



## **Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority**

### **Minutes of the Board of Directors' Meeting**

July 21, 2022

Meetings for the Board of Directors of ECGRA can begin meeting in a physical location per Governor Wolf's proclamation of June 11, 2021. However, each member and ex-officio has the option to attend in person or virtually. Members of the public can now speak at the physical location of 5240 Knowledge Parkway.

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

The Board of Directors' Meeting of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority was held on July 21, 2022 at 5240 Knowledge Parkway, Erie, PA 16510. Legal Notice of the meeting was given through an advertisement appearing in the Erie Times-News. The meeting was called to order by the Chair.

#### **ROLL CALL**

Mr. Cleaver is present in person, Ms. Loll is present via phone, Ms. Hess and Mr. Sample are present via Zoom. Chairman Brian Shank and Mr. Wachter are present via zoom. Dr. Wood is present in person.

#### **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Mr. Sample makes a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Cleaver seconds the motion. There is no discussion of the agenda. Motion carries 4-0.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 2022**

Mr. Sample makes a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Mr. Cleaver seconds the motion. There is no discussion on the minutes. Motion carries 4-0.

#### **DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS**

There are no comments by any Board member at this time.

### COMMENTS BY THE CHAIR

There are no comments by the acting Chair at this time.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

There is no public present for comments.

### PRESENTATIONS

There are no presentations at this time.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Treasurer's Report: Mr. Cleaver: I reviewed the financials and everything seems to be in order.

Mr. Sample makes a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. Ms. Hess seconds the motion. There are no questions or discussion of the Treasurer's Report. Motion carries 4-0.

- b. Strategic Planning Committee:

Dr. Wood: The committee did not meet but we did make two grant applications available to the Board for review, which will be the bulk of the decision-making today. It's in the form of Resolution Number 9, 2022; it's the first two Renaissance Block applications for 2022. One is for the Borough of Union City and the second is for Our West Bayfront, each in the amount of \$100,000. Those grants were reviewed, they were put out to the Board, we didn't receive any questions from the Board. Tom and I would be more than happy to entertain any questions you might have about either of those applications at this time.

Mr. Sample: They are pretty much in line with a continuation of what they have been doing, correct?

Dr. Wood: They are. In fact, these are two of the best organizations we have with the Renaissance Block Program. I would say Union City in particular is very efficient and effective in their community engagement efforts; they have a great leader in Cindy Wells. We were just down in Union City this week for a listening session, meeting with the leaders of Union City as well as some special guests – we had Councilman Bayle there and we had Jeff Cooper from the County Executive's office.

These are great opportunities to support some of our smaller communities that are being very aggressive in rural economic development.

Mr. Sample: The response has been very favorable. These smaller towns are very appreciative of this opportunity.

Dr. Wood: Indeed, they have been. Are there any questions for me about Renaissance Block?

c. Update from County Council

Chairman Shank: I met with Perry and the group in North East and I just spoke to Charlie Bayle about the meeting you guys had and we really appreciate this, what I call, Boots on the ground approach in our community. That is one of the biggest things we hear from our constituents in the County is that they feel like they kind of get second choice on a lot of stuff. I know I have had several wonderful discussions with the folks and explain that we are Erie County Council and not the City of Erie Council. We are all in this together, all in this as a team, we all have to survive. But I know for a fact with the new County Executive, we're trying to refocus on the issues of Erie County and not just focusing on the City of Erie.

I think the City of Erie has had a great jump-start and I think they are going to be doing well. Now, we need to look at the County and ask "What's broken out here?" I live in Harborcreek, and I know we don't hear a lot from the township supervisors, which sometimes that can be a good thing. But we want to make sure that communication is there between the council reps and folks like ECGRA. I always talk about Perry and how during the lockdown, we had a food bank in North East that needed some money and you guys helped. We had a food bank in Harborcreek that needed help and you guys helped. They appreciate that and I appreciate that.

I really like the fact that we are starting to communicate better amongst management. I'm not going to point fingers at the previous Administration, but I think the line of communication is a lot better now and I think the only thing we can do is improve and keep on track. I tell the folks in my district, "We can't fix something unless we know it's broken." So, I appreciate what you guys are doing, I appreciate the mission. I think we're on the right track and we'll get this all fixed and we'll get working together. With that, I thank you.

Mr. Wachter: Chairman Shank, I have a question for you. Are you familiar with the Grant Money at Work map that is on the Gaming Authority's website?

Chairman Shank: I will be honest with you and say that no, I am not.

Mr. Wachter: Perry, do you mind if I share my screen?

Dr. Wood: Sure. I believe you have the ability to do that.

Mr. Wachter: Just based on your conversation there, this is a map that the Gaming Authority has put together that details each and every grant that has been made over the years, throughout the County, identifying where the money has gone by Council district. Your comments regarding the County and those folks who are happy to see the work that's being done; if there's ever a question, you can go through and take a look at each one of these. Unfortunately, it won't let me go to the next level, but it will give you the details on each of the grants that have been given in each Council district throughout the County over the years.

