



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

**EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR'S  
REPORT  
FOR  
DECEMBER  
2020**

PP

**November 2020**

**Meeting with Executive Director to Plan COVID-19 report**

**Ongoing Social Media Management**

**Ongoing Consulting**

**October/November Comms**

**IMPLEMENTED 2020 Community Asset Awards | ZOOM EVENT**

- MANAGED participant engagement & quote approvals
- DRAFTED INVITE for TM distribution
- COORDINATED Zoom logistics
- DRAFTED & DISTRIBUTED Media Advisory
- IMPLEMENTED MEDIA Outreach
- DRAFTED & DISTRIBUTED Press Release
- FACEBOOK EVENT created
- 7 Social Media Graphics (3 featured award recipients)

**IMPLEMENTED 2020 Renaissance Block Awards | PAPER RELEASE**

- Case study for website of Corry success story
- DRAFTED AND DISRIBUTED Press Release
- IMPLEMENTED Media Outreach
- 3 Social Media Graphics

**IMPLEMENTED | Social**

20 posts throughout month

**IN PROGRESS**

**2019/20 Anchor Building | EVENT**

- MANAGE on site event planning
- DRAFT & DISTRIBUTE Media Advisory
- MEDIA Outreach
- DRAFT & DISTRIBUTE Press Release
- LOCATION: Mercy Center for Women
- DATE: TBD
- PARTNER: Women's Club of Erie County (largest award to date)
- CONCEPTUALIZE & DESIGN Social Media Graphics

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Michael Paris  
Chairman of the Board  
Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority

FROM: Dom DiPaolo  
ECGRA Board Director

DATE: November 19, 2020

RE: Conflict of Interest Disclosure

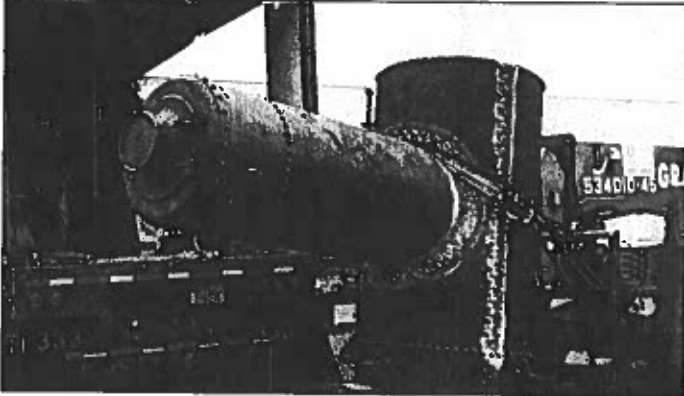
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On this date, the Board of Directors of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority was presented with Resolution Number 21, 2020, which is a Resolution to enter into agreements with thirteen (13) Erie County Community Assets. One such entity is the Eagle's Nest Leadership Corporation.

I am an Advisory Board Member for the Eagle's Nest Leadership Corporation. As such, I have abstained from any deliberation or involvement in the process to determine whether to recommend an award to the Eagle's Nest Leadership Corporation, and I abstain from the deliberation, and vote, regarding the approval of the Resolution. Further, I announced my conflict during the meeting and request that this memo be made part of the minutes of the November 19, 2020 meeting of the ECGRA Board of Directors.

Monday, October 19, 2020

## Climax locomotive returns home



Donnie Rosie/contributed photo

The Climax A313 locomotive arrived home to Corry on Friday. Above, the boiler for A313 is loaded onto a shipping container in Nome, Alaska, for its trip home.

BY SARA JUKES  
sara@thecorryjournal.com

After being away for 118 years, A313 Climax locomotive arrived Friday back to its birthplace of Corry from Nome, Alaska.

Corry Rails and Industrial Legacy Society has been working for three years to arrange its return.

It may have made it back in pieces, but having A313 home again is a relief for the group that has worked hard to make its return happen.

"What a relief," Corry RAILS Chairman Tom VanTassel said. "For me it's a relief to know that it's here." During its arrival, the

trucking container holding all the parts and pieces of the locomotive was driven within 100 feet of the Climax building where it was originally constructed, which was momentous for Corry RAILS members and onlookers who have followed the journey.

Vice Chairman Carl Wassink said it's a relief to have it finally arrive at the newly designated Corry RAILS Climax A Restoration Shop on the corner of Delaware Street and Mead Avenue.

