



Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority

Minutes of the Board of Directors' Meeting

July 20, 2023

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 20, 2023 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 at 8:30 am.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Barney, Mr. Cleaver, Mr. DiPaolo, Ms. Hess, Ms. Loll, Mr. Oberlander, and Mr. Winschel are present in person. Mr. Smith is present via zoom (enters meeting late). Mr. Wachter and Dr. Wood are present in person.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mr. Cleaver makes a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Oberlander seconds the motion. There is no discussion of the agenda. Motion carries 7-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 2023

Mr. Cleaver makes a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Mr. Winschel seconds the motion. There are no other questions of the minutes. Motion carries 7-0.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

There are no comments from members of the Board at this time.

COMMENTS BY THE CHAIR

Mr. Barney has no comments at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There are no members of the public present, so there are no public comments at this time.

PRESENTATIONS

There are no presentations at this time.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Treasurer's Report: Mr. Cleaver: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I reviewed the Treasurer's Report with Dr. Wood, and everything seems fine; not seems fine, is fine. I had a couple of questions that were answered. If the Board has any questions, I'm certainly positive we can answer things. But everything is up and up and fine. End of report.

Mr. DiPaolo: I have a question. The credit cards – there's an entry, a couple of entries – for Jennifer Dworek; \$3,100, \$185. What is that for, Whitey?

Mr. Cleaver: I don't have a copy in front of me.

Dr. Wood: Tammi, would you explain that?

Ms. Michali: We had scheduled to do updated Board headshots with Jennifer Dworek, that's her photography studio. Then the date that we had scheduled it for wasn't going to work. There was a non-refundable fee attached to that. But if you read how I have it listed on there, the \$3,100 was the total charge but then below that, those three charges are actually a credit. So, she did refund the full amount, minus the non-refundable fee, which I believe was \$500.00.

Ms. Loll: If you do the math, it's \$1,235.

Ms. Michali: I believe there was a credit on last month's Visa as well.

Mr. DiPaolo: One other thing. The Amazon membership of \$139.00. Why do we have an Amazon membership?

Mr. Cleaver: I asked the same question. I think you can get an answer from Tammi or Perry.

Dr. Wood: So, that's an Amazon Prime Membership. Basically, if you buy it every year, you get free shipping on anything you get through Amazon, which is primarily where the office supplies come from. Do you want to add anything, Tammi?

Ms. Michali: I would like to add that we order two to three times a month, so if we had to pay for shipping each time, you're looking at \$10-\$15 each time . . .

Mr. DiPaolo: Isn't there a local vendor that could supply office supplies? Does the County do the same thing, or do they have a supplier? If you know.

Ms. Michali: That I cannot answer for you in honesty.

Dr. Wood: You know, the issue about a local vendor, I think it's a great question. We used to use Sanner Office Supply and then it got bought out by a national office supply entity. So, is there really a local vendor? Not that we're aware of.

Mr. DiPaolo: Okay.

Ms. Loll: Is this a year?

Ms. Michali: Yes.

Mr. DiPaolo: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Barney: Are there any other questions of the Treasurer's Report?

Ms. Hess makes a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. Mr. Oberlander seconds the motion. There are no further questions or discussion of the Treasurer's Report. Motion carries 7-0.

- b. Strategic Planning Committee: Mr. Barney: I know we didn't have anything, but I know we have some things lined up.

Dr. Wood: Tammi is going to be organizing the Strategic Planning Committee Meeting so we can do some grant reviews. The next round of grant reviews we're going to look at Multi-Municipal Collaboration and Renaissance Block. Part of the thing, and Tom and I had talked about this and we talked to some of the Board members about this, some of you want to see more presentations in person as opposed to just reviewing online. So, we'll bring in the Municipal Collaboration folks for the next round to present in person. Tammi, did you put out an email?

Ms. Michali: I did send out an email. I have three responses so far.

Dr. Wood: So, she will be organizing the standard grant review. We'll do two presentations and then break for lunch and then we'll do two more presentations. Any questions about that?

Mr. Cleaver: Is there a date set for that?

Dr. Wood: The email asks for three or four different times to see what's best.

Ms. Michali: It's for the week of July 31, August 1, 2, and 4. Those are the dates.

- c. Update from County Council: Mr. Shank is not present, so there is nothing to report at this time.
- d. Update from County Executive's Office: Mr. Smith is not present at this time, but joins the meeting later and gives an update before the conclusion of the meeting.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dr. Wood: Okay, good morning, everyone. This is the housekeeping Board meeting. We're working on internal stuff and as you can see, there are no grants to review on your agenda. However, you'll see three different housekeeping items. The first is renewal of our lease here at Knowledge Park; we're opting for a one-year renewal. Resolution Number 10 is the audited financials. So, we had the auditors come in and present, there were follow up questions, we talked to the auditors last week and there hasn't been any other questions from the Board to the auditors and the staff hasn't had any other questions about the audit. So, this is the finalized audit on the agenda. This is important because it kind of memorializes our finances for the fiscal year. It's an important document for County government because they enter it into record down at the courthouse, however they do that. This, along with the annual report, become the two things that we are obliged to do according to our bylaws, in order to communicate with County government. So those are the two official documents, which is why that's important.

