



E·C·G·R·A
ERIE COUNTY GAMING REVENUE AUTHORITY

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT
FOR
APRIL
2021**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund Receives National Recognition, ECGRA Reports on Fund

Erie, PA (March 17, 2021) – The \$2.35 million Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund, established on March 17, 2020 by ECGRA and Erie County Council, was recognized by Drexel University Nowak Metro Finance Lab as a “First Mover” in the nation, while helping inject money into the local economy ahead of state and national funding.

“American communities without a public agency like ECGRA, built to connect and invest at all levels of a community, are at a distinct disadvantage in a post-COVID world,” said Bruce Katz, co-founder and inaugural director, Nowak Metro Finance Lab at Drexel University. “ECGRA was built to move swiftly and with public accountability allowing Erie County to get ahead in the crisis, which saved many local organizations from closing their doors to the residents they serve.”

“The success of the Erie County Emergency Relief Fund can be attributed to swift action on the part of Erie County Council and the ECGRA Board to approve the local funding necessary to deliver expeditiously, while counties across Pennsylvania awaited state and federal funding relief,” said Dr. Perry Wood, Executive Director, ECGRA.

The COVID-19 Response Fund focused on small businesses, nonprofits, and humanitarian aid and created three programs to address the COVID-19 crisis that wreaked havoc on communities and small businesses across the country. The Immediate Human Relief Fund was established to offer urgent relief to the populations served by food pantries, homeless shelters, child care centers, and elder care centers. The first grant, which launched the fund, awarded \$168,000 to Second Harvest Food Bank and supported 6,000 meals to be distributed throughout Erie County. A total of \$708,794 was awarded to additional organizations.

The Nonprofit Loan Fund and Small Business Loan Fund included \$1.6 million that helped meet the rising needs of small businesses and non-profits. The loans, administered through Bridgeway Capital, included flexible payment schedules and closed on 26 loans in just seven weeks.

ECGRA’s mission is to elevate Erie County by empowering nonprofits and small businesses toward economic and community development. Since February 2008, ECGRA has invested more than \$55 million in Erie County.

EDITOR’S NOTE: FULL REPORT CAN BE FOUND HERE: www.ecgra.org/COVIDREPORT

**American Rescue Plan Discussion
Erie County Stakeholders
March 18, 2021**

AGENDA

1. Welcome – County Executive (2 min)
2. Investing for Our Future – County Executive (6-8 min)
3. Rescue Plan Overview - Melinda Meyer, Erie County Dept. of Planning and Community Development (15 min)
4. Group Discussion. (30 min)
5. Wrap up and Next Steps (5 min)



**Economic Impact &
COVID Revitalization
Committee Meeting**

**Wednesday, March 24, 2021
11:00 a.m.**

ZOOM Information

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84509360856?pwd=RjBRVnpNcUZla09rMVhGNVlhVDY2UT09>

Meeting ID: 845 0936 0856

Passcode: 128266

AGENDA

1. Housing Authority – Michael Fraley, Deputy Dennis
2. Velocity Net – Joel Deuterman
3. Good of the Order



Economic Impact & COVID Revitalization Committee Meeting

Wednesday, March 31, 2021
11:00 a.m.

ZOOM Information

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84509360856?pwd=RjBRVnpNcUZla09rMVhGNVlhVDY2UT09>

Meeting ID: 845 0936 0856

Passcode: 128266

AGENDA

1. PA Coalition of Affiliated Healthcare & Living Communities – Chase Cannon
2. Pleasant Ridge Manor – Robert Smith
3. Good of the Order



**City of Erie Police Athletic League
626 State St. Erie, PA 16501**



**Sgt. Thomas L. Lenox
814-870-1168**

**Erie Police Athletic League
Board of Directors**

Chief Dan Spizarny
Co-chair
Erie City Police Chief
Sheriff John Loomis
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Kate Phillips
Director
President- Ten 53 Newton LL
Ronnie DiVecchio
Director

March 30, 2021

Perry Wood

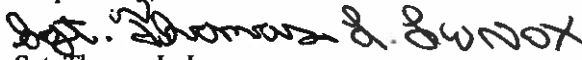
**Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
5340 Fryling Road #201, Erie, Pa 16510**

Dear Perry Wood,

Thank you for your great generosity, donating to the Erie Police Athletic League. We at the Erie Police Athletic league appreciate your donation and understand the financial sacrifice that it takes, especially during these trying times of economic crisis. Your support helps to further our mission through encouraging and fostering positive relationships between the officers and youth in our community. The financial donation will allow our organization, to take the PAL kids in to additional field trips outside of the school setting, provide gifts, in addition to having more PAL summer camps in 2021.

