



Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority

Minutes of the Board of Directors' Meeting

May 16, 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 May 18, 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 8:39 am.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Barney, Mr. Cleaver, Mr. DiPaolo, and Mr. Oberlander are present in person. Ms. Hess, Ms. Loll, and Mr. Winschel are present via Zoom. Councilwoman Mary Rennie and Mr. Wachter are present via zoom. Dr. Wood is 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 – April 2023

Mr. Cleaver makes a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Mr. Oberlander seconds the motion. There is no discussion on the minutes. Motion carries 7-0.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Mr. DiPaolo: Perry, did you meet with the County yet? I know we said at the last meeting that you would be.

Dr. Wood: Yes. In fact, Doug is here and will be talking about that today.

Mr. DiPaolo: I was just curious to find out. Very good.

Mr. Wachter: Dale, both Carol and Mary have comments they wanted to give. The fact that there are three members here who can't communicate, it's just not going to work. What I can try to do here is put my speakerphone up to my computer and let them interact through that; let's see if that will work. Otherwise, I'm not sure if we're going to be able to continue with the meeting. So, let's try this. Carol, you can give your comment here and see if they can here you?

Ms. Loll: I'll give it a try. The minutes of April 20 it was stated by Ms. Hess that "that to support things like personnel, from some of the things that I'm hearing on the news, that to me is a slippery slope that once you start giving money towards that you're signing up forever." To which Mr. Barney responded, "It used to be when . . . "

Mr. Barney: Excuse me Carol. We're beginning to correct the IT problem here so that everybody will be able to hear.

Ms. Loll: Okay.

Mr. Wachter: I'll hang up the phone.

Ms. Michali: Carol, can you hear us?

Ms. Loll: I can hear you.

Mr. Barney: We can hear you now.

Ms. Loll: Is it my turn to speak?

Mr. Barney: Yes, let's move on.

Ms. Loll: In the minutes of April 20 it was stated by Ms. Hess that "that to support things like personnel, from some of the things that I'm hearing on the news, that to me is a slippery slope that once you start giving money towards that you're signing up forever." To which Mr. Barney responded, "It used to be when agencies were requesting money through grants, we saw to it that it wasn't for increasing their personnel or paying for staff. It was for paying for things that were concrete. So, this would be different than what we had done in the past."

My question is, I think I then checked on the Beehive grants and I looked at the one we're talking about in today's resolution 8, and all of them, except for the Idea Lab, has monies in the budget for personnel. The Idea Lab does have professional services in their budget. I only checked on them, but I'm sure that we will find other grants that have put money towards personnel. My point is, I don't think we can put regulations on some grants and not others. We need to be consistent. That's the comment I have on that particular subject.

Then I have one more comment. The other comment is, when I was appointed to the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, I was given the Economic Development Financing Law. Is this the law that we are following to decide to vote on grants? And are there any other guidelines that we are to follow?

Mr. Wachter: I can answer that second question for you. So, the Horse Racing and Development Act establishes how monies initially are to be spent through municipal grants. But it allows, if the money is not spent through municipal grants in the first year, then they become unrestricted funds. And once they become unrestricted funds, then they are to be used pursuant to the Economic Development Financing Law and the allowances thereunder.

All the monies that we use are one year out, so they are all unrestricted. The reason for that is because in 2010, there was an Erie County Court of Common Pleas settlement agreement between multiple parties including the County and the Gaming Authority, which laid out that process to have those monies go from restricted in terms of municipal grants to unrestricted in terms of general grants to use under the Economic Development Financing Law. That is why also there is a specific percentage of monies every quarter that are spent specifically to what are known as the settlement communities, is because that is then dictated pursuant to that settlement.

So, there's a lot of history working into this, but ultimately, yes, the Economic Development Financing Law is the end law that we're following when we're making grant determinations here at the Gaming Authority.

Ms. Loll: Okay. Thank you. That answers my question. The other part that I brought up really doesn't have a question to it. I just thought we should stay consistent with whether we're going to do personnel or pay for certain items or not. Thank you.

Mr. Barney: Thank you, Carol. Are there any other comments at this time? Are we going to hear from Mary? Mary, would you like to go now, or would you like to go during the County Council's time frame?

Ms. Rennie: I didn't realize Council had its own time frame. I will go during the County Council time frame. Thank you.

COMMENTS BY THE CHAIR

Mr. Barney: I would just like to say thank you to everyone who accepted their positions. I look forward to, let's say, a very productive year.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Although there are members of the public present via zoom, there are no public comments at this time.

PRESENTATIONS

- a. Bodhi Gardens – Michael Shannon, Dave Robinson, Amanda Hines, Ashley Lawson

Mr. Shannon: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Mike Shannon; I am the CEO and founder of Bodhi Garden Initiative. I'm going to try and do this really fast because I've been allotted 30 minutes and I don't want to go over that time frame.

As you can see, we're multifaceted and we'll get into that in a little bit. In 2020, Bodhi was a class project of mine. I went back to Mercyhurst University for my junior and senior

years. In May, two years ago, this was presented to the Beehive Innovation Showcase as a 5-year concept plan. Right now, we're on year four of that first concept plan timeline; there is a new timeline in those packets that we've changed to. Since May of two years ago, we have become a state level nonprofit and a federal nonprofit.

Use of indoor hydroponic gardening at a crisis level facility is something that nobody has done before. We collected two sets of data on that, and it plays into our veteran suicide initiative as well. Our Board of Directors: Ashley Lawson is here today, controlling the PowerPoint, Amanda Hines is over there, and my CFO, unfortunately, could not be here today; he had some prior plans.

Feed Erie – a component and one of the things that we do. As all of you know, Erie has a lot of food deserts, poverty, food insecurity; nearly 12% of Americans, roughly 38 million people, live in food insecure households. As far as veterans go, post-911 veterans and women veterans face the highest rates of food insecurity. There is another little thing that goes along with that - as the numbers of veteran suicides overall start to decline, the number of female veteran suicides, homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction is rising.