A team of Corry RAILS members arrived in Alaska on Aug. 25 and worked with rail enthusiasts, plus unex-

pected present and past Corry-area community members, to gather all parts and pieces of A313 to pack and ship it home.

The team included Wassink, of Corry; VanTassel, of Corry; Norm Thomas, of Spring Creek; Chris and Tara Lyon, of Corry; Rusty Pochatko, formerly of Corry and now of Palmer, Alaska; Donnie and Tonya Rosie, of Spring Creek; Grady Smith, of Ohio; Steve Niederriter, of West Virginia; Erik Christiansen, of Alaska; Pat Durand, of Alaska; and Randy Foster, of Alaska.

See Climax, P2

## Climax

(Continued from front page)

Unexpected setbacks started in Nome, where the only nearly complete Climax A class engine was located.

On the final day in Alaska, Sept. 2, the container had to be partially unpacked to be lifted onto a road trailer and then repacked because they did not have a forklift big enough to lift it, VanTassel said.

"We were hours from being ready to fly out and we were just finishing up," VanTassel said.

Just in time, work to pack the container was completed and A313 started its 4,000-mile journey back to Corry.

The team faced another day's setback after finding out the container was not standard. It was a high-cube container, which would cost them an additional \$1,500 in unexpected permits across 10 states.

Barnhart Transportation LLC, of Erie, donated its services to bring the container from Seattle, Washington. Corry RAILS only paid for fuel.

ROG'S Inc Rigging and Crane Service, of Erie, donated a crane and a Hyster forklift to unload the container and maneuver it into the restoration building.

"It's the beginning of phase two, which involves the full restoration and raising funds," Wassink said.

Corry RAILS member Kevin Amy said the work is just starting, literally.

Work is estimated to take three years to rebuild the engine, VanTassel said.

However, that is dependent on how fast funds can be raised, Wassink said.

Some of the things that still need to be done in order to rebuild the locomo-

tive is research into the wood that was used and construction blueprints.

"We've got drawings to make because the drawings that were made for these things are long gone — most of them," Wassink said. "We will be creating those drawings."

Wassink continued to say a lot of people expect to see a finished locomotive when the container doors are opened, but that isn't the case.

Corry RAILS has had offers from many people within the area and around the United States who would like to help with the restoration.

"None of this could have been done if it wasn't for the charity of all the people that have donated time, material and money," Amy said.

New Corry RAILS members, Ron and Connie Sitterley, said seeing the excitement of the other members is great since they became interested in Climax engines long before the A313 was purchased.

The Sitterleys became interested because the Climax was invented just outside of Spartansburg and they are thrilled to be able to participate in the restoration of A313.

Donnie Rosie, who owns Rosie Marketing, and has documented this historic event, said it's exciting to see the conclusion of this chapter.

"I don't know if people realize this will be quite the endeavor on this side of it — trying to put it together," Rosie said. "To see this chapter closed — of it being back in Corry and driving by the place it was built 100 years ago — that's pretty crazy."

Tonya Rosie contributed to this report.

# Union City signage celebrates National Register designation

BY STEVE BISHOP  
Contributing writer

**UNION CITY** — The installation of five new signs in Union City could surprise residents who may have been unaware they live in a historic district that's listed on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places.

Nonprofit Union City Pride, in collaboration with the Union City Community Foundation, Preservation Erie, and Union City Borough, recently had the five signs installed at key entry points to the historic district that includes West High Street between First and Third avenues; South Street between First and Fourth avenues; and First, Second and Third avenues between West High and

South streets.

Union City's historic district — which was approved by the National Park Service in 1990 — also includes Main Street between High Street and Concord Street, although that area was not included in the current signage initiative.

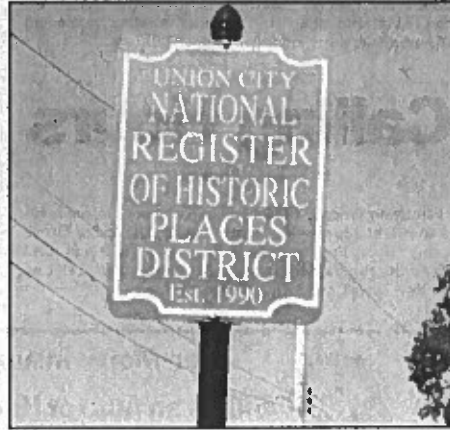
The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation, according to the National Park Service's website. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate and protect America's historic

and archeological resources.