Together we are making a difference in our community and investing in the future leaders of the Erie community. Your continued support of our mission is deeply gratifying to us, and we hope that it is the same for you. We are honored that you have chosen the Erie Police Athletic League as your organization to donate to and looking forward to a continued partnership in the future. Your support is invaluable to us, thank you again. If you have any questions about our mission and growth, be sure to visit our websites at <http://www.eriepal.org/> and <https://www.facebook.com/EriePAL/>. In conclusion, I want to thank you again and I'm looking forward to our continued partnership.

Respectfully,


Sgt. Thomas L. Lenox

Encouragement

Trust

Positivity



Tammi Michali

From: Gary Bukowski <GBukowski@sarahreed.org>
Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2021 1:09 PM
To: Adrienne Dixon; Brittany Hayden; Chris Hlifka; Gary Bukowski; Jennifer Zietz; Kristen Heisler; Larry Shallenberger; Laura Amoscato; Mary Barr; Molly Myers; Steve Kohler
Cc: Tammi Michali; Perry Wood; Tom Maggio
Subject: FW: ECGRA Immediate Human Relief Report
Attachments: ECGRA COVID RESPONSE 2021.pdf

FYI

Earlier this morning we were talking about data and its importance, I just received this report from ECGRA and wanted to share it with you. This shows the importance of providing timely reports and detail to our charitable partners. This grant and support from ECGRA meant a great deal to us in those early days of the pandemic when we were scrambling for support to fund our growing needs brought about by COVID-19....

We thank all those at ECGRA who considered us for this support!!

Happy to report that they focused their story on Second Harvest Food Bank and Sarah A. Reed Children's Center...

This was funding we received 4.13.2020 toward our 150th Anniversary Technological Initiative which was critically welcomed in the early days of the COVID-19 Cloud ..It was a great shot in the arm at a challenging time....

Any questions please let me know...
Gary

Gary L. Bukowski, MA, CFRE
Associate Vice President of Development
Sarah A. Reed Children's Center
2445 West 34th Street
Erie, Pa. 16506
814.835.7602 Fax 814.835.2196
gbukowski@sarahreed.org
<https://sarahareed.plannedgiving.org/>

From: Tammi Michali <tmichali@ecgra.org>
Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2021 11:25 AM
To: Perry Wood <pwood@ecgra.org>; Tom Maggio <tmaggio@ecgra.org>
Subject: ECGRA Immediate Human Relief Report

Good morning!

It is with great pleasure that I am sending this report on behalf of the Board of Directors and staff of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority. We are all aware of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the community and so Dr. Perry Wood felt that it was imperative to compile a list of the organizations that were directly helped in the early months. ECGRA took great efforts to assist in any way possible to help alleviate some of the strain on the community's vital organizations and those they serve. We consider it a

Route 6 businesses could use grant for upgrades

BY SARA JUKES
sara@thecorryjournal.com

Corry City Council voted to write a letter of support for the Pennsylvania Route 6 Alliance and its efforts to fund a facade improvement program in Erie and Crawford counties.

A letter from the alliance was received during a recent Council meeting requesting support for a grant application.

In partnership with Preservation Erie and Oil Region National Heritage Area, the alliance is applying for a Keystone Communities Grant.

The grant is being offered through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

If received, the grant will enable the alliance to provide funding to commercial building owners, business owners and nonprofits along Route 6 for facade restoration projects.

City Business Manager Nick Heil said it is very similar to the Renaissance Block Grant program the city participated in to improve the facades of its downtown businesses.

Business and nonprofit owned properties on Route 6 would be able to put the funds toward improvements such as new signage, professional design assistance, exterior painting, awning repair and more.

"Improvements do not need to be costly to greatly improve the facade of the building and make a lasting impact not the community," Executive Director Candace Hillyard said in her letter.

If received, the alliance could provide up to \$5,000 per property. It would require a dollar to dollar match.

"It is our hope to fund a minimum of 20 properties in the two-county area," Hillyard said.

The alliance intends to hold public informational meetings if the grant is acquired.

\$350 million from stimulus headed to Erie residents

Jim Martin Erie Times-News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Passage of the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan is expected to provide a stunning \$275 million in grants to Erie County government, schools and municipalities.

But that sum is only a fraction of the amount that's being paid directly to the residents of Erie County.

Stimulus benefits — paid in the form of expanded unemployment checks and \$1,400 payments to individuals who meet income guidelines — are expected to total more than \$350 million, according to the Economic Research Institute of Erie at Penn State Behrend.

It's a historic amount of stimulus or rescue money, said Ken Loule, an economics professor and director of the institute.