Food deserts in Erie, PA, as of today with the data that we have, there are 20 food deserts within the city limits. You can see the quote from our friend Alex at the Health Department about that. County-wide, there are 24 food deserts. And as you see, there's a huge one right up there in New York State that isn't too far away. Those people are either going to Chautauqua or Harborcreek to get food.

The Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority is where we will be making our home if everything goes according to plan. There is a big veteran component to this, and Amanda will get into what we're doing with the food production, but the veteran component and the community engagement component play a huge role in what we're going to be doing down there.

Ms. Hines: With this type of growing system that we're going to be doing, we're going to be able to supply the residents of Erie with a lot of food that they normally typically wouldn't be able to have access to. And we also use 90% less water than traditional farming, how we will be growing these towers. We are also going to be having farmers markets monthly that people will have access to be able to in order to supply them with this type of food.

This is our floor plan at EMTA – this just gives you an idea. Every circle that you see on the paper represents a tower that we'll be using to grow. This gives you an idea of some of the food we will be able to produce. We are going to have 11 towers with cherry tomatoes that will give us 44 pints a week, 11 towers of beefsteak tomatoes that will produce 176 tomatoes a week, 8 towers of peppers at 80 peppers a week, 8 towers of cucumbers at 160 cucumbers a week, 42 towers of strawberries at 84 pints a week of strawberries.

Also, in the middle of winter we will be growing year-round. Leafy greens will have 21 towers and we'll be able to get 100 bunches a week of leafy greens and 63 towers of lettuce, which is 924 heads of lettuce a week. So, this is a tremendous amount of food that we'll be able to supply to Erie County.

Mr. Shannon: In case you're wondering why Ms. Hines is doing this, she is literally the best independent hydroponic grower in Erie County. She has been running No Dirt Farms for five years. She absolutely knows what she is doing.

Some of the notable funders that we're talking to are Erie Community Foundation, Erie Insurance, Erie Bank, Marquette Savings Bank, and Curtze Food Services. What we're looking for is gap funding. We need equipment still; we need propagation equipment, we need growing nutrients, supplies, and we're also going to hire three veterans that will help this

operation succeed. We will need help with propagating, harvesting, running the market, cleaning. There is a lot that goes into this operation.

Our new five-year timeline - once construction is completed at EMTA we will ramp up production every month until we get to 100%. Honestly, this timeline is already outdated, and I only did it like three months ago. Once we have a fully operational farmers market, we will judge what's being bought, not bought, see what the community wants more of or maybe something different. That's the beautiful thing about this; we can change crops in and out at will.

Year three – city expansion. There have been talks; the foundations are already being laid for our expansion plans and quadrupling our growth, which would bring us up to 94,500 heads of lettuce a week possibly. That can feed a whole county. We hope for County expansion eventually, and as long as I have 4,500 heads of lettuce, I'm going to need to distribute it. Are we opening farmers markets in the County? Are we doing distribution days? What are we doing? There are a lot of options there.

This is our community engagement section. As I said, we came out of the Beehive; we came out of the Innovation Lab out at Mercyhurst University, which you are all very familiar with the Beehive Network.

How that plays a role into Bodhi is this – our sustainability is extremely important; the sustainability issues across the board is extremely important. As Amanda said, we use 90% less water than traditional farming, but we're still running the best (inaudible) 14 to 16 hours a day. How do we reduce that? Can we even recycle the remaining 10%? What I'm looking at and what the discussions have been with Penn State over the past few weeks is a combined project. As far as I know it's never happened before, and Senator Kelley's office was extremely interested in this. We're looking at a combined project with Pitt, Penn State, and Allegheny. The way I'm seeing it right now is we go through Penn State School of Business, the results of that go into Pitt and Allegheny, and the results of that go back into Penn State's engineering school. Allegheny is in the top three sustainability schools in the country, they bounce back and forth between one in Washington and one in Northern California. We are always going to have a connection with Mercyhurst; Bodhi did earn us a Catherine McCauley award.

Some of the places we're established at - Sarah Reed Children's Center, Early Connections in Erie, Perseus House, MCRC, Mercy Center for Women, and Lake Shore Community Services. Mental health plays a huge role in what we have been doing and what we are going to do.

Pennsylvania is the number four state in the country as far as veteran population goes. As you can see with the graph on the bottom right, "22 a Day" was a cute little catchphrase to get people on board with veteran suicide. It hasn't been 22 a day for a very long time. If you look at the numbers for 2020, the Army alone was over 36 a day, Marine Corps was over 33 a day, and the average was over 28 a day.

Allegheny Health Network, our friend Nina Ferraro is in charge of AHN Behavioral Health for Erie County right now and is very excited to work with Bodhi. Peru – we are program partners with Pitt-Peru and their veteran suicide initiative. It's a fantastic relationship; one we're very proud of. UPMC Safe Harbor - as we said in the beginning, we are the first nonprofit company ever to record the effects of indoor gardening on crisis-level patients and when you think of crisis-level patients, most veterans can be considered crisis-level upon exit from the service due to the suicide rates, homelessness rates, drug and alcohol rates, etc. We have been with them for two years now.

It has taken me two years, but we finally got a garden inside the Soldiers & Sailors Home. The veterans are extremely excited about it; they plant, they grow, they harvest, it

goes directly to the Soldiers & Sailors kitchen, and back out onto the salad bar that day. There is a mindfulness aspect to that which I will get into in a second. We are also partners with the Erie Vets Center; they have two gardens now. I met with Sondra and her new counselor two days ago.

We're working with Pitt-Peru to develop a survey that will be on a QR code that we'll leave at the Vet's Center and at the Soldiers & Sailors, as well as other areas that we have gardens at. The purpose of this is to collect data on the effects of our gardens on our veterans and other people. We'll ask, "Is this helping you? What was your first reaction to this?" etc. The more data that we collect, the more legit that we become. We already have some data now.

At EMTA, we're going to house Feed Erie, we're going to employ veterans, we're going to provide community engagement through volunteerism. What that means is Marquette, Erie Insurance, they all want to get involved, right. Maybe Tuesday's will be Marquette's day to come and volunteer at the Grow-Op; we will combine that with a few of the veterans at the Soldiers & Sailors. When we all work together, it makes us all better.