Then you have Resolution Number 11, which is the Annual Report. There's a physical copy of it in front of all of you. This is what we did this current fiscal year. Remember the fiscal year is April 1 through March 31. So, it's 2022 - 2023 and it's a standard annual report. This is where our current cash position is, where all of our grant funds have gone, a list of everyone who's received it, and what grant category. Okay, so those are the housekeeping items on the agenda.

In the Director's Report, you'll see a report about our communication strategies including the press conference we did for small business development down at Enrique's; you'll see the press release from that. And then of course, we always get a couple of thank you notes or thank you letters from folks that come in. I like to put that in the reports so the Board can see it. There are some Corry Journal articles here about what's going on with EMS and our Renaissance Block program. And then some other activities we did in economic development, including a trip I took down in Corry just to check up on some grants that they had received from us. Okay, that's Director's Report. Any questions about this report? Okay, how about the three resolutions? Any questions about the lease, the audit, or the annual report?

Mr. DiPaolo: I have a question on the audit. According to our minutes of last month's meeting, actually we just got these, I had a question that I asked about the borrowers, if everybody was up on their payments, and if anybody had defaulted? Then Ms. Bryan said, "I don't believe there are any delinquent payments, whether it's anybody who has paid or paid interest only on the payments." According to the sheet here, the Authority was notified that the Greater Erie Industrial Development Corporation filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy, and the Youth Leadership Institute of Erie got \$188,000 and they still owe \$121,000 as of March.

Dr. Wood: Let's take those one at a time. So that Note in the audit for the GEIDC is from 2016-2017. It's been in the audit every year since then. Is that when the bankruptcy was, Tim?

Mr. Wachter: Yes. The Authority was notified in 2016 that they had gone into Chapter 7.

Dr. Wood: Thank you. So that Note is in our audited financials every year for the GEIDC. Now, they went into bankruptcy; they didn't go into default to anything that they had with us. But it was important to put that Note in there for historical purposes because at the time, they were operating the CDFI

known as Enterprise Development Fund. They no longer operate that Fund, and part of what we did in response to the GEIDC bankruptcy to protect ourselves was we followed up with Enterprise Development Fund, both legally with the federal bankruptcy system to make sure that we would be in line to receive any funds that didn't – but Enterprise Development Fund didn't go bankrupt. It was an affiliate of GEIDC. So, they were able to separate and protect themselves from GEIDC bankruptcy as well.

We then restructured our debt to them. At the time, and I know now, but at the time we were about 60% of their fund. So, we were overleveraged with them. I mean, it depends on what your definition of overleveraged is. I would say anything over half of the funds is probably overleverage. But we had gotten there because at the time they were the only CDFI in Erie County. Since then, Bridgeway Capital, Progress Fund, and some other entities have stepped up. The RDA certainly stepped up its involvement in funding projects.

So, that was an opportunity to solidify in the historical record that we recognized that the bankruptcy happened, we took action, and it did not affect our position with the Enterprise Development Fund. So, that's a great story. Now, we had to extend the runway on the loan that we have to them, so that they did not collapse. We talked about that extensively at the time because we had the right to recall the loan at that time and then they would have collapsed as an entity. The good news is that they didn't and now they're flourishing under the Redevelopment Authority as their kind of fiscal manager. And you know, we continue to get reports from them on what they're doing, and they continue to be on time with payments. Are there any questions about the first one before I move on?

The second one is Youth Leadership. Youth Leadership Institute is the first loan that we did under the Community Entrepreneurial Financing concept. It's a concept you just approved not long ago. This was the very first loan – it's the only loan that we've done – and the idea behind that loan was that there are federal grants or big state grants streaming into the community and these nonprofits need cash flow. They need to borrow the money up front, and then as the grants come in, they can repay the loan. So, we could provide a financing vehicle to make that happen. At one point in time, they approached us about restructuring, I think it was about six months in, about restructuring the loan. We put the loan on hold, so they're not in default. They're not late; we put the loan on hold while we tried to figure out whether or not we would restructure with them. At the end of the day, the staff recommendation was to not restructure. I did not bring this to the board. I briefly discussed it with Tim, and they resumed payments on time.

Mr. DiPaolo: So, they don't owe anything?

Dr. Wood: No, no they do.

Mr. Wachter: But they're not in default.

