excited to see that many of those funding opportunities are being recognized and awarded to benefit the community in January-February. This month, we were focused on find opportunities for GECAC’s prison reentry program, supporting the Blue Zone effort, and helping the Innovation District develop a competitive application for funding.

Additional RPG Relevant Activity for this Month

- March 18 – Call with Sheila Silman on GECAC reentry funding opportunities
- April 1 – Sent follow-up information to Sheila with updated funding opportunities (attached)
- April 1 – Provided quote from Gov. Ridge to Melissa Lyon on Blue Zone initiative in Erie County
- Throughout month – Worked with Karl Sanchack and the Innovation District on a RCAP application for the Innovation District, including:
  - Conversation with Sherri Collins and Neil Folwer
  - Connection to Rep. Bizarro
  - Meeting with Rep. Bob Merski on March 29
  - Meeting with Senator Laughlin on March 28
  - Call with Scott Deitrich on the Governor’s Action Team on March 29
Hi Tom,

I want to thank you so much for hooking me up with Edinboro Bee Hive. They have been such a help on so many levels. Not only just a technical and design level, but the energy of the students and professors inspire me. Going through the process of bouncing creative ideas forces me to look at the weaknesses in my game. I was hitting a wall here in Erie because I didn't have that kind of energy to feed me.

A couple of the students came by yesterday to do a video. My brain has been on fire ever since.

Thank you so much.
From the Desk of Sr. Annette

**BE KIND.** That’s what the buttons and magnets say. Distributed during Catholic Sisters Week in early March, they state the obvious: kindness is sorely needed always, but especially now.

Eulogizing among children, hateful or bigoted expressions in our language, our inability to discuss differences of opinion without rancor, violence in our families and neighborhoods—these are signs of a society that is adrift from the basic values of mutual love and respect.

How do we change this? As Jane Goodall states, “What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.” We decide to build up or tear down ourselves, each other and society itself through our everyday behaviors. Children or adults, affluent or needy, powerful or weak we can all be part of the solution. “Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.” —Desmond Tutu

Every act of kindness builds a connection, and the connections build a society. Essentially, it all boils down to how we treat one another.

“I expect to pass through life but once. If, therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again.” —William Penn

**Art Displays and Competitions**

At the request of Judge Elizabeth Kelly, a series of black and white photographs taken by Lourdes Jasso's photography students and framed by Sarah Everett, Program Assistant, are on display on the second floor of the Erie County Courthouse. The theme of this show is *A Child's View of Erie*. Other display and competition opportunities that will have NAH artwork submitted include The Tom Ridge Environmental Center and the Barber National Institute upcoming art shows. As always, the walls of the Art House display children's art.

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**Thank you, thank you** to everyone who has already responded to our recently mailed appeal. The funding from this appeal will increase our capacity to serve Erie's inner-city children.

This appeal was largely the effort of the Marketing Committee, chaired by Kathleen Burik, with assistance from the Development Committee, chaired by Tammy Roche. As always, we are grateful for the generosity with which they share their talents with us.

If you have not yet had an opportunity to consider a donation, you might wish to use the enclosed donation envelope.

Again, our sincere gratitude for your support.

**Green Team Challenge**

*(Continued from front page)*

- One trillion plastic bags are used worldwide each year, with an average "working life" of just 15 minutes.
- Estimates for how long plastic endures range from 450 years to forever.
- Some 9 million tons of plastic end up in the ocean each year.
- It takes a lot of energy to make a plastic bottle.

Plastics form a swirling mass called the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Currents and winds move the garbage patch throughout the oceans, harming plants, animals and coral reefs.

**Take the Plastic Pledge:**

*Signature*

Tejanae J
New toy gives Erie a leg up

Our View

BY KEVIN FLOWERS, KEVIN.FLOWERS@ETN.COM

For roughly two years, Our West Bayfront has been working on a plan to revamp Bayview Park on the city's west side.

On Tuesday evening, residents will hear details of the neighborhood organization's first phase of improvements for the park, which could start as early as this summer. Bayview Park is located along West Second Street between Cherry and Walnut streets.