We will also offer classes. What are you going to do with all that lettuce and tomatoes and cucumbers that you buy? Amanda is going to teach you how to cook it, we're going to teach you how to can it, we're going to teach you how to utilize what you have; the mindfulness, the cooking, the food. My parents were first generation immigrants and we always had gardens, my grandmother always used to can, there was always food around. Let's teach these people how to do that; how to become better people and how to help yourself.

That's a lot of information. This has been two years' worth of work.

Dr. Wood: Thank you for that presentation. We're going to move into questions here and let me tee one up. I get the concept – you're growing indoor food, there is a heavy veteran component to it; is this new facility at EMTA a progression? Did you start with small gardens around the community and now you're realizing that you need to be in one facility in order to mass produce?

Mr. Shannon: It is a progression. We started off as simply an idea to help veterans to bring gardening indoors to help veterans. From there, we began to realize about the food deserts. I didn't know about food deserts until I went back to Mercyhurst. I grew up in the county and we always had gardens. But going through Mercyhurst University's Social Work program, I learned about a lot of this stuff and it really shocked me.

Being introduced to Amanda a little over a year ago, the dream started becoming a reality. We found someone that could operate this on a high level. This isn't a one and done deal. This is our large pilot sight and like I said, we have begun laying the foundations for those expansion plans. So, going from one garden at Western Behavioral Health Crisis to over 100 in just over a year is fantastic. The number of people that we're going to be able to help in a lot of different ways, like I've said since the beginning, Bodhi was built just to help people. That's it. A lot of people in a lot of different ways.

Dr. Wood: I'll just make one note to the Board, which is I did visit Amanda's vertical growing operation in Fairview Township with the Director of Veterans Affairs for the County who was very excited about it. Could you talk a little bit about the relationship there with the Veterans Affairs Office?

Mr. Shannon: Absolutely. Joe is a fantastic guy. We've had a relationship for about a year and a half. He has been very, very supportive of this, not just from the veteran aspect but his daughter works in D.C. for SNAP, I believe, so he is very aware of the food issues across the country, not just the county. Joe has suggested getting veterans that are going through veteran's court right now, those that have been through hard times and are trying to rebuild their lives. We said he could bring a few of them down and we'll give them a job at Bodhi, we'll teach them some skills, we'll teach them whatever they want. Like I said, that community engagement side of things is huge – bringing veterans and nonveterans, the citizens, I think is a fantastic part of this. Joe is real excited.

Ms. Loll: I was wondering about the location of distribution. Do you have sites available and are you going to use the food pantries?

Mr. Shannon: Like Amanda stated, we're going to be operating a farmers' market out of there weekly eventually. EMTA connects directly with three food deserts. Being a transportation hub, people can obviously take the bus in from the county and other parts of the city. So, we feel that being located at the 100 block of East 14th is a perfect location for the farmers' market. We have had conversations with other Erie groups like EDDC, EDP, and those organizations and they're all on board with that. Emily, the new CEO of Erie Downtown Partnership, wants us to work with her farmers' markets and develop a relationship that way as well. If we do have an overabundance of food that doesn't get sold at our farmers' market at EMTA, there are plans to get rid of the food.

Ms. Loll: What are those plans?

Mr. Shannon: We have had a conversation with Hamot Health Foundation. Penn State Behrend is housing our equipment, we have \$100,000 worth of grow equipment in the warehouse right now with \$100,000 worth of the best grow aides that you can buy. Hamot Health Foundation has simply said they want to come down and buy the food and give it away. We're also very close to the St. Martin Center, the Erie City Mission, etc.

Mr. DiPaolo: What's your connection with Second Harvest Food Bank, or do you have any at all?

Mr. Shannon: We have a relationship with Second Harvest. Nia is head of Behavioral Health at AHN now and sits on the Second Harvest Board. We have talked to them about how they want to proceed. They do buy food; we do give food. There is a relationship there.

Mr. DiPaolo: Do you know how many food pantries there are in Erie County?

Mr. Shannon: About eight?

Ms. Lawson: Sixty plus.

Dr. Wood: Can you talk for a few minutes on where you're at with financing? Who else has provided financing and what are you looking for from us? This obviously is the first in a series of conversations to get you introduced to the Board.

Mr. Shannon: We received a pretty substantial grant from the American Rescue Plan; through the City of Erie we received a \$250,000 grant, which was the major building block for Bodhi. Like I said, we have had conversations with Curtze, Erie Insurance, Marquette has made a substantial donation, Erie Bank is very interested, and the Erie Community Foundation's grant ends on the 28th of this month, I believe, but we're very positive about that one.

What we need is the equipment to finish this grow to makes this grow be the best we can. We're looking for about \$200,000. Due to the timelines, we don't have anything set in stone. EMTA's architect said 16 -18 weeks max to design it. And being a federal facility, they have to bid out the construction. Then, how long is the construction going to take? Worst case scenario, absolute worst case, we start growing in January, which means we need to order the remainder of our equipment by September to make sure that it gets there in time. So, the \$200,000 would cover the gap between the future funding that we will get from the other organizations. Like I said, that is going to ensure that our grow is very successful.

We're going to make a dent in things. We're a game-changer and I don't have a problem saying that.

Dr. Wood: I know that you're a 501c3. Are you prepared to take financing on as well as loans? You're obviously set up to take loans.

Mr. Shannon: We've talked about half loans, half grants and we're absolutely fine with that. My CFO is very good at what he does; he's a Penn State graduate, he retired as the CFO at the Early Childhood Development Center. If you all remember what happened with Conneaut Lake Park and all that happened with that and Kim Thomas, Rich was the CFO for that as well. So, he is very well established within the community. So, to answer your question directly, yes, we are prepared.

Dr. Wood: This question is for Amanda. After you've taken a look at the EMTA facility, is it everything that you need as far as an indoor facility goes?

Ms. Hines: I believe that it is. They are working really well with us to be able to develop it to be pretty much exactly what we need. Our HVAC system is very important piece of equipment to keep our humidity where it needs to be; our temperature and everything. So, we are working with their architects, they found out exactly what we need to have a successful grow and they are willing to work with us on that.