Dr. Wood: They're not in default. And that's a specific word, right? They're not in default. They were just put on hold while we decided whether or not to restructure them. I mean, this is a brand-new program. We decided not to restructure.

Mr. DiPaolo: How long did you put them on hold?

Dr. Wood: They're no longer on hold; they are paying back their loan to us. Great questions. Any other questions about the audit? It's probably the most important document here.

Okay, very good. So, what's coming up next on the Board's agenda, we'll have, as I said, Tammi put out an email for a grant review of MMC, Multi-Municipal Collaboration and Renaissance Block. We have four Municipal Collaboration grants and four Renaissance Blocks coming in. The way we're going to structure it is we're going to have the four municipal collaboration folks come in and present to you guys, and the staff will make a recommendation on the four Renaissance Block. If you want to see them come in too, we can schedule another meeting. But to see the four MMCs is going

to take, we're going to estimate 20 minutes per – 15-minute presentations and 5 minutes for questions, and we'll hold them to it. So, about a two and a half hour total grant review.

EMS funding – EMS funding has been an interesting discussion throughout the County, and we've been following it. There are different positions being taken on it. There are a lot of unresolved questions, but we continue to follow it. We continue to communicate with the paramedic's associations and the township supervisors. We are currently doing research on that. Tom and I, Tom, if you want to jump in, did a conference call with Allegheny County EMS system, which is actually pretty, pretty interesting what they've done there. It's not exactly what our County is proposing, but an interesting solution to help fund what's going on there and the role that the County plays is interesting.

But you have emerging, and you'll see this in the Municipal Collaboration grants, you have more of a confederated system emerging as opposed to a centralized one. So, you have, what I keep calling the Dean Pepicello model - that Pepicello model over here with Harborcreek, Lawrence Park, and Wesleyville. They have a system of using an intergovernmental cooperation agreement to collaborate. And that's been very effective as far as answering calls and cost effective as it hasn't required any kind of tax increase. The role we've played is we've helped them purchase emergency vehicles in the past, and you're going to see them on the agenda for a new vehicle. I think it was like five years ago, when we purchased last vehicle from them. You're going to see them on the Municipal Collaboration agenda for a new vehicle.

In the West County, we have the let's call it the Cranesville model. And I'm working with Brandon Kennedy over there. It's Cranesville, Albion, and then the two surrounding townships Wayne and Elk Creek. So those four townships, or those four municipalities, excuse me, are collaborating for an EMS service. They're also going to come to us for the same thing for a vehicle. The difference in their model is that they're using a commission model. So over here, you have intergovernmental cooperation agreements that basically say, "Harborcreek Township will supply the full time EMS employee. We got a grant from ECGRA for the vehicle. We will own the vehicle on behalf of the Cooperation." Over here in the West County you have a commission system, which I think is really interesting, which basically says, "Based on our size and participation in EMS, it's a two-tiered evaluation process, each municipality owes this much to the commission every year in order to solve the EMS issue."

So, two different models, similar, but both functioning very well and others are looking at those two models and trying to decide what to go with. Certainly if you're in the West County, I think it would make sense for you to have a conversation with that Commission about collaborating with them in support. The same is true over here in East County, but everybody's doing something different. You've got that same Commission that I just mentioned, has now publicly said, "Yeah, we're supportive of the idea of a countywide EMS Authority. Whereas some townships have literally passed ordinances saying, not ordinances but resolutions, saying, "We're not in favor of it, we're not going to participate in it." So, it's kind of a mixed bag across Erie County, but I continue to follow it and we'll continue to do research on it because it's obviously important. Are there any questions about EMS? Don't hesitate to follow up with me on it. There's a lot going on there and I'm just kind of verbalizing it. This isn't any kind of formal report, but at some point, I think we'll bring some type of solution to you guys to look at.

And then finally, Transformational Grants with the Erie Community Foundation. We have been doing Transformational Grants with ECF about every four years - on a four-year cycle. Last time, we contributed \$4 million to the ECF process. We haven't done this for two cycles now because first of all, COVID stopped us, and then when we were gearing up to do it, again, we got this huge influx of ARPA dollars, so we had to focus on administering that. But we're ready to get back to that phase. Some of the wins that have come out of that, for example, have been the Erie Community College. I guess probably the biggest one working with them and other funders. You want to talk about things that are truly big scale and transformational, that's kind of the area we look to. We can't do all these things ourselves, obviously. So, it's a nice opportunity to work with the largest funder in Erie County on it. So, I'll be bringing some type of process back to you on that as well. It worked really great the last time we did it. We had joint grant reviews with our Board of Directors and the Community Foundation Board of Directors and it was a nice opportunity for you folks to get to know them and then

to talk them through. We basically have the same alignment as far as mission goes. It's just we're the government entity and they're the private foundation. So, there's a nice opportunity to get together with those leaders and make some big things happen. I can talk more about that later on, but let me bring a process back to you about how we look at doing that again this time.