Chairman Shank: That's a great tool and I appreciate that. Now what I can do is redirect the people to it. I know when we met in North East with Dr. Wood, I was actually impressed. I had no idea that so much work had gone in toward North East through ECGRA. These listening tours that you have started, I think it's a great idea.

I spoke to Charlie Bayle, and he loved the fact that you had the time to talk and I think you're on the right track. Some people just really don't understand your mission and that is both good and bad. But it ends up being a bad thing because the negative stuff starts to fly, which 90% of it is not even true.

You're on the right track. The men and women on this Board are doing a great job. We appreciate all the work that everybody does. And let's face it, it benefits us, and I know, like I said earlier, we're trying to refocus back to the counties. I can go back to when we were out in North East of what we talked about in the meeting about how we have a lot of renters in North East that are struggling; it's not just an inner-city Erie problem. There are folks in Albion and all over the place that these communities need a little bit of help and what the men and women here do, that's a great mission. That's why I'm here and that's why I always support it. When they try to beat up Perry, I always make sure I defend him because the mission is a good mission, and we appreciate that.

d. Update from County Executive's Office

Mr. Smith is not present to give an update.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dr. Wood: Good morning, everyone. There is a report on Board Effect that has some of my comments on there. First, you'll see the communications report, so we'll start with that. As Chairman Shank mentioned, we did begin the listening sessions; we've actually done three of them so far. We did one in North East, we did one in Union City, and we had a combined Girard/Lake City session just this week.

If you don't know, or if you're new to the Board, we used to do these listening sessions pre-COVID about every three years. Obviously, things slowed down with the pandemic and the need to do everything on zoom, but we're getting back into the saddle on getting back out there and talking to folks. This is tremendously valuable. Basically, the format is we bring in some special guests to assist us in talking to the municipalities. When we go into a County Council district, we invite the County Council person to attend, and we do everything we can to help facilitate that. We now have a representative from the County Executive's office, who is a liaison with the Fusion Cell. His name is Jeffrey Cooper, and he is attending those meetings, and then Melinda Meyer from the Planning Office most recently attended the session in Girard, and she will be attending those in the future as well.

Basically, what we do is we go into these communities, we get representation from local government, we have representation from local industry, small business – mostly main street-type business folks, and then we get representation from some type of nonprofit sector. Mostly it's the revitalization group that exists that we're already working with. In some of these communities, it might be a Foundation, which can also bring funds to the table, and we have talks with them about how they can leverage the funds with the grants we are making and vice versa. I know we have established a relationship with the North East Community Foundation, which I think will be productive as we are able to pass information back and forth from grantees with folks from that community.

Then we do what's really key – we give an overview of ECGRA grants that have been made because elected officials come and go, and volunteers come and go and they really don't know the full history of the impact that we've made over the last 10 years. I think Councilman Shank saw that we have made over a half million dollars-worth of investment in North East over the last decade, and even the leaders of North East were surprised to see it all on one piece of paper in a nice, concise one-pager showing the huge impact that we have had on their community. We always summarize that and then we ask who is missing from the list, whether it's a nonprofit, municipality, or economic

development projects. We normally get some good feedback like maybe there's a group that's not hearing about us for some reason.

Then we present the Building a Better Future Guidelines, which of course is the funds that ECGRA has been tasked to administer from the ARPA funds. We have a contract with the County to administer those funds. We explain the three buckets within that program and then we move on to listening. We spend the majority of our time listening.

You can see we provide them with an outline, you can see there A through F, but we want to hear from them about what they are doing to support their small businesses, their residential side like do they have a Renaissance Block and if they do how that's going and what they would change about the program if they could, what kind of Anchor Buildings need investment – are there any problem properties, vacancy issues or blight issues – and then how are the businesses responding to the façade programs that are being put forth through Mission Main Street.

Then we ask about infrastructure. This is something new that we've been doing; just kind of getting a consensus of where they are at with broadband, everybody brings up stormwater, some folks have brought up water infrastructure as a key issue. We want to hear about those utilities and find out where folks are at and if they have any projects in the mix. Every now and then something will come up that will surprise us and we'll add it to the list.

Maintenance and development of parks – we have the Parks, Fields, and Trails money available, and then any other matters of strategy that the local community is working on that we should know about, that we can have a conversation on. Sometimes it's a property. Like in Union City, it was the old chair factory, which the Borough is in negotiations with the current owner of to get site control of. They are talking with the County Redevelopment Authority so they can make sure that we knew about that.

The next step is how can they market and do something productive with the property to strengthen it for the future to make sure that it is a productive property on the tax rolls, and it can do something for the local economic development efforts.