Dr. Wood: I ask the question because I'm assuming, when I went to your operation, it's like a greenhouse and this is in a major transit building.

Ms. Hines: There are many different ways of growing; I've grown in both. It's actually a little bit easier to grow in a facility. In a greenhouse, there is a lot of fluctuation that you really can't control; in the summer it's 115° in my greenhouse, in the winter I keep it at 65° because that's all I can afford to do because it's very expensive to grow here in the winter. In an enclosed, controlled environment it's a little easier because you don't have those huge fluctuations in temperature and humidity. So, yes, I think it's going to be a great location for us.

Mr. DiPaolo: I have a question. The \$200,000 you're asking for, does that include wages?

Mr. Shannon: Some of it does.

Mr. Barney: We are approaching the half hour mark. You did a great job. If none of the other Board members has a question, we'll move on. Thank you.

Mr. Shannon: Thank you for your time.

b. EMS Discussion – Doug Smith, Jessica Horan, John Grappy

There are technical difficulties getting the Power Point to show on the screen.

Dr. Wood: I will make sure that everyone who is online gets a copy of the presentation in your email so you have it for your records.

Mr. Smith: Good morning, Board. I appreciate you giving us some time this morning to talk about this EMS crisis, and I call it a crisis because that's where we are. We've got areas of the County that are struggling to provide ambulance service to their residents, we've got an old model in place in many places that can just no longer function any longer. You've probably all read in the news, for instance, about what's happening with departments up in Summit that are well-funded – they are having to carry a big load in the communities that are not able to support fire and ambulance as well. This is causing burn-out across the board where we've got pockets of large involvement, well-funded departments, well-funded EMS, and they are being stretched. I'm going to let John and Jessica give you a little better thumbnail of the problems than I am giving you now and then we will move this along. Obviously, I will give you a lot of time for questions because we don't want to do too much here too fast.

Ms. Horan: I'm Jessica Horan, the Planning Director for Erie County. Back in 2018-2019, the County set up a committee to look at the crisis facing both volunteer fire and EMS. Our committee is made up of municipal leaders, fire and EMS leaders, and County experts around public safety. What our committee started to do was engage municipalities in understanding the obligations that they have to provide emergency services in their communities.

In doing so, we started to learn about the crisis. This crisis is not just in Erie County, it is statewide and nationwide. Back in 1970, there were 300,000 volunteers working in volunteer fire and EMS; today there are somewhere around 35,000 folks that are working in this field, both career and volunteer. And what happens with that, with declining availability of resources of individuals either career or volunteer, there are fewer number of people to respond in your time of need. We know that in public safety there are somewhere around 50,000 calls for service every year, and out of 50,000 calls, 80% of those are for EMS. So, that's someone needing an ambulance 80% of that 50,000 calls that come in.

We know that our EMS providers in Erie County, as throughout the state, they are in crisis. And one of the things that has exacerbated the crisis for EMS was COVID. So, between the folks that were working in this career before - low pay, high stress and high turnover, being a paramedic or EMT is a very difficult job. Those folks are low paid and then you add the layer of COVID with folks dropping their licenses, not continuing to provide EMS, not continuing to be providers of EMS because of the stress and the fear of COVID from going out in those communities; the exposures that you would get it and dangers to your family if you would bring that back. So, folks are leaving that career at a higher pace now than they have ever been.

Fewer people are becoming EMTs and paramedics than ever; we're actually losing more. We are actually hemorrhaging folks in this career. So, what do our providers have to do to try to keep people working in this career? They have to increase wages. That has

added an additional stress on the providers. Additionally, they have low reimbursement rates that are not covered by Medicare and Medicaid. So, when you pick up a patient who is Medicare eligible or Medicaid eligible, those particular insurances – one pays 65% of the cost of that call, the other one only pays 41%. So, every time that ambulance goes out and takes a Medicare or Medicaid patient, they're losing money on that call. So, how do our EMS providers stay in this arena where they're losing money every time they take out a call?

What we've talked about and what we've educated our municipalities on, and I worked for the Council of Governments for seven years, so I worked with the municipalities, is that EMS is not free. There is a cost to ensure you have that ambulance come to your door when you need it. And that obligation needs to fall upon local government to support those agencies that provide that service. Those agencies, by themselves, are financially insolvent; they are unable to recoup the cost of readiness through patient billing and through Medicare and Medicaid. Those dollars just don't equal what it costs for them to have staff in the stations ready to go when called. The only way you could recoup, potentially, is if you were out in the field all the time answering calls and the turnaround to assist in calls to the hospitals and things like that just won't allow for that. In order to have the cost of readiness to have your ambulances ready, your supplies ready, your staff there, you need subsidy to do that.

We've been engaging our municipal leaders to put dollars into their EMS providers in exchange for an expected level of service. We've been asking them to do that for the better part of three years. And what we're looking for now is a partnership with ECGRA to help us support those agencies to ensure the long-term sustainability. Our County Executive has looked into a model, an EMS Authority model. That model has been tested out in Lancaster County; there are also multi-municipal emergency service models that exist throughout Pennsylvania and here locally in the Albion, Cranesville, Conneaut, and Elk Creek areas. Those models are where the municipalities group together and use investment of their municipal dollars to support an EMS provider to ensure that EMS provider is available to them and their citizens 24/7/365 in exchange for contractual obligations and payments from the municipality to do that.

What we're looking at in terms of the County is an opportunity for the County and ECGRA to take leadership in this area. There are 38 municipalities and not every municipality has the capacity to solve this problem. Also, in terms of the work, and the amount of need there is in our community, every single municipality does not have to have their own dedicated fire or EMS department; there is just not the need for that and there isn't the financial ability to support 38 individual silos of departments. What we're trying to do is to help them to talk regionally and work with each other. So, for instance, one provider for four communities or one provider for ten communities and we all support that provider to ensure that they are able to do that.