SUNDAY, MARCH 28, 2021 | ERIE TIMES-NEWS

See MILLIONS, Page 4A

illions

ued from Page 1A

To get a sense of the scale of those payments and what they could mean to local residents, \$350 million is enough money to:

- Make 700,000 credit card payments of \$500 each.
- Pay for 33,194 months of in-state tuition at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania.
- Buy more than 29 million upper-level box seats at an Erie Sea-Wolves game.
- Pay for 8,750 new \$40,000 cars.
- Foot the bill for 8.75 million cases of disposable diapers at \$40 each.
- Eat 3.5 million \$100 meals at a local restaurant.
- Replace 777,777 broken \$450 washing machines.

Even that \$350 million figure — much of which already has landed in bank accounts — is only a portion of the financial boost flowing to individuals.

The American Rescue Plan also temporarily increases the child tax credit from \$2,000 to \$3,600 and provides a \$3,000 tax credit to parents of 7-year-olds, providing millions more for Erie County residents.

"There are many other provisions in the ARP that will also result in dollars coming to Erie, but these other amounts are even more difficult to estimate," Loule said.

Joe Bell, a spokesman for the Youngstown-based Cafaro Co., which owns the Millcreek Mall, said the retail industry is forecasting improved sales for the rest of 2021, and stimulus payments



Ken Loule, director of the Economic Research Institute of Erie, is shown in this 2014 file photo at Penn State Behrend in Harborcreek Township. CHRISTOPHER MILLETTE/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

are part of the reason.

There's little doubt that the sum is large enough to be felt. The \$350 million figure represents more than 3% of Erie's annual gross domestic product — the final value of all goods and services produced in a typical year.

But not everyone will agree on the value of the stimulus payments, either in northwestern Pennsylvania or the country as a whole.



"Where you stand depends on where you sit," said Scott Miller, dean of the school of business at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania.

Through one lens, he said, "This is a good policy. It should keep the market churning. It helps people who have hit hard times."

There is debate, however, about whether the massive stimulus program is worth the long-term cost.

"At the same time, where is it (the money) coming from?" Miller said. "You have to pay for it at some point. It's a zero-sum game. You are giving this money away, but you are getting it from somewhere."

Loule is hopeful that the money will help the local economy and those hurt most by shutdowns associated with COVID-19.

Loule notes there was nothing wrong with the economy before the pandemic. The most important role of the stimulus bill might be rescuing those "who were so savagely hurt," he said.

"This provides disposable income, which represents purchasing power," he said. If past patterns hold, lower-income recipients will typically spend a larger portion of

their stimulus payments. That might not be the best thing for them, but it's the best thing for the economy.

"That is the intent of the program," he said. "That is what the federal government wants to see."

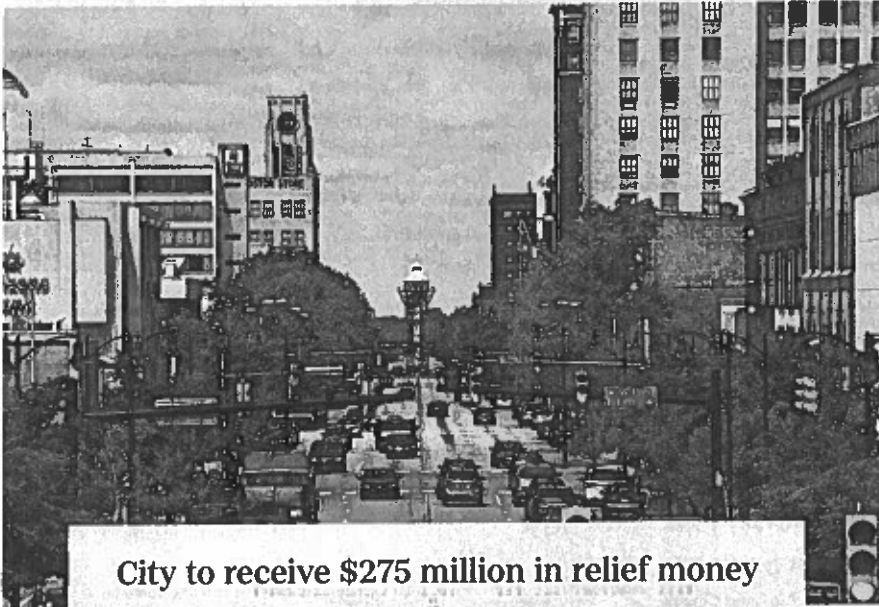
Will the money make a difference?

"It is an astounding amount," Loule said. "It's going to be noticed."

Jim Martin can be reached at 870-1668 or at jmartin@times-news.com. Follow him on Twitter at @ETNMartin.