Melinda Meyer, president of Preservation Erie, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving Erie County's architectural history, said Union City's historic district is one of seven in Erie County. In the City of Erie they include West Park Place, the West 21st Street historic district, and the West 6th Street historic district.

Meyer said the Union City historic district National Register nomination was prepared some three decades ago by John Claridge, who was the director of the Erie County Historical Society at the time and a founding member of Preservation Erie.

◀ See Signage, P.2



Contributed photo  
Five historic district signs have been placed throughout Union City Borough marking the borough's place on the National Register of Historic Places.

## Signage

(Continued from front page)

The historical society and the Erie County Department of Planning had a strong partnership and were responsible for preparing and submitting a handful of National Register nominations in the 1980s and 1990s, Meyer noted.

Union City Borough employees installed the signs, and Borough Secretary Cindy Wells said it's another example of what makes Union City a special place to live.

"I hope residents realize the history there is in the borough and that they are proud to live in a community such as Union City," she said.

Dave Nothum, president of the board of Union City

Pride, said the historic district signage should bring positive attention from anyone interested in history, including residents who live in the district.

"I hope we have enough new members of our community who are not completely aware of our history, and that these signs will encourage them to investigate that history further," he said.

Union City's original National Register nomination document notes the historic district — including the downtown portion — contained commercial, industrial and residential buildings primarily erected between 1865 and 1925. The overall historic district at

the time of the application in the late 1980s included 128 buildings, some of which have since been lost to fire and other factors. Of those original 128 buildings, 17 were erected between 1865 and 1879; 58 between 1880 and 1892; 41 between 1893 and 1925; and 12 since 1925.

The residential portion of the district had 68 contributing buildings. Sixty-three of them were two- or 2 1/2-story frame buildings, along with two brick, one stucco, and two combined stone and frame.

"The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's list of important historic buildings, structures, sites, and objects ...

and Union City is on it," said Meyer. "Adding a historic resource to the National Register isn't easy, nor is it guaranteed.

To be considered eligible, she continued, a resource must meet the National Register criteria for evaluation, which involves examining the resource's significance, age, and integrity, or how much it looks like it did in the past.

Meyer said inclusion on the National Register should be a source of community pride.

"The history of Union City is unique, and it is forever documented on the nation's list of its most important historic resources," she said.

# Union City secures grant for trail study

BY MARYANN MOOK  
Staff writer

Union City Borough has secured a grant that will help fund a feasibility study for a French Creek access path for walking and biking.

Borough Manager Cindy Wells told Borough Council during its Oct. 27 meeting that the borough has secured a Greenways Trails grant from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

The grant is in the amount of \$32,500. The borough is seeking matching funds, also in the amount of \$32,500.

Wells said the grant would help implement ideas that people expressed they wanted in the Parks and Recreation Plan.

"In completing the Parks and Recreation Plan, people were requesting access to French Creek," Wells said. "This is another step toward developing a path along French Creek."

In another matter, a bid has been received for work on the traffic signals and railroad safety in the borough.

Council received information from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation that the traffic signal project had been put out for bid.

## Trail

(Continued from front page)

PennDOT is expected to schedule a planning meeting about the project.

In other news, Council approved sending a letter to an applicant for the zoning officer position, offering him the job. The applicant, Jason Sayers, responded to Council's offer on Monday, Nov. 2, accepting the position.

In other business, a recipient of the Renaissance Grant requested an extension for a project due to construction problems and problems obtaining materials due to COVID-19 and health re-

PennDOT has accepted a bid from Bruce and Merrilese Electric Co. The low bid amount is within \$70,000 of the estimated cost of the project. The amount of the bid was not disclosed.

The project, which is scheduled for spring of 2021, includes upgrading traffic signals on Main Street. Also, upgrades to the railroad crossings at High Street, Main Street and Bridge Street push the cost to more than \$1.2 million.

Union City Police Chief David Pernice asked Council to consider installing surveillance cameras at the intersec-

owners.