That is the listening sessions in a nutshell. They take up a lot of time, but I can tell you just as Chairman Shank said, they are very worth it, we get a ton of positive feedback, and especially post-pandemic, it's a great opportunity for us to get in front of these leaders and talk face to face about how the grants are going and the revitalization efforts. Are there any questions for me about the listening sessions?

We do have other listening sessions scheduled that we haven't got to yet. We have one scheduled with Corry, there is one with Millcreek on the horizon, and then Councilperson Schauerman asked us about doing a west county one that we hadn't planned on doing which would include Albion, Conneaut, and Springfield. We can pull in the leaders from Elk as well.

I think the main strategy with these listening sessions isn't to get to every municipality; I want to clarify that. It's not to be physically present at every single one. It's to talk to the ones that have the most potential for economic development efforts based on the programs that we have. The Boroughs, for example, have the largest main streets in Erie County and these are significant commercial corridors with small businesses. That's why we're targeting them – it's part of our rural economic development strategy here at ECGRA. I just wanted to make that one clarification – we're not going to hit all 42 municipalities. We are going to target the ones that have the ability to take advantage of our programs.

Continuing on with the report, you'll see some stuff in there about some things that we funded, folks recognizing those grants, some news information in there like the story from Bridgeway that highlights eCAT, you'll see the announcement that the Erie County Community College expanded its footprint into the Villa Maria facility – Mr. Barney attended that on our behalf with other leaders. Finally, you'll see the rollout of the Investment Playbook took place, which of course you have a copy of and we have talked about it several times. The title of it is "Erie Inclusive Growth: A Framework for Action." This has been a great success so far. We have an editorial here from the County Executive, the Mayor, and the Chair of the Erie Community Foundation explaining it to the public, endorsing it, and talking about initial first steps. The Nerve Center is now up and running and we are super excited to see that. I think this is going to be one of the most significant things that we have done, certainly

post-pandemic. This is going to be a great strategy for the community. And with the City and the County rowing in the same direction, we need to continue to be supportive and stay on board with the other funders of Erie County. This will not interfere with our grant-making process, but what I would like to say is that it should complement or inform our grant-making process. We're actually in talks with the County Executive right now about what kind of role we can play in ARPA based on this Investment Playbook work and based on the work we're doing in rural Erie County.

Are there any questions of the Executive Director?

Mr. Cleaver: Have you received a report from the Summer Jobs Program yet?

Dr. Wood: We used to get a report from the Director of Administration about Summer Jobs on a regular basis, but with the transition, no, we have not received any kind of report. We are in touch with GECAC though, periodically, about how the program is going. I don't have numbers for you today, but we can certainly get those numbers. They are saying that everything is going along well so far this year; there is continuity in the program because of the administrator, but I don't have any specific numbers for you.

Mr. Cleaver: I just wanted to compare to last year just to make sure we're not throwing money away. But if there are people and they are working . . .

Dr. Wood: I would definitely say that there are opportunities, there are definitely folks working, the program does continue to function. GECAC is still firing on all cylinders. We get an analysis back every year from a third party detailing all that stuff and confirming it. Those reports keep back favorable as well.

Mr. Sample: Perry, I will be surprised if we even broach the 50/50 split between County and City because I know that there was not much of an outreach in Corry, which had supported the program pretty well. It was radio silent down here as far as anybody marketing the program to the different businesses. I'll be interested to look at the numbers. I think that my fear is that they took the low-hanging fruit and took the City of Erie while other things in the County maybe didn't get dealt with as much. I know that in the previous Administration, Gary was very adamant about that. Things get lost; it's not a big deal, but if we're going to move forward, we should encourage them to get out to the County earlier and to go in through the School Districts.

Dr. Wood: We'll communicate with GECAC and find out how many kids are enrolled currently, and we'll find out what the City/County split is. Historically, it's been between about 60/40 or 70/30, it's kind of fluctuated, but City heavy.

Mr. Sample: I understand that, but I just don't think that this year there was much outreach.

Dr. Wood: We will specifically ask about that.

### SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Mr. Wachter has nothing to report.

Dr. Wood: Tim, you may not have a report, but I will say that Tim and Tom and I continue to work diligently on getting the ARPA funds up and running – making sure that we are compliant with all the federal standards and rules that are out there. We occasionally touch base on process, as far as making sure that we are crossing all the "t"s and dotting all the "i"s on our side. I think we have a

good communication strategy in place to make sure that we are in compliance not only with the County, but also with the federal ARPA guidelines as well.

### OLD BUSINESS

There is no old business to discuss at this time.

### NEW BUSINESS

- a. Resolution Number 9, 2022 – Resolution to enter into agreements with two (2) entities that comprise the recipients of the 2022 Renaissance Block Program

Dr. Wood reads the resolution.

Mr. Sample moves to accept the resolution. Ms. Hess seconds the motion. There is no further discussion of the resolution. Motion carries 4-0.

### ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Sample moves to adjourn. Mr. Cleaver seconds the motion.