So, what does that model look like on the Authority's side? It looks like a commitment between both the municipal contribution and the County and/or Gaming Revenue contributions to make that whole. Those providers know they need subsidy to exist. We have providers who, a couple of weeks ago, unable to make payroll. They support ten municipalities, and their Board members sit at a table and say that they need \$45,000 to pay their EMTs for the week and they don't have it. But you're going to want that ambulance when you call 911 to come and where are we going to get it from to support those people and pay their payroll.

The idea of the model is where the County and ECGRA work together and really EMS reform to ensure that EMS is sustainable in Erie County. The expectation is that this is a partnership. EMS is not free; I say it all the time in municipalities. EMS is not free. You cannot expect this service for free. You have to put something in; the County has to put something in, or Gaming Revenue has to put something in to make this whole. That's what we

see. We really see that Erie County can be a model throughout the state. We've worked with the Borough of EMS very closely at the state level and talked to them about best practices and things we're doing in Erie County. We're analyzing the data and performance of every provider every single month. We look at whether they're dropping calls, which means they're not answering when dispatched, we look at whether they are out of service which means their doors are closed. If the fire department in your community's doors are closed 95% of the time, you're not getting that service. That isn't acceptable to you as a citizen particularly if you're putting your tax dollars in, and it wouldn't be acceptable to us to invest in agencies that aren't there for their citizens.

So, we want to take more of a high-level look at EMS and develop a model that is sustainable and sets a level of expectation in service delivery for our citizens in their time of need. And we see that as a great opportunity to partner with ECGRA to make those big reforms in this field that will be monumental change for our communities.

Mr. Smith: That was a lot of information. The idea would be that the County would be broken up into five zones; each of those zones would contain some number of municipalities. Currently there are zones already created for 911 radio calls, so that's sort of the basis for these zones. All of those five zones would make up the whole county and so there would be representatives, let's say, from each zone. Let's say there are two – so, you would have ten members of this Authority, they would come from those five zones. They would be municipal officials, supervisors, borough councils, mayors, those sorts of individuals. We want the municipal leaders to be the ones making the decisions on this Authority. They are the ones ultimately that are responsible for fire and EMS in their communities. With them sitting on this Board, they can all talk together and talk as a region of what they need and what the best way is to spend the dollars that are available. Each of those communities will put some money on the table; that is part of the arrangement, that might be through a fee or a tax, but we can't ask those communities to carry that load themselves. Many of them just don't have the money. There is only one Millcreek, there's only one Harborcreek, in between there's a lot of smaller communities that don't have a lot of money.

So, you, the ECGRA Board, in this discussion, we would ask you to interact with this Authority. You would be the gatekeeper of that. We're going to ask you for \$1.5 million annual; that's what I am asking you today for you to consider. You would interact with that Authority, and you would be that gatekeeper for that \$1.5 and they would bring funding requests to you and out of that pot you would approve what you thought was prudent. There would be an interaction there, and as you became more familiar with the whole EMS picture, I think those sorts of things would become far more pressing to you and I think you would become a part of that whole model. We're asking you to be a partner here with your county.

When the Gaming Revenue was created by the state, taxpayers were told that it would be used to offset some of their taxes and some of their costs. Now I understand that you contribute a lot in a lot of different ways to Erie County through grants and through other programs. On your agenda today is an ask for the Earn and Learn Program, formerly Summer JAMS. All of that, we understand, you built that, and it is important to you. But what we're asking you to do is to consider a higher calling today. We really are. We're asking you to think about it in that way – a higher calling to support EMS in your community. I know that a lot of these programs are important to the people who get the money, but I can't imagine that too many things are more important than having the ambulance when you need it.

This is not getting better. This is at a very fragile point. This team that you see here has been tirelessly working on this problem for the last two and a half years. We met with West County Ambulance a couple weeks ago, there's going to be a south county meeting

coming up shortly. We are engaging MacDonald Illig to help us with an authority model; I think most of you know Jim Walczak. I can't think of someone who knows more about those kinds of structures than he does. We're also talking with professionals that help Lancaster County, Rob Brady – he's from Fairview, isn't he?

Ms. Horan: He's working with Fairview on their merger.

Mr. Smith: We are working with people who have knowledge in the field. This is an ongoing solution. Our hope is that we can have a structure ready to go by the end of summer. So, we're not asking you for money today; we're just asking you to think about your place in the community and to help us solve this problem. These funds, along with funds that will certainly come from Erie County as well, are going to subsidize wages, they are going to buy equipment where appropriate, they are going to be to hire professionals where needed.

This is not something that is going to be solved overnight; this is a first step and obviously this is a big change for a lot of people and a lot of communities. There's a lot of tradition when you think about fire and EMS around the County, but unfortunately tradition doesn't pay the bills anymore. But people are open. We found that people across Erie County in those professions and those departments are open to this change, are open to this idea of regionalization and these funds that we're asking for, the funds for instance that County Council approved a couple of weeks ago from gaming, those grant funds are only going to projects that involve regionalization. And it's the same story and it would be the same thing that we would be asking you to consider in your role. We want the money. We can't buy ladder trucks for every community anymore. That model is not working. We need those communities to share that equipment, we need them to share volunteers.

We are only talking about EMS today. At some point, we'll be talking about fire services. But today we'll start with EMS this year, right?

Ms. Horan: That is where the crisis is.

Mr. Smith: I don't know if you have anything to add, John, but at this point I'm going to open it up for questions.

Mr. DiPaolo: What are the five zones?

Mr. Smith: I guess they're really north, south, east, west, and City of Erie.

Mr. DiPaolo: The city. Why would the city be included?

Mr. Smith: Well, at this point, you've got EmeryCare Ambulance serving the city but EmeryCare is asked to go outside city limits because as Jessica pointed out, when there is a 911 call, 911 sends the most appropriate service available. I will say in converse, Dom, Greenfield Township I sending ambulances to the city because there isn't an EmeryCare ambulance available at the moment it is needed. So, the city is part of that discussion because they are part of that 911 service area.

Mr. DiPaolo: What about all the people that belong to EmeryCare that are paying? What happens to them? Are they exempt from another tax?

Mr. Smith: Have you guys considered that?

Mr. Grappy: Do you want me to jump in here?

Mr. Smith: Sure.