COVID-19 IN ERIE

Talks start over use of stimulus cash



City to receive \$275 million in relief money

Matthew Rink and Kevin Flowers Erie Times-News | USA TODAY NETWORK

Hundreds of millions of dollars in federal pandemic relief funding will begin pouring into Erie County by early May, marking what Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper calls “our moonshot moment.” The \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan will pump the largest sums yet in federal COVID-19 relief into the area — an unprecedented \$275 million combined for county government, the city of Erie and 37 other municipalities, as well as the area’s 13 public school districts.

How the money can be spent and how officials choose to spend it are questions central to early conversations among a workgroup of elected officials, agency directors and other economic development and philanthropic organizations such as the Erie Regional Chamber & Growth Partnership, Erie Community Foundation and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

Brought together by Dahlkemper, the group hopes to pool resources and craft a plan that would have far-reaching effects throughout Erie County.

“This is our moment,” Dahlkemper said. “We won’t see this kind of money again in our generation, or in a few generations, I don’t believe. So it’s sort of our moonshot moment. What is the trajectory here? How are we going to truly look back and say we

significantly changed the trajectory of this community by using this money in the most powerful way we could?”

The county sent out a survey to all participants in the first meeting of the workgroup, which plans to meet again soon, Dahlkemper said.

Who’s getting what?

Erie County government is projected to receive \$52.3 million, while the city of Erie is expected to get \$79.1 million.

Millcreek Township is in line for \$6.5 million and all other townships and boroughs will receive more than \$12 million combined.

Erie County school districts will get a total of \$123 million, which includes \$70 million for the Erie School District alone.

See **STIMULUS**, Page 10A



Dahlkemper

Above: The skyline of downtown Erie is seen from the State Street railroad overpass.
CHRISTOPHER MILLETTE/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

Stimulus

Continued from Page 1A

The American Rescue Plan funding is "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to really transform this region, and I'm very excited about it," Erie Mayor Joe Schember said. "You add our \$79 million to what the county is getting, to what other municipalities are getting, to what school districts are getting, and there's a chance to really multiply the effect to benefit citizens."

How can the money be used?

Rick Schuettler is executive director of the Pennsylvania Municipal League, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that advocates for policies and programs that benefit third-class cities throughout the state, including Erie.

Schuettler said that PML — which is affiliated with the National League of Cities — has been lobbying the federal government for more than a year to sign off on the type of COVID-19-related direct aid to municipalities that the American Rescue Plan provides.

"This level of direct funding to municipalities is something that's unprecedented in today's political environment," Schuettler said. "For those who weren't in a great (financial) position when the pandemic hit, this is a tremendous boost to them."

While the U.S. Treasury is finalizing American Rescue Plan guidelines, Schuettler said some eligible uses for the funding are already clear.

"Water, sewer and broadband projects appear to be eligible," he said. "Some folks are looking at housing and funding for the homeless. There is money for assistance for small businesses, and it can be used for revenue losses. Those are things a lot of municipalities can start to look at pretty quickly in terms of using the money."

David Sanko, executive director of the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors, said there are "four pots" into which the money can be put: COVID-19 response, revenue losses, premium pay for essential government workers and infrastructure work.

Revenue replacement is especially critical, Sanko said. It was not an eligible use of funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding.

"You had folks who stayed on the job and worked through this," he said. "Local government was an essential service. You didn't get to stay home. There was still an expectation to go plow the roads and pick up the trash and to make sure the toilets flushed and the water came out when we'd turn the tap."

"As many other people were forced to stay home, you saw traditional revenues not come in, whether it was sales tax or income tax. Peoples' spending patterns changed. People were driving less, so the liquid fuels (tax) collections — the gas tax — was generating less money. But you still had to fix the roads. You still have to plow — all those things. So being able to replace that lost revenue was important."

Because there are fewer "strings attached" to the American Rescue Plan funding than there were with the CARES Act, counties would have the flexibility to use the money in a variety of ways, including addressing the mental health crisis that worsened with the pandemic, said Lisa Schaefer, executive director of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania.

"We've talked about the need for increased mental health funding, for instance, for a while," she said. "I'd have to go back and double-check the language to see if that's something under the statute, but that's something that you can kind of start building that investment over time. We've certainly seen case-loads increase during the pandemic."

Ideas for Erie

Among the ideas being discussed is how Erie County communities can improve access to high-speed internet. Erie County used CARES Act funding to



The skyline of downtown Erie is shown Aug. 18 looking south on State Street from Perry Square.

CHRISTOPHER MILLETTE/ERIE TIMES-NEWS



Erie Mayor Joe Schember.