Mr. Winschel: This is a good transition here. So, the last time you reviewed the different flow of the monies, and we talked about the Lead Assets, the Lead Assets that the Community Foundation has the Endowment. You mentioned nine, but as I was looking through the minutes, I saw six or seven listed. Question - is the airport part of those regional assets, or Lead Assets?

Dr. Wood: The airport is an interesting one. The airport is not a Lead Asset and has never received funds from us.

Mr. Winschel: The reason I ask is in today's paper, there's an article about Fly Erie Fund. And let's face it, I mean Erie has no airlines. In the way of doing business, you're going to have to pay these airlines to come in. American just added another one, a third flight, to try to get back low costs to Florida. If you read the article, \$6.5 million; \$5 million is going to come from the reserves. They're looking for \$1.5 million, a half million a year over three years. I'm just wondering if you know, clearly this is economic development, you know, for the key of Erie County. Then you mention the Erie Community Foundation. I mean, I would think they would have a role too. Is there something that . . .

Dr. Wood: Let's talk about the airport for a second. We have been approached by the airport and they said, "Can you play a role in the Fly Erie Fund?" So, what is the Fly Erie Fund? I'm not representing it here; I'll just give you what I know about it. It is basically a subsidy to incentivize a carrier to come in. I guess this is common, especially in smaller airports all across the country. The Chamber has actually done a lot of research on this issue. They gave me a kind of a dog and pony show, and I told them, "I think you need to come in front of our Board at some point and do a study session on this." The Fund mentioned in the newspaper this morning was supposed to be a combination of well, \$5 million coming from the airport, and then a combination of private sector and public sector funds. Where will those public sector funds come from? They want one of the contributors to be us. We're always open to those ideas. I think it's up to the staff to kind of analyze the idea and then bring it to you guys at the appropriate time. It's getting close to being fully baked to the point where we can bring it to you. Typically, in a concept like this, we're normally the first ones in and it gives others confidence to get involved in concepts like that.

Mr. Winschel: The airport is at a tipping point right now.

Dr. Wood: It is at a tipping point. I don't know how you guys feel about this. I think, instead of polling you outside the context of what they're asking, I think it makes sense to do a study session, to have them come in. This can be viewed different ways. This can be viewed as a class issue, but I would say this is an economic development issue. It's not a class issue. A functioning airport is important and an airport with a subsidy is ubiquitous at this point. And the fact is that there is no County support to our airport. I don't know if you know that. There is no County funding support to our airport.

Mr. Winschel: Maybe they could be approached for (inaudible)

Dr. Wood: They could. I don't know if it's up to us to do that. But this is certainly a discussion that I have with Doug – "Are you looking at subsidizing this? If so, do you want to go in on it? Do we want to be one of three public sector partners to subsidize it?" That's a discussion yet to be had. But, I think it should be on the agenda to be discussed by this Board. Does anyone object to it? Is everyone okay with a study session with the airport?

Mr. Wachter: Gary, one thing we didn't have at the last meeting was a list of all the dedicated regional assets. You said you got six of them.

Mr. Winschel: I looked through the minutes, and I know Perry listed off a few.

Mr. Wachter: I pulled up the list. It's the Erie Arts & Culture, Erie Art Museum, Erie Philharmonic, Erie Playhouse, Erie Zoo, Children's Museum, Flagship Niagara League, Historical Society, Mercyhurst Institute for Arts & Culture. There's your list.

Mr. Winschel: And that was decided way back as part of the Settlement?

Mr. Wachter: It was baked into the Settlement in 2010. It's a closed circle. You can add to it . . .

Mr. Barney: Oh, you can? We can add people in?

Mr. Wachter: You can add but not to take money out of that endowment. If you wanted to add more money to that endowment, yes, but that money in that group is closed.

Dr. Wood: One clarification on that list. It's not like we arbitrarily decided that list. There was a report that County government had done in which basically they determined who it was years before ECGRA existed. We were really going off of that report.

Mr. Winschel: I understand.

Dr. Wood: Any other questions?

Mr. Oberlander: I have a question about the lease. Just from an organizational standpoint, when did we start here? When did the lease start, I mean? Is it a yearly increase? I see there's an increase of \$150, but it ended May 31. We're in a little in between.

Dr. Wood: When did we begin here? Let's start there. I believe it was 2009 that we moved here. The courthouse was going through renovation. We had an office at the courthouse, and they basically kicked us out, is my understanding. It was like – go find a home somewhere else while we're in this major renovation. There's not a lot of space down there. But it was also with the blessing of County government, since we are an independent authority, we should go out and be independent. For some reason we ended up here. Oh, I know why we ended up here – it's because at the time, all of the County Authorities were located here. And by all I mean, all the ones at the Redevelopment Authority now controls. At the time it was Develop Erie that controlled them, GEIDC. They were all located here, so we just took an office in this building, actually right down the hall. We had that space. And you know, all County Authorities were here. So that's why we ended up here.