Our West Bayfront will meet with westside residents at Emerson-Gridley Elementary School, 810 N. Park Ave., to discuss the first amenities that will be added to the park as part of an up to $500,000 plan for improvements that could include public art installations; walking paths; a community garden; improved access for those with disabilities; renovated basketball courts; permanent restrooms; new playground equipment; and free Wi-Fi.

Tuesday's meeting begins at 6 p.m., and the public is invited to attend.

The project is funded by a $150,000 state grant; $30,000 from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority; and $20,000 from the Erie Community Foundation.

See BAYVIEW, A9

Bayview Park revamp on way

Our West Bayfront will talk about the park improvements Tuesday at Emerson-Gridley

The West Bayfront is moving forward with plans for significant upgrades to Bayview Park. (KEVIN FLOWERS/ETN)

BAYVIEW

From Page A1

Authenticity: $20,000 from the Erie Community Foundation; and $3,000 raised by Our West Bayfront, a nonprofit focused on improving neighborhoodhoods from Presque Isle Bay south to West 12th Street and from Fenner's Street west to the Bayfront Parkway.

"We went through a long process of doing a neighborhood survey of park users, and the types of things people want to see there," said Anna Franta, Our West Bayfront's executive director. "We are going to share with residents the things we believe we can fit into our budget that will be installed this summer."

Our West Bayfront is still seeking additional funding for the project.

Franta declined to discuss specific amenities that are part of the park improvement plan's first phase, saying that she wants residents to hear about them first at Tuesday's meeting.

Renee Lamie, Erie Mayor Joe Schember's chief of staff, said she and/or Schember will attend Tuesday's meeting.

The city has worked closely with the neighborhood group on the Bayview Park plan.

"We are excited about the plans for Bayview Park. The ideas were collected through a community process that engaged residents of the West bayfront neighborhood to provide their input," Lamie said.

Gannon University President Keith Taylor said the school is strongly behind efforts to improve Bayview Park. Gannon partners with Our West Bayfront on West bayfront renewal plans.

Kevin Flowers can be reached at 870-1693 or by email. Follow him on Twitter at www.twitter.com/ETNflowers.
Our West Bayfront outlines Bayview Park upgrades

New splash pad, improvements to basketball courts included in project

By Ron Leonard
ron.leonard@erinet.com

Later this summer, children can cool down at a new splash pad — the first of its kind in Erie — scheduled to be installed at Bayview Park. Those who play in the summer basketball leagues at the park, located along West Second Street between Cherry and Walnut streets in Erie, can expect to see upgrades to the basketball courts including fencing and lighting. New walking paths within and around the park are in the works. So are new benches and trash receptacles, and improved pedestrian access points.

Our West Bayfront officials outlined the $370,000 initial phase of park improvements.

See PARK, A3

PARK

From Page A1

on Tuesday evening at a public meeting at Emerson-Gridley Elementary School, 816 N. Park Ave., in Erie. About 100 people attended the 1½-hour-long community gathering.

“We have so much enthusiasm for this project and we’re really grateful to everyone for seeing the vision and for willing to be a partner with us to make this happen,” Our West Bayfront Executive Director Anna Frantz said. “I need to stress how grateful we are for the support of the city working with us. This would not be possible if they weren’t willing to move this project along. The mayor and his staff have really picked up the ball and run with it.”

Other park amenities include the transformation of a tennis court into a multipurpose court, and the addition of public art that conveys the history of Pontiac Baseball Field and the New Jerusalem neighborhood.

Improvements will focus on the eastern half of Bayview Park, Frantz said.

The project is funded in part by a $150,000 state Greenways, Trails and Recreation program grant, a $50,000 Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority community assets grant, a $25,000 Erie Community Foundation grant, and about $5,000 raised through the 2018 Erie Gives Day fundraiser.

“We don’t have a splash pad in Erie and we think it’s really important and something that’s more common in public parks around the country, and we’re excited for Erie to have the same kind of amenity that other communities have,” Frantz said.