Mr. Grappy: Hi. For those of you who don't know me, my name is John Grappy; I'm the Director of Public Safety for Erie County. Public safety has been my life since the volunteer fire service. Approximately two weeks ago, Doug, Jessica, and I had the opportunity to meet for breakfast with your Executive Director and spent a lot of time educating on exactly what the crisis is and what it isn't. I know ECGRA and the Board, and I say this respectfully, funds a lot of worthwhile programs throughout your existence, and I applaud all those efforts. But, in my humble opinion, there is no greater crisis or no greater need than the investment in emergency services.

As Jessica had mentioned, this has been a crisis since 1970. From 1970 up until now, the emergency services, in particular emergency medical services, is on the verge of collapse. When I say collapse, I'm not trying to scare anyone but that's the truth; that's the reality of it. Eighty percent of all 911 calls for fire and rescue and emergency medical services, 80% of calls are medical calls, which in Erie County is somewhere between 40,000 – 50,000 calls annually. Those are the EMS calls.

There are 27 services throughout Erie County; 21 of those are volunteer, which is in crisis. Six of those are providers that are career that provide basic life support and advanced life support. So, what you have read maybe in the newspaper and what you see on TV or electronic media over the last four years that we've been working on this, is the reality that there is a reasonable expectation that when someone calls 911 for medical emergency, 80% of the time there is going to be a trained medical professional, or in other words, an ambulance that's going to be at your doorstep in a reasonable amount of time. I can assure you that's not happening – it's not. There are examples that it takes 30 minutes for an ambulance to arrive at someone's doorstep when someone is having a heart attack.

A real-life example was a couple years ago in the wintertime, you had an older gentleman that was shoveling his sidewalk. He started experiencing difficulty breathing; he was having a heart attack. He didn't know that, but he was having a heart attack. This was a man that was alive and breathing and shoveling his sidewalk. He walks in and tells his wife that he's not feeling well. She calls 911 and while she's on the phone with the 911 call taker, he goes into cardiac arrest. So, we're walking the now-widow how to perform rescue breathing and CPR on her husband. It took 30 exact minutes to get an ambulance to her doorstep. You know what happened when they arrived? He was already deceased. They didn't transport him to the hospital because there was no need at that point. They notified the coroner, the coroner came, and the rest is history.

I'm not trying to scare anybody here, but that's the reality that's happening more common that we're trying to fix and that we're trying to address. With that being said, while all due respect, we're not just looking at ECGRA as far as gaming revenue to make an investment to fix this crisis in emergency services. Jessica detailed that out very well that the municipalities under Pennsylvania law are legally responsible to ensure protection of EMS, fire, and law enforcement. So, right now we are focusing on EMS for this discussion. There has to be buy-in by the 38 municipalities to support emergency services; for one thing, they are legally required to do so.

The model that we're proposing, that the County Executive is leading here, is to establish a municipal authority because the County can't. Currently there is pending legislation so a county can create an EMS and fire authority, but that doesn't exist today. So, there is pending legislation for the County to do that. But we can't wait because the crisis is

real. So, the municipalities could, under the Municipal Authorities Act that was passed years ago, create an EMS Authority – and as Doug said earlier, we will address fire later; they kind of go hand-in-hand, but right now since 80% of the calls are medical, that’s where our focus is – create an authority. We’re going to all five zones to get the buy-in, so all the municipalities opt-in, so you don’t have just Summit Township that’s investing almost a million dollars into Perry Hi-Way Hose Company for Summit Township. We have other municipalities that aren’t making an investment at all and that’s why we’re sending Perry Hi-Way and Greenfield and all these other providers that are available all over the county, including EmeryCare outside of the city and other providers into the city and into Millcreek and Summit and so on and so forth. It’s not uncommon for us to send Perry Hi-Way Hose Company or Millcreek Paramedics all the way out to Springfield or all the way out to Corry or all the way out to North East. This happens on a daily basis because there is limited amount of EMS resources at any given time.

So, what we do is we have the municipalities come together, we’re leading them and guiding them to do so, and establish an authority, a governance model if you will, since we’re legally responsible anyway, and then they contract with the existing designated providers - right now, we will stay focused on EMS – with the standard of care or service model that they expect from this provider to deliver. “This is the standard, this is what we want you to deliver, we’re going to invest in your service as the provider to do that”, whatever that looks like.

But now, as an authority, let’s fast forward, we have all 38 municipalities that established this authority, now yes, they can create a funding model to do so. And then with the municipalities supporting emergency services, so does the county, and then so does ECGRA.

Mr. Barney: You’re speaking of authorities – have all the townships signed on to create an authority?

Mr. Grappy: We’re in the process of doing that. We met with ten municipalities; right now is western Erie County and on June 11th, we’re meeting with the southern municipalities, and then we’re going to east county, and so forth.

Mr. Barney: So, right now, they haven’t agreed to sign on.

Mr. Grappy: We’re working on that.

Mr. Barney: Okay, so that’s in the process. And I do understand the importance and the need being in crisis but from my perspective, I’m going to need more information and we’re going to need to slow down. I think, until I know how many have agreed and signed on, I wouldn’t be doing due diligence without first knowing what we’re giving for the \$1.5. That’s a lot of money and I’m still trying to figure out who we’re going to eliminate – and we may need some suggestions on that. Definitely the Board will look at how we’re going to find some of this money.

And then I need a grant – something is writing, something concrete so the Board can decide and have a session and we can actually look over and pinpoint how things are going to be. I understand that Mr. Smith said that he’s not asking for the money now, but there are a number of things that we would need still in place, other than the fact that “it’s a crisis.” We deal with them a lot. If we don’t fund some of the things we do fund, that group of people will be saying, “it’s a crisis.” We understand that. I’m going to have to take a deep breath and slow down as far as where I’m at in the process.

I know we do have time and we've got Board members that need to go, but I wanted to try and get some of this and get our other business done and keep it moving. I didn't mean to . . .

Mr. Grappy: No, no, no, that's fine.

Mr. DiPaolo: I'd like somebody to answer my question.