What do we pay for it? We have, a couple times, have done a kind of mini research project on can we get a better deal on rent somewhere else. And there's always pluses and minuses to look at; location is one of them. This is a centralized location right off of I-90, especially if you're traveling from Corry, Union City, or Waterford. We basically found we're getting a pretty good deal on rent for what is not quite Class A office space, but pretty close. Plus, access to these rooms come at no additional charge. In many of the other places we looked at renting, we were going to have to rent rooms like this to hold Board meetings. We also get a nonprofit rate, which is part of the Penn State mission. Whenever they host a nonprofit, they get a lower rate. So, we're on board for that. Rent has gone up every year that we've been here, but I imagine that'd be the case wherever we were. But just so you know, at least twice in my memory, I can recall doing studies on other office locations and basically coming back and saying this is pretty good deal.

Mr. Winschel: I see they raised it 10% over last year. Question on when it expires. I know it expires at the end of May. Is there a reason you can't get that aligned with our fiscal year? It makes sense for that to expire at the end of April. Or the end of March, I mean.

Dr. Wood: I suppose we could do that.

Mr. Winschel: Just to kind of get this realigned to expire at the end of March.

Dr. Wood: I have no problem asking them to do that. We are paying the rent until it expires.

Mr. Winschel: Then it's more aligned and hopefully the County . . .

Dr. Wood: Tammi is making a note of that. We'll follow up with the property managers.

Mr. Barney: I'd like to say that prior to the lease running out, if anyone knows of a place or identifies a place, numbers and stuff, you're always open to present that and we'll look into it. It's been done in previous Board meetings.

Mr. Winschel: Perry brought that up that before it was at the Courthouse and then there was no room and then everyone else was up here; not too many others up here.

Dr. Wood: Now there is no one up here!

Mr. Winschel: Is there space down at the courthouse now, since it is eight years later?

Dr. Wood: No, there's no space at the courthouse. We did at one point in time look at moving into the library, the County-owned library, but then the Planning Department ended up taking that space.

Mr. Winschel: It would be nice to be right next to the incubator space there at the library.

Dr. Wood: Oh, the Beehive space?

Mr. Winschel: Since they're part of what we fund.

Ms. Loll: I did a little bit of homework on that and there is room at the courthouse. The Finance Department has quite a bit of space left.

Dr. Wood: Interesting.

Ms. Loll: So, there is room at the courthouse. And the airport, originally when they did the extension, the County put money into it. Even though they might not be right now, they did then.

Dr. Wood: That's a great point, Carol. You're right. There was a bond issue and the County was using their gaming revenue to pay off that bond issue. But what I was referring to was direct operational costs, which most municipalities do subsidize the operational costs of an airport. There are none. And there haven't been since that bond was paid off. That bond was paid off in 2018 or 2019.

Mr. Cleaver: We got sold a bill of sale when we invested in that . . .

Ms. Loll: (giggles) Build it and they will come. Yeah, right.

Dr. Wood: Great discussion, folks. Thanks.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Mr. Wachter: Perry and I are doing a regular review of things to make sure things are running well. There is nothing specific to report today.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. DiPaolo: I have some comments. I had brought up, asked some questions in regards to this contract, or this month-to-month that we have with Parker Philips. I believe, and this is my own opinion, but I think we spend too much money a month on different things that could be going to other possible things. Three thousand dollars per month, \$36,000 a year, for somebody to write a news release or send out emails. Basically, the County has the same position there that all County departments can use. Like I said, I don't think \$36,000 a year, I think we could be using that some other place.

And no disrespect to Tammi, but she's almost making \$45,000 a year. We only have three people in the Authority. I mean, if there's an email or newsletter to be spent, I don't understand why it can't be sent within. Eighty-one thousand dollars a year, the \$36,000 we're paying and then of course Tammi's salary, I think that's a lot of money for basically just news releases and emails.

At this time, I would like to make a motion that we end the services with Parker Philips to try to save that money and do something else with it. And that's my opinion. I don't know who Parker Philips is – I have no idea who they are. But that's my motion that I would like to make.

Mr. Wachter: So, in order to entertain that motion, we first have to take a motion to amend the agenda.

Mr. DiPaolo: Okay.

Mr. Wachter: So, you would make a motion to amend the agenda to terminate the Parker Philips contract.

Mr. DiPaolo: Okay. I make a motion to amend the agenda to terminate the Parker Philips contract.

Ms. Loll: I second that motion.