The Our West Bayfront nonprofit targets improving neighborhoods from Presque Isle Bay south to West 12th Street and from Sassafras Street west to the Bayfront Parkway.

Bayview Park work is expected to begin in late spring or early summer. Some of the planned initial-phase work will go out for bid, which has not yet occurred, officials said.

“We still have more bid work and more design work,” City Public Works Director Dave Mulvihill said.

Mulvihill said he hopes to have installation of the park’s new splash pad completed by July 4. Crews will attempt to complete all of the improvements without disrupting the park’s summer activities.

“We’ll be working in and out of the activities going on,” Mulvihill said. “We hope to have this work done by the end of the fall, or earlier, if possible. We don’t want to shut down the park. We have a window of a few months, so it’s better to do construction prior to the summer and after the summer.”

A second phase of Bayview Park improvements is planned.

“We know what we want to be in phase two, but we haven’t nailed it down,” Frantz said.

“I think phase two will be more emphasis on taking advantage of the promenade and the overlooks, maybe some creative seating that looks out over to the bay, and hopefully some parking improvements on the west side of the park. We haven’t gotten to the nitty gritty of that.”

Ron Leonard can be reached at 870-1680 or by e-mail. Follow him on Twitter at www.Twitter.com/ETNLeonard.
County Council OKs cash for community college study

By Matthew Rink
matthew.rink@timesnews.com

Erie County Council narrowly agreed Tuesday to invest $15,000 into its efforts to establish a community college here.

By a 4-3 vote, Council approved sending the general operating fund money to Empower Erie, the nonprofit agency that, with county government, has led efforts to establish a community college here.

The money will go toward an updated impact study and a marketing campaign to “re-invigorate and re-energize” stakeholders and the community at large, Empower Erie officials have said.

Speaking in support of the community college, Councilman Andre Horton said a post-secondary education remains out of reach for a majority of Erie County residents, and that the county’s skilled workforce is aging.

“Erie is the largest metropolitan area in the state without a community college,” he said, later adding that the issue is “dire.”

Horton would join Council members Kathy Fatica, Fiore Leone and Carl Anderson in approving the $15,000 expenditure.

Council members Kyle Foust, Scott Rastetter and Carol Loll voted against. Foust said the investment “misses the mark” and that the money would be better spent trying to persuade officials in Harrisburg to support the community college.

Community college proponents are waiting on the Pennsylvania Department of Education and state Board of Education to act on the county’s application, which they submitted in June 2017 after a majority of

County Council and County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper decided to sponsor the college.

The state Board of Education isn’t expected to take up the issue until July at the earliest, a spokesman with the Department of Education told the Erie Times-News recently.

Officials are concerned by both the inaction of state officials and the opposition of state Sen. Joe Scarnati, president pro tempore of the Pennsylvania Senate. Scarnati, of Jefferson County, R-25th Dist., helped found the Northern Pennsylvania Regional College, which rents classroom space to hold courses that are often live-streamed by a professor. Scarnati has argued that a community college for Erie would duplicate services that the NRPC already provides or is capable of providing.

Empower Erie officials Ron DiNicola and Judi Roth addressed County Council at its March 14 finance committee meeting. They said $10,000 will be used to update a May 2017 study by the firm Parker Phillips to reflect changes to the county’s original application and changes in the local economy that they say further necessitate a community college in Erie County. The other $5,000 of county funds will be combined with donations from businesses and other groups for marketing.

Also on Tuesday, County Council voted to invest $25,000 for a census coordinator for the upcoming 2020 Census and expand the county’s Human Resources Department.

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Councilman Carl Anderson called it “an investment and insurance policy for the taxpayers of Erie County.”

As for the Human Resources Department, it will add two new positions to its staff of four: A data specialist, at an annual salary of $37,557, and a wellness coordinator, at a salary of $39,800. The positions will help the county reduce turnover, which can lead to cost increases of up to four times a vacant position’s salary, according to department officials, and improve participation in wellness programs, like blood pressure screenings, which can reduce healthcare expenses. Foust and Leone voted against the $86,275 expenditure.