Applications will reopen in late winter of 2021. Also, Union City Borough has a vacancy on the Zoning Board. Anyone interested is asked to contact Borough Manager Cindy Wells at 814-438-2331; stop at the Borough Building; or send a letter of interest to Wells at 13 S. Main St., Union City, PA 16438.

Council members present at the meeting were Dan Brunaigh, Dan Hoban, Greg Bowes, Matthew Joyce and Riley Cross (via telephone). Emmet McGuire was absent from the meeting.

## ANOTHER VIEW

# Video gaming terminals, skills games a bad bet for Erie



Rev. Charles Mock

State lawmakers in Pennsylvania are on the verge of taking a risky gamble that is sure to be a losing bet for Erie County, particularly in economically distressed urban communities. Some members of the Pennsylvania Legislature are pushing legislation to dramatically increase the number of video gaming terminals, or VGTs, in the state while legalizing so-called "skills games." These are nothing more than slot machines by a different name and the legislation would open the floodgates to an additional 85,000 of them in pizza parlors, gas stations, corner stores and bars in cities and towns across the state, including right here in Erie.

This is the type of reckless gambling expansion that historically hurts poor and largely minority communities. Currently, skills games are illegal in our state and VGTs are restricted to truck stops that meet certain requirements. Erie County already has legal gambling at Presque Isle Downs Casino. Regardless of your view on gambling, it's important to know that activities at the casino are highly regulated - something that is all but impossible with VGTs and skills games. Further, the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority administers funding from the county's share of state gaming revenue to a range of community organizations. Currently, more than \$55 million in Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority impact investments and grants are at work across Erie County. There isn't a corner of the county that isn't touched by

ECGRA grant money - improving Erie's economic and community development forecast through investments in community projects and events, educational programming for children and human services funding. The push for these new machines threatens to deliver a double-whammy - preying on those who can least afford to lose while also likely reducing casino revenues, which would result in declining dollars to fund community initiatives that improve quality of life for all Erie County residents. Further, the timing couldn't be worse. Erie's most challenged neighborhoods are suffering from long-standing poverty only made more acute by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, conversely, for the first time in memory these neighborhoods stand to make real progress toward economic equity. Erie has been a national leader in developing

Opportunity Zones that are proving to be a catalyst for economic revival throughout the city of Erie by attracting investors and supporting local entrepreneurs and community enhancement groups. Additionally, the recent state approval of Erie County Community College - the first in Pennsylvania in 27 years - will soon offer hope and a path to a better future for scores of residents throughout the county for whom quality post-secondary education has long been out of reach. VGTs specifically pose a serious threat to that potential progress, creating a steady and accessible temptation for vulnerable citizens to gamble money they can ill-afford to lose while saddling our community with new unfunded regulatory and social costs. There is no doubt that VGTs are predatory against low-income and minority communities. There is

significant statistical evidence that shows just how exploitative these companies are and how they target marginalized communities. Case in point: Illinois where in 2013 gambling was expanded to include 30,000 VGTs throughout the state. It's been a disaster. A joint effort between ProPublica Illinois and the Chicago Sun-Times found that VGTs were concentrated in low income minority communities. For instance, the study found gambling machines are found in Berwyn, Illinois, which has a population made up of about 70% Black and Hispanic residents. But there are no machines in Oak Park, Illinois, which has a population that is roughly 68% white. Meanwhile, there are video gaming terminals in Harvey, Illinois, where the population of black residents is over 75%. But there are no machines in Palos Park, Illinois, - almost 93% white.

The same story repeats throughout Illinois. No doubt the companies that manufacture these machines are aware of these troubling statistics. Yet, they continue to seek out lawmakers who willingly ignore the risks in hopes of a quick - but surely fleeting - cash grab. That's what is about to unfold in Pennsylvania if something isn't done to stop it. And once these machines proliferate, there is little that can be done to shut them down. VGTs are terrible for minority neighborhoods. Yet beyond that, they are clearly bad for every citizen of Erie County who stands to pay a price through dwindling gaming revenues and anticipated social costs. It's a gamble none of us can afford to take. The Rev. Dr. Charles Mock is pastor of Community Missionary Baptist Church and serves on the Board of Trustees for the Erie County Community College.



**November 19, 2020**

## **AREA BRIEFS**

### **7 projects receive nearly \$400,000 of ECGRA grant funds**

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority has awarded nearly \$400,000 to seven recipients to fight blight and improve neighborhoods.