CHRISTOPHER MILLETTE/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

state-mandated moratoriums on construction during the pandemic.

In addition, parking ticket and parking tax revenues dropped, collectively, by nearly \$500,000 in 2020, according to city financial figures.

Erie City Councilman Michael Keys said he hopes to see the money used to create "something tangible," such as recreational facilities or park improvements for young people in the city.



Keys

Keys would also like to see much of the city's American Rescue Plan funding go toward fighting homelessness.

"We need to help people," Keys said. "And we need to create things that are still here when (the pandemic) is gone."

'Is this real?'

Schember said his administration participated in a conference call with representatives of U.S. Sen Bob Casey's office last week to ask questions about the American Rescue Plan's guidelines and eligible uses for funding.

"They couldn't really answer a lot of our questions yet," Schember said. "But from what we understand so far, the primary purpose of this money is to help people and businesses impacted by COVID-19. And we can use it to deal with some of our revenue losses in city gov-

ernment."

Schuettler said PML will host webinars in the coming months to better explain the American Rescue Plan's guidelines and nuances to officials from across the state.

"People are looking for that information," he said. "We want to provide some clarity."

The Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors held two virtual meetings earlier this week for 700 people about ARP funding guidelines.

Participants asked how the money could be spent and what accountability reporting procedures they'll be required to follow.

"There's a couple of things (they asked)," Sanko said. "First off, 'Is this real?' Because local communities have not gotten direct federal funding for decades. It's always gone some other way," such as through a state agency.

About \$1 billion of the \$13 billion headed to Pennsylvania is targeted to communities of fewer than 50,000 people, which in Erie County is every municipality except the city of Erie and Millcreek Township.

Those 36 communities will receive a combined \$12 million.

Harborcreek Township Supervisor Dean Pepicello is among those who are in disbelief. Harborcreek stands to receive a projected \$1.68 million.

See STIMULUS, Page 11A

Stimulus

Continued from Page 10A

"I find it hard to believe," Pepicello said Monday, "that they're just going to hand us those numbers. I don't know."

CARES Act funding allowed the township to address most of its personal protective equipment needs, but it did not plug the quarter of a million dollars in lost revenue since the start of the pandemic.



Pepicello

That would be Harborcreek's priority, he said.

"We're looking for clarity as to how we can use it, but I will tell you, there is plenty of work that has been put off simply because the money wasn't there," Pepicello said. "So can we certainly improve our roads, number one, our stormwater system, our parks? You bet."

When will the money arrive?

State and local governments are expected to receive the first distribution of funds within 60 days of the American Rescue Plan being signed into law by President Joe Biden, but no later than May 10.

The balance of the funds will be sent a year from the first distribution, but no sooner.

More time to spend it

One complication with the funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was that, initially, the money had to be spent by the end of 2020.

Erie County officials spent the summer prioritizing how to spend \$24.3 million.

By late summer the county was



Erie firefighters and EmergencyCare personnel respond to an accident at 12th and State streets in Erie on Dec. 8. Personal protective equipment for emergency responders can be covered by the city's American Rescue Plan funding.

JACK HANRAHAN/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

forced to deploy the funding to a range of nonprofit and governmental entities.

"Last year, counties only had until the end of the year," said Schaefer of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania. "That was ultimately extended at the last minute, but by the time the deadline was extended those counties had pretty much spent down their funds."

American Rescue Plan funding must be spent by the end of 2024.

"Those were chief goals of counties and local governments — trying to make sure that we had that extra flexibility to invest in our communities and to keep our governments running and provide the services that people need," Schaefer said.

What not to do

Sanko, of the Association of Township Supervisors, notes that municipal-

ities will continue to incur costs from the pandemic in the years ahead, both direct and indirect. There will still be a need to equip employees with personal

protective gear, such as masks and sanitizers, and to adhere to the strict cleaning standards of facilities and vehicles demanded of the pandemic, he said.

There's also no guarantee that revenue from sales, income or property taxes, among other sources, will return to pre-pandemic levels soon, he said.

It might appear that there's much more money being sent to local governments than what they need right now, he said.

"One of the things that makes it look like there's more is that you have five years — 2020 through 2024 — to spend this money," he said. "It's not as though it's all one year's worth of expenses."

That's why Sanko and others are urging caution and patience when it comes to spending the money.

"Do it right, not fast," Sanko said. "You don't need to go out and let this money burn a hole in your pocket and start spending it, not knowing whether it's eligible. I think it's smart for communities to use this money to help build capacity and to pay for non-recurring, one-time expenses, not recurring expenses, because look, the money's not going to be there forever."