Matthew Rink can be reached at 870-1984 or by email. Follow him on Twitter at www.Twit-ter.com/ETNRink.
New toy gives Erie a leg up

The Issue: Erie dog toy bounces onto market

Our View: Native innovation is Erie’s path forward

It is not made of cast iron, exactly. But the proud “Erie PA” raised stamp on Lake Erie Rubber & Manufacturing’s new made-in-Erie dog toy recall the logo’s maker founded one of Erie’s most renowned and venerated local products — Griswold cookware.

While among us does not come across an old piece of cast iron and flip over to check for the Griswold look, complete with Erie bragging rights — Griswold, which made now-collectible cast-iron and aluminum cookware, closed its plant in 1957. Many other manufacturers that worked around Erie faded away and the region shed manufacturing jobs by the thousands as the global economy changed and shifted away from Erie.

Not all is fine. But Erie’s future does shine in the up-and-coming industries, rather than creating new ones with the native ingenuity, networks and resources at hand.

The new “One Leg Up” rubber dog ball, a simple thing, fills all those roles.

Start with entrepreneur Jon Meighan. A former mechanical engineer at GE Transportation, Meighan staked his hopes and fortune on the Erie region’s future. In 2017, when he bought a group of businesses in Fairview Township and consolidated them into Lake Erie Rubber & Manufacturing with plans to diversify and create new jobs.

The company typically fills orders for other clients, but now it is putting on the marquee dog ball toy created with help from local expert in the Northwest Pennsylvania Innovation Beehive, an expert Mark Pfeiffer detailed. The business, which receives crucial support from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, has helped create a buzz around the prototype in all stages of the business development tap for free expertise of local colleges and universities. Penn State Behrend helped with the design of the One Leg Up toys, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and the branding and logo.

Another local business, Peninsula Pups Doggie Daycare helped them test the prototypes on Erie’s canine community. The ball, soft, solid rubber, features a groove in which to put peanut butter or other treats for a pup to gnaw on. Check it out at https://lepupspets.com/.

This product should prove popular not just with pooches, but also with local pet lovers, given the Erie connection. As Peninsula Pups owner Liz Freitag said, “Everyone is totally about Erie here.”

It also meets a key demand for pet owners worldwide — safety. It is made with Food and Drug Administration-compliant materials. That is important at a time when products made overseas too often trigger sickness and death in our pets and lead to product safety recalls.

Hopefully, it won’t be a one-off, but one among many innovative, made-in-Erie products to emerge from Meighan’s plant. Other would-be entrepreneurs should take notice and heart.
Our West Bayfront outlines Bayview Park upgrades

New splash pad, improvements to basketball courts included in project

By Ron Leonardi
ron.leonardi@timesnews.com

Later this summer, children can cool down at a new splash pad — the first of its kind in Erie — scheduled to be installed at Bayview Park.

Those who play in the summer baseball leagues at the park, located along West Second Street between Cherry and Walnut streets in Erie, can expect to see upgrades to the basketball courts including fencing and lighting.

New walking paths within and around the park are in the offing. So are new benches and trash receptacles, and improved pedestrian access points.

Our West Bayfront officials outlined the $370,000 initial phase of park improvements

See PARK, A3

PARK

From Page A1

on Tuesday evening at a public meeting at Emerson-Gridley Elementary School, 810 N. Park Ave., in Erie. About 100 people attended the 1½-hour-long community gathering.

"We have so much enthusiasm for this project and we’re really grateful to everyone for seeing the vision and for willing to be a partner with us to make this happen," Our West Bayfront Executive Director Anna Frantz said. "I need to stress how grateful we are for the support of the city working with us. This would not be possible if they weren’t willing to move this project along. The mayor and his staff have really picked up this ball and run with it."

Other park amenities include the transformation of a tennis court into a multipurpose court, and the addition of public art that conveys the history of Pottsgrove Baseball Field and the New Jerusalem neighborhood.

Improvements will focus on the eastern half of Bayview Park, Frantz said.