Mr. Barney: There's a motion and it's been seconded. Is there any discussion?

Mr. Cleaver: Mr. Chairman, does she have a contract? Isn't it month-to-month?

Dr. Wood: Yes, it's month-to-month.

Mr. Cleaver: I just wanted that clarified.

Mr. Wachter: So, this is the motion to add it to the agenda.

Mr. Winschel: Dom, you had said, and you've been on the Board longer than I have, but you don't know what she does. Perry, per the conversation we had over the phone, I see some of the things she does. Would it make sense to have her come in and talk to explain to us exactly what we're getting for the dollars we spend per month? I see the notes in here that she met with Perry and

things. It looks like she worked on the Annual Report, and phone calls and discussions. But \$3,000 a month . . .

Dr. Wood: Okay, so I'll defend it. For an organization our size, we have three employees. We're putting out the same amount of grant dollars that the Erie Community Foundation is with 15 employees. We do this through two key ways. The first is technology, which you see the memberships we have with various forms of technology in order to automate things. The second thing we do is we use consultants at ECGRA. That's why we have external auditors to do the finances rather than having a controller. Really, an organization handling this amount of money could stand to have a controller, a full-time financial controller. But the Board always opted not to do that. Let's keep the operational expenses down.

We need a communications strategy to be transparent, have accountability, be open to the public. We could go hire a different person every time we wanted to do things like the Annual Report and other special reports that we do, but to reduce it just down to press releases and press conferences, I think, misses the point of the overall communications strategy.

That being said, sure I'll take a full-time employee to do our communications. I'm not going to use the County's communications officer for that; it doesn't make sense. I doubt they would allow us to, by the way.

Ms. Loll: Yeah, they would.

Dr. Wood: It's not going to work, Carol.

Ms. Loll: I know, but I already asked.

Dr. Wood: It doesn't matter. It's not going to work. We're a completely separate . . .

Ms. Loll: They are available to us.

Dr. Wood: And so, if it was only for press releases, I could see. But there's a bigger communications strategy that needs to take place to make sure that we fulfill our duties to be open, transparent, and accountable to the public and to the people that we serve. So, I would say having some type of communications group is absolutely indispensable for our organization. There isn't an organization or Authority in town that doesn't use some type of agency; they all do, or they have a full-time employee doing it.

Mr. DiPaolo: When I asked the original question, you stated – I said, "What do these people do?" and you said, "News releases and emails." That was the answer.

Dr. Wood: Those are amongst their activities. That's why we put the monthly accounting of what they do in my report.

Mr. DiPaolo: Then why wouldn't you be able to use the County's, if they already have one?

Dr. Wood: We want the County to shape our communications strategy?

Mr. DiPaolo: No, you don't want that.

Dr. Wood: The County has its own communication strategy.

Mr. DiPaolo: I understand that, but what I'm saying is that if in fact that is available, you couldn't sit down with them to let them know what you want as far as what these people are doing the same thing?

Dr. Wood: That's never going to work. We're at a point in time where we're at odds with the Administration and you want me to sit down with their communications director?

Mr. DiPaolo: Well, I mean if you want to save some money, I think you should. At least try it.

Mr. Cleaver: Mr. Chairman? Perry, just break down what this gal does. There is this report, but that's just one month. Give us a breakdown so we can get a better picture of what she does.

Dr. Wood: Her group designed the Annual Report that you see in front of you; that's one of the things that they do. Whenever I do a special report that comes out, they do the graphic design and some of the writing behind it. They might quantify what we're doing with Small Business or Renaissance Block with special reports on those areas. Economic Impact Studies – we've done economic impact studies with them. Now, that's a separate cost, but I'm going to be doing another update with them now that we're 15 years old. Yes, press releases, yes, press advisories, press conferences, writing for the website, interacting with the various media stations on a regular basis, some advising on the e-blasts and emails. Overall, what does a communications strategy look like for an organization of our size? You need professionals to continually help you analyze and execute on it.

Mr. DiPaolo: Who did these notifications for Building a Better Future and the Edinboro/McKean press conference that you had? Tammi is the one that sent them.

Dr. Wood: Yes, she is the one who sent them but if you look at the top, for example the Small Business one, this one that says Parker Philips.

Ms. Loll: Why aren't we doing it in-house?

Dr. Wood: Because we have three employees who are administering the same amount of funds as the Erie Community Foundation does and they are doing it with 15 employees. I'm just trying to put it in context for you. We're highly flexible but we have limits too. It's not an area of expertise for any of the three of us, the area of communications.

Mr. Winschel: Perry, with everything that's being said, it's a month-to-month contract, maybe since Dom asked it, Whitey asked it, do we need to have them come in and talk? And then with Carol saying that Erie County could do it, does it make sense since it is month-to-month to table this for a month to see if they could come in and see if Erie County could come in . . .