Mr. Grappy: I'm going to answer your question right now. The career services like EmeryCare, like Millcreek, like the West County have membership programs and the idea of the membership program is that in the event that you need their service, the membership, let's use EmeryCare, and you need their service, they will accept whatever the insurance reimbursement is as payment in full and they won't bill you for the difference. That's the purpose of the membership. The membership, however, for the members that they have, is not recouping the cost to continue to provide that service for any provider. And this crisis is, by the way, not just with the volunteer providers; it's also with career providers as well.

Mr. DiPaolo: If you put a tax on the City, EmeryCare will go out of business because people will quit. If they know that they are going to have to pay another tax on top of paying EmeryCare for their services. They have a lot of members. If you're going to include Erie in this, who already pays for fire and they're paying separately for EmeryCare. I don't know how that's going to go over.

Mr. Grappy: The City of Erie, and Jessica knows this because she was a city Councilwoman for years, invest millions of dollars in law enforcement and fire, right? They have a paid police department, they have a paid fire department. They invest nothing in emergency medical services – nothing. They designate EmeryCare as their provider for EMS but make no investment and that's what we're talking about. Every municipality needs to make an investment for the County to make an investment and then for ECGRA, as we're asking, to make an investment. That's where the authority model comes in.

Mr. DiPaolo: Well, I think you're going to have a problem with Erie. That's my own opinion.

Mr. Smith: I'm sure you're right.

Mr. DiPaolo: Everybody is getting whacked; they got sewer taxes now, they got extra water, every time you turn around you're getting taxed. And now you're going to get taxed with this? I don't think they'll go for it.

Mr. Smith: We want them to come to the table; that's the starting point.

Mr. DiPaolo: You better get big Joe there, and talk to him about it.

Mr. Smith: We're going to get a couple Joes together on that. We're grateful for the Board's time today and obviously as Chairman Barney indicated, you need more information and we'll provide you with more information and more discussion going forward. Thank you.

Mr. Barney: One last question. Would it be the County that gets the money, or would it be that authority, once it's established, would get the money?

Mr. Smith: It would be the authority.

Mr. Barney: Okay. So, that's not a done deal yet, as far as the authority.

Mr. Smith: That's correct.

Mr. Barney: Are there any other questions from the Board? Hearing none, Perry do you have anything?

Dr. Wood: I'm just trying to process this here. By the end of the summer, we'll have a legal structure, McDonald Illig, under the Municipal Authorities Act. Where does the number \$1.5 million come from? Is it going to match the County's \$1.5, match the municipalities \$1.5, like 1/3, 1/3, 1/3? And is that enough to accomplish servicing the five zones?

Mr. Smith: I don't know if it's enough. I can't speak to that exactly. The number comes from, I guess, the experiences in other parts of the state. We think that there's a study that's going to be ongoing that will I think zero in on a number, an overall cost assessment, and I think once the study is complete and once they study the ambulance providers and make a determination of what might be needed for whether it's subsidizing wages or people or equipment, I think we'll have a better handle on that. Part of my purpose in giving you a number today was to give you a target with the idea that hopefully I wouldn't be coming back in a year and asking you for more. I wanted to give you something. I know it's a big bite today, but this is a big problem and it's not going to go away.

Dr. Wood: So, there is a study in process?

Mr. Smith: Yes.

Dr. Wood: And who is doing the study?

Ms. Horan: Strategy Solutions.

Mr. Smith: I think some of you might know Deborah Thompson; that's her firm. She's done some ambulance consolidations in some parts of the state, so she is familiar with the process.

Dr. Wood: When do you think that will be done?

Ms. Horan: We're targeting August.

Dr. Wood: I think that will help tremendously. Is a business plan part of that study, to say this is what the operations would cost?

Ms. Horan: Yes, absolutely.

Dr. Wood: Okay. That will be valuable; very helpful. You sent me a great Power Point on the Lancaster model, Municipal Emergency Authority of Lancaster County, this requires the authority to be a taxing authority, or a fee-based authority. So, when these ten people come to

the table, two from each zone, are they in essence going to be the ones recommending some type of tax or fee to be created?

Mr. Smith: I would say yes.

Mr. Grappy: Yes.

Mr. Smith: Since they are going to be municipal officials, they are certainly going to be - well, you know whitey, when you're in that elected seat raising taxes is a tough decision – so we think those are the exact right persons to have to make those tough decisions. And they're going to be prudent, we would think.

Dr. Wood: So, this authority would be able to raise a fee through the power of Erie County government? Or would Erie County government have to approve them to do that?

Ms. Horan: Under the authority, the authority would decide itself how they would fund it. In the Lancaster model, they have the assessment of property for their base. But other communities, you can do a millage up to a half mill for EMS, they can all decide on that authority board and the municipalities could make that up to decide how they are going to assess that. So, they can assess a half mill of EMS tax or they could raise a fee (inaudible). That's why we have the Lancaster (inaudible).

Dr. Wood: So, it's either a per person fee or an assessment based on property taxes.

Ms. Horan: So those municipalities would decide how they would assess that fee to their residents.

Dr. Wood: Will Strategy Solutions come up with an answer to that?

Ms. Horan: They will be able to help us find other models so that the authority board would decide which model works best for them.

Dr. Wood: So right now the way it works, and bear with me, you've answered so many of my questions already, is that each municipality is required to provide EMS, police, and fire which means they are required to use their taxpayer dollars to do that. But we're going to shift it to this authority, of which they have representation on, and so they are in essence still fulfilling their obligations, but they're doing it through the authority rather than through their local government.

Ms. Horan: Collectively, just like anything. Collectively ensuring what is required by law as opposed to individually (inaudible).

Dr. Wood: So Mr. Barney's question makes sense, which is how many are on board and the answer I heard is that it's in process.

Ms. Horan: Right. We have been talking about municipal engagement for the better part of three years and this is the next logical step. We've talked to the municipalities about supporting their providers and doing it in a collective way and now this will actually create a formal structure for them to be able to do that. In the small scale, we did that in Albion, Cranesville, Conneautville - create the four municipalities created a commission to work

together and then all four commit their dollars to support the agency in their communities. So, this would be bringing that model County-wide, instead of just in little small groups.