The project is funded in part by a $150,000 state Greenways, Trails and Recreation program grant, a $50,000 Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority community assets grant, a $25,000 Erie Community Foundation grant, and about $3,000 raised through the 2018 Erie Gives Day fundraiser.

"We don’t have a splash pad in Erie and we think it’s really important and something that’s more common in public parks around the country, and we’re excited for Erie to have the same kind of amenity that other communities have," Frantz said.

The Our West Bayfront nonprofit targets improving neighborhoods from Presque Isle Bay south to West 12th Street and from Sassafras Street west to the Bayfront Parkway.

Bayview Park work is expected to begin in late spring or early summer. Some of the planned initial-phase work will go out for bid, which has not yet occurred, officials said.

"We still have more bid work and more design work," City Public Works Director Dave Mulvihill said.

Mulvihill said he hopes to have installation of the park’s new splash pad completed by July 4. Crews will attempt to complete all of the improvements without disrupting the park’s summer activities.

"We’ll be working in and out of the activities going on," Mulvihill said. "We hope to have this work done by the end of the fall, or earlier, if possible. We don’t want to shut down the park. We have a window of a few months, so it’s better to do construction prior to the summer and after the summer."

A second phase of Bayview Park improvements is planned.

"We know what we want to be in phase two, but we haven’t nailed it down," Frantz said.

"I think phase two will be more emphasis on taking advantage of the promenade and the overlooks, maybe some creative seating that looks out over to the bay, and hopefully some parking improvements on the west side of the park. We haven’t gotten to the nitty gritty of that."

Ron Leonardi can be reached at 870-1680 or by e-mail. Follow him on Twitter at www.Twit-ter.com/ETLLeonardi.
County Council OKs cash for community college study

Council also to invest $25,000 for a census coordinator

By Matthew Rink
matthew.rink@timesnews.com

Erie County Council narrowly agreed Tuesday to invest $15,000 into its efforts to establish a community college here.

By a 4-3 vote, Council approved sending the general operating fund money to Empower Erie, the nonprofit agency that, with county government, has led efforts to establish a community college here.

The money will go toward funding an updated impact study and a marketing campaign to “re-invigorate and re-energize” stakeholders and the community at large, Empower Erie officials have said.

Speaking in support of the community college, Councilman Andre Horton said a post-secondary education remains out of reach for a majority of Erie County residents, and that the county’s skilled workforce is aging.

“The county is the largest metropolitan area in the state without a community college,” he said, later adding that the issue is “dire.”

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Matthew Rink can be reached at 870-1894 or by email. Follow him on Twitter at @Twitter.com/ETNrink.
April 3, 2019

Mr. Perry Wood
Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
5340 Fryling Road
Suite 201
Erie, PA 16510

RE: Section 218 Agreement with Social Security Administration

Dear Mr. Wood,

I have been in recent contact with Ms. Kristen E. Gardner, the Pennsylvania State Administrator of Social Security for Public Employees. As you may be aware, local government, school district and authority employees are not specifically eligible for Social Security, but can have such withholdings made and participate in the system if the entity has a Section 218 Agreement with the Social Security Administration. I was told that the majority of these agreements were adopted at some point between 1951 and 1955, but that there has been little to no compliance review since that time.

Ms. Gardner has determined that as the State Administrator of Social Security for Public Employees she is going to ensure that each local government entity is compliant with the Section 218 of the Social Security Act requirements so that there are no concerns with local government employee social security and Medicare eligibility in the future.

I am available to assist in this review. Ms. Gardner has indicated that you would need to authorize me to speak with her about your Agreement, and to obtain copies of the Agreement in the State’s possession. You can undertake this yourself if you so desire. If, however, you wish me to do it on your behalf, please email Kristen Gardner at krgardner@pa.gov and simply indicate that I am authorized to work with her to ensure Section 218 compliance on behalf of your government entity. Please do copy me on any email you send to Ms. Gardner.

Please do let us know if you would like to discuss this further, or if you have any questions. I remain,

Very truly yours,

KNOX McLAUGHLIN GORNALL & SENNETT, P.C.

[Signature]

Timothy S. Wachter