As part of its Renaissance Block Program, ECGRA, which administers more than \$4 million annually in casino gaming revenue, funded the following groups:

- Borough of Girard, \$51,250
- Borough of North East, \$60,000
- Borough of Union City, \$60,000
- Impact Corry, \$100,000
- Our West Bayfront, \$25,000
- Sisters of Mercy/House of Mercy, \$50,000
- YMCA of Greater Erie, \$50,000

The Renaissance Block program provides matching grants up to \$150,000 per application or up to \$5,000 per property. It covers eligible exterior repairs, permanent improvements, and streetscapes. Funds can also be used to improve publicly owned property that is targeted.

# ECGRA reflects on 2020 Renaissance Block Grants to combat blight

## FROM STAFF REPORTS

Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) awarded nearly \$400,000 in the 2020 round of funding for the Erie County Renaissance Block Program, an anti-blight, neighborhood cooperation initiative designed to help improve Erie County neighborhoods through a block-by-block strategy that targets aging or neglected areas where neighbors are organized and willing to work together to combat blight.

"Once blight settles in, a neighborhood is at high risk of reduced property values, vacancies, and increased crime — in the city of Erie alone, there are 9,500 homes identified by Erie Refocused as moderately or severely distressed," said ECGRA Executive Director Perry Wood. "ECGRA's Renaissance Block Program awards grants to help revitalize our neighborhoods."

"The execution of a blight removal strategy to reestablish a neighborhood is the first step, and when families are ready to invest in their

community, these grants help to carry out their goals," Wood continued. "Impact Corry is just one of the inspiring success stories happening in Erie County."

Impact Corry was awarded \$100,000 through the local Renaissance Block project specifically focused on the neighborhood of School House Block. Rick and Linda Brown are residents

in the neighborhood that received a portion of the grant to help improve their home. The couple recently installed 21 energy-efficient windows that totaled \$16,000, but with the \$5,000

matching grant, they ended up spending \$11,000 out of pocket.

"This is a real thing," Linda Brown said. "I just hope anyone who wants to take advantage of these grants makes the decision to do so. I'd like to see as many people as possible benefit from this."

The Brown's home is one of 19 School House Block homes that are in the process of or have finished making their exterior improvements with the recently awarded funds. Projects range from replacing garage doors to upgrading front porches to roof replacement to painting to landscaping.

The grant, which can be used for exterior home improvements, is a one-to-one match up to \$5,000 of a participant's project.

For more stories and photos of Corry homeowners who took advantage of these grant opportunities, visit the Impact Corry Facebook page or visit [www.impact-corry.org/renaissance-block](http://www.impact-corry.org/renaissance-block).

◀ See Grants, P.2



Contributed photos

Local residents Rick and Linda Brown were among 19 homeowners who took advantage of Erie County Renaissance Block Program funds awarded to Impact Corry from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

(Continued from front page)

In addition to Impact Corry, Renaissance Block Grants were awarded to the following neighborhood groups in 2020: Union City Borough, \$60,000; North East Borough, \$60,000; Girard Borough, \$51,250; YMCA of Greater Erie, \$50,000; Sisters of Mercy/House of Mercy, \$50,000; and Our West Bayfront, \$25,000.

The Erie County Renaissance Block Program awards up to \$150,000 per application or up to \$5,000 awarded per property. It is a matching program that helps finance eligible exterior repairs, permanent improvements, and streetscapes. Funds can also be used to improve publicly owned property that is targeted to improve the block's visual appearance.



The Browns used grant funds to offset the cost of installing 21 energy-efficient windows in their Corry home.





Sara Jukes/The Corry Journal

## Climax container open

Corry Rail and Industrial Legacy Society was finally able to open a shipping container holding parts and pieces to rebuild Climax A313. The container arrived from Nome, Alaska, on Oct. 16. From left are Corry RAILS members and volunteers Buzz Hammond, Chelsea Oliver, Connie Sitterley, Carl Wassink, Ron Sitterley, Kevin Amy, Tom VanTassel and Donnie Rosie. VanTassel is holding a picture of his late wife, Jean VanTassel, whom he describes as having been their biggest cheerleader.

gin, Findley Lake, Spartansburg, Spring Creek, Union City & Wayne Township