Dr. Wood: Gary, I'm not going to work with Erie County on our communications strategy . . .

Mr. Winschel: . . . how about we get a breakdown of . . .

Several people begin speaking, so it's inaudible.

Dr. Wood: I think we can continue to communicate with them and work just fine with them but the idea that we're going to allow them to articulate our communications strategies, that's just not acceptable.

Mr. Winschel: We don't even want to hear what they have to say and how they could help us maybe? If they could work with us on this, especially with EMS.

Dr. Wood: I think that's a really naïve position considering what we've been through with them just over the last six months.

Mr. Winschel: I just don't (inaudible) give it a try.

Dr. Wood: Trying is a two-way system.

Ms. Loll: So, they just compile the information, put it together on paper, and then it gets handed out.

Ms. Hess: Can I add something? My very limited expertise with communications. Communication and marketing, whether it be an organization like this or a school district or whatever the case, it's a very unique skill set. The skill set that, I'm just thinking, the skill set that Perry, Tom, and Tammi has, that's not the skill set that we probably hired them for. There is a skill set that there is a consistent message, there is consistent coloring, there are consistent graphics, all of those things take a consistent skill set. And to now just add another duty to a full list of job responsibilities seems penny wise, pound foolish. It just doesn't make sense to me.

Dr. Wood: You made a comment, too, Dom about Tammi's salary. We've done salary studies for all the positions that we have here at ECGRA; we're somewhere between in-line and below with those averages for our region. The Office Manager position is underfunded, if you ask me, based on what we've seen with other organizations. The Executive Director position is underfunded based on salary studies of other Authorities that manage similar financial assets. But you don't ever hear us talk about that. We come in and we humbly ask for a cost-of-living increase.

That being said, this does feel like a conflict-based discussion rather than one in which we solve . . .

Mr. DiPaolo: Well, you made it a conflict by saying that you don't want to work with the County. You're the one that made it a conflict.

Dr. Wood: I didn't say I don't want to work with the County. I do want to collaborate with the County; I do want to work with the County. I've never refused to collaborate with Doug . . .

Mr. DiPaolo: Well, then why don't you at least look into it?

Dr. Wood: The idea that we're going to have a whole other organization develop and execute on our communication strategy is not realistic.

Mr. DiPaolo: If in fact you explain to them what you want done, they're going to tell you no, they're not going to do it? I mean, you're in charge.

Dr. Wood: I just think it's really naïve considering the relationship that we currently have with the Administration.

Mr. DiPaolo: Then to get back to my original point, you don't want to work with them.

Dr. Wood: I'm clearly working with the Administration on a regular basis.

Mr. DiPaolo: All I did was try to bring this up because I feel that it's a duplication of services. The County has one and you have one. The County is paying their people to do the same thing that this organization is doing. That's why I brought it up. But if you don't want to work with the County or even at least to sit down with them to find out what they can possibly do, I still think it's a waste of money. That's my opinion.

Mr. Wachter: The motion that is on the table right now is the motion to amend the agenda to add the question of whether to terminate the contract. So, I would say unless there are any other comments on whether to amend the agenda, now would be the time to call for a vote. A "Yes" vote would add the question of terminating the contract to the agenda. A "No" vote would not add the contract to the agenda to terminate the contract.

Mr. Winschel: I guess the only other comment I have, Dom, if we terminate that, then we have nothing going forward. Nothing.

Mr. DiPaolo: Well, we have the County available to us.

Mr. Winschel: But do we though?

Ms. Loll: Yeah, we do. I already did my homework.

Mr. Cleaver: Why are you getting the County involved with an Authority? That's like getting the City involved in an Authority. They're separate entities.

Mr. Barney: Correct. They are independent.

Mr. Cleaver: They are separate entities. We run our operation, and we run it good. Perry runs it well. I don't understand why we would do that. End of story.

Dr. Wood: Let's take a roll call vote. If you vote "Yes" on this, we're adding this discussion point to the agenda. If you vote "No", we're not adding it to the agenda.

Roll Call is taken and the motion to add the Parker Philips contract to the agenda fails, with Mr. Cleaver, Ms. Hess, Mr. Winschel, and Mr. Barney voting in the negative. Mr. Winschel gives his reason for his "No" vote after he votes.

Mr. Winschel: I'm going to vote "No", Dom, just because I would like to have them. I don't want to be naked here. I know you say the County, but this is a month-to-month so I would like to hear more about what they can do versus what the County can do. I'm going to vote "No".

Mr. Wachter: That vote was 4-3 to the negative, so the agenda is not amended.

Mr. Winschel: So, with that, can we have them come in?

Dr. Wood: Absolutely.

Mr. Winschel: Can we have both come in? I would like to see what Erie County can do. At least sit and talk to them.

Ms. Loll: I used them when I was on Council.

Mr. Winschel: So, they can make a commitment to the same thing?

Ms. Loll: Sure, they can. It's just compiling . . . would you look at that? (referring to the Annual Report in front of her) You compile the information, you put it on paper, and you make copies. That's all it is.

Mr. Winschel: I understand. But that's just one item. There's press conferences, press releases, etc.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. Resolution Number 9, 2023 – Resolution to renew the existing lease for the period of one (1) year

Dr. Wood reads the resolution.

Mr. Cleaver: And there was an increase, right?

Dr. Wood: There was a small increase.

Mr. Winschel: Ten percent.

Mr. Cleaver makes a motion to renew the lease. Ms. Hess seconds the motion.

Mr. Winschel: Are we going to try to change that before we vote on this because this actually says for one year. Are we going to try to amend that to have that end with our fiscal year of March 31st?

Dr. Wood: I see what you're asking and that's a great question. Why don't we go ahead and approve this, if you're okay with it, and I'll bring back an amendment adding the certain amount of time so that it starts in April of next year.

Mr. Winschel: Or should we just table this for a month until we get it for sure?

Dr. Wood: Yeah, we could do that. It's up to you.

Mr. Wachter: Another option, Perry, would be to approve it subject to a termination that coincides with our fiscal year.

Mr. Oberlander: Is that an advantage over tabling it?

Mr. Wachter: The matter is completed. That way, the authorization is only if you achieve that which you've asked for.

Dr. Wood: Mr. Cleaver could amend his motion to ask for that, if that makes sense.

Mr. Cleaver: I'll do that to add that comment in there.

Mr. Wachter: The motion is to approve the extension of the lease agreement contingent upon the termination date to coincide with our fiscal year.

Mr. Cleaver: Right.

Mr. Winschel: Yes.

Ms. Loll: So, what you're doing, in essence, is extending it for a year?

Mr. Wachter: It would be less than a year.

Mr. Barney: Yes, because it will end at the fiscal year and not go until the time stated.

Dr. Wood: Which would be March 31st.

Mr. Wachter: Kelly, would you amend your second?

Ms. Hess: Yes.

There are no other questions of the resolution. Motion carries 4-3, with Mr. DiPaolo, Ms. Loll, and Mr. Oberlander voting in the negative.

b. Resolution 10, 2023 – Resolution to accept the 2022-2023 Audited Financial Statements

Dr. Wood reads the resolution.

Mr. Cleaver makes a motion to accept the financial statements. Ms. Hess seconds the motion. There are no other questions or discussion of the resolution. Motion carries 7-0.

c. Resolution Number 11, 2023 – Resolution to adopt the 2022-23 Annual Report

Dr. Wood reads the resolution.

Ms. Hess makes a motion to adopt the report. Mr. Cleaver seconds the motion. There are no questions or further discussion of the resolution. Motion carries 7-0.

Mr. Barney: Before I ask for a motion to adjourn, I see we have Mr. Smith on the call and would like to give him the opportunity for comments at this time.

Mr. Smith: Thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for joining late. I just want to convey to the Board that our discussions with communities around the County regarding an ambulance authority are continuing well. I spoke with Deborah Thompson, our consultant, today and they are still conducting interviews with areas in the east. What we are finding is there is significant interest in this ambulance authority idea.

There is some concern in places about the County taking over ambulance, which is not what we want to do, but I understand the concern. It's a natural one, I think. When people even hear the word authority, sometimes, they curl in a lot of blanks. We're hearing those concerns and we're also finding through legal research that there are in fact five ambulance authorities now created in other parts of the state beside Lancaster, which is a positive note that they were created all under the same statute that we're looking at. So, an Emergency Services Authority is not something that in fact is new, it does exist, and it is in practice in other parts of the state.

We're also finding that where we had created these geographical areas that were created under the radio call system, that in fact we're seeing some movement where some of those geographical partners, I'll call them, might change just because of a number of factors. I also see that as positive because that means that people are in fact envisioning this concept in action and thinking about what would work best for their community. Even those who have expressed concern about – let me say it this way. That major concern seems to be about governance of any sort of ambulance authority and so they want to be involved, they want to participate, and that's the vision that we on the County side have.

I feel like there is in fact a lot of momentum going forward and we're going to continue that work. I appreciate your work, Board, and of course the ECGRA team as well. With that, I won't hold you up anymore. Thank you.

Mr. Barney: Thank you, Mr. Smith. Keep us posted and informed. Are there any questions for Mr. Smith? If there is nothing else, I do see where we have next month's Board meeting on August 17th. I look forward to seeing everyone then.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Cleaver moves to adjourn. Mr. Oberlander seconds the motion. Meeting is adjourned at 9:28 am.