Even in Lancaster County, there are eight municipalities in that group that are working together collectively to work to fund that EMS agency that supports those communities.

Dr. Wood: It's a fantastic model.

Ms. Horan: It's a small model. We want bigger. I want to go big or go home.

Dr. Wood: How long did it take Lancaster to go from zero to sixty?

Mr. Grappy: About two to three years.

Dr. Wood: Theirs took three years but we're going to get ours done in August?

Mr. Grappy: They were really creating the model. We're (many voices talking over each other).

Mr. Grappy: Let me give you an example real quick. Lancaster has 60 municipalities and they have eight in this authority right now. So, same thing. It is going to be fluid as we continue to go around the county, introduce the proposed authority under the Municipal Authorities Act, and gain that support. They are legally required to provide that service but the best model to do that, in our opinion, is an authority model to ensure that service delivery.

Mr. Barney: In line with that question, there's eight. Is that the eight that started originally, or did any other municipality sign on afterwards?

Mr. Grappy: That's the original eight.

Mr. Barney: So really, none of those that hadn't signed on have seen it to be so attractive that they came on board afterwards. At least not yet.

Mr. Grappy: There are considerations, like a wait and see approach a little bit, but yes, I had a conversation with my counterpart in Lancaster County just yesterday and yes, there is additional interest.

Ms. Horan: It's all pretty new, the concept. And the legislation, the state legislators, had looked at creating a specific authority that would pertain to emergency services in last legislative session, so there's been talk about this for the last couple years to have a specific authority for this purpose at the state level but it hasn't passed through the legislators yet. I don't know why.

Dr. Wood: I was going to ask that because this is a hot topic at the state assembly level.

Ms. Horan: It is. It's a new concept of how to ensure EMS throughout the state.

Mr. Smith: I think one factor to consider, Mr. Barney, is that when you think of Lancaster County, and this is a far wealthier area than Erie County, a more populous area, we believe that once this gets going, this will be a much more attractive model, membership will be far

more attractive to our small communities than perhaps more wealthy communities in Lancaster County. There is a significant difference.

Mr. DiPaolo: One quick question, but I don't want to keep this going. You said Summit had a billion dollars' worth of whatever they're doing up there, as far as what they're doing with their EMS. What if they don't want to jump into this? What would happen? As far as tax, what happens to the tax in Summit if they say they don't want to get into this, and they'll just do it on our own?

Ms. Horan: Summit is already doing . . . the Township of Summit is already wholly supporting Perry Hi-Way Hose Company by themselves. Every EMS provider is licensed by the state; the state requires that ambulance to go wherever it is needed throughout Erie County. So, Perry Hi-Way cannot say that they will only service Summit Township. So what is happening is that ambulance is going to Waterford or it's going to Springfield or Union City and the Summit Township supervisor is saying, "We're paying for it. Why is it going everywhere?" We can't control that. That's state licensure and so the best thing for Summit to do is to be part of the collective and then other municipalities dollars would help to offset the cost of that ambulance in Summit. It's the best model.

Dr. Wood: And Dom, just so you know, Perry Hi-Way Hose has a \$2 million budget. Basically \$1 million comes from Summit Township taxpayers and \$1 million comes from us. So, we're paying for half of that.

Mr. DiPaolo: I understand that.

Mr. Barney: We do have people on zoom. I would like to open it up to them in case they have any questions. Councilwoman Rennie, did you have a question?

Ms. Rennie: I was actually saving my comment for the Council portion of the meeting. I will wait for that, so I don't keep you too far off track.

Mr. Barney: Was there a question specific to this presentation?

Ms. Rennie: Some of my comments have to do with this but it's a little bit broader than that, so I will save my comments for later in the meeting.

Ms. Loll: I do have one comment. If you remember when this whole thing was formed and this Gaming Authority started and ECGRA started and stuff, that money actually belongs to the residents of Erie County, the people that you're talking about trying to help. So, you need to be very careful to make sure that it does get back to them if they need it.

Mr. Barney: We feel that when we do what we do with the various groups that come before us and we approve their grant or their request, it's getting back to those in Erie County.

Ms. Loll: Right. But this is something too that would go directly to them in a case of need.

Mr. Barney: We haven't said we wouldn't, it still needs further discussion.

Ms. Loll: I know that. I just wanted to remind you.

Mr. Barney: I don't need reminding on that. Thank you.

Mr. Cleaver: I need to hear a better explanation of Dom's question about the City of Erie.

Mr. Barney: Right, because the City isn't going to be on board, not if there's another fee. And if we're the largest one that would be a part of it.

Mr. DiPaolo: I'm sure they'll try to work it out.

Ms. Horan: The City needs to be a partner because when EmergencyCare started, the city was no contractual expectation. And if EmergencyCare decides they're not going to serve the city, there's nothing the city can do about it. EmergencyCare is not contractually in a commitment to provide services to Erie.

Mr. DiPaolo: Then fire departments could get their ambulances back.

Ms. Horan: And how do they afford that? That will cost them \$26 million just like the fire department cost and the citizens paying for it. And the memberships, under the authority umbrella, everyone who is part of the authority, the agencies that are serving the municipalities in the authority, could all have memberships which would be uniform memberships across Erie County so no matter if you bought a membership under this authority, it could be used for whoever that provider would be. You can't guarantee that just because you belong to EmergencyCare and you live in the City, as I do, I can't guarantee that EmergencyCare is going to be the one who answers. If EmergencyCare is committed on calls downtown and I need somebody, Perry Hi-Way is coming for me and my membership to EmergencyCare will not pay that. But if we use an authority model, that can be part of the authority that you belong to the authority and your membership translates to whatever provider is coming for you and that supports our folks that are already doing that.

Dr. Wood: Can I just make one last summarizing comment? I want to say thank you to the Director of Administration, the Director of Planning, and the Director of Public Safety. I did have a fantastic meeting with you on a topic that I'm not well-versed on and you guys really helped me put it into perspective and understand it. I feel like I can do a much better job as we move forward.

Ms. Horan: We appreciate all your engagement and understanding what's going on here and what we're asking for.

Mr. Smith: I know it's not easy. Thank you.

Mr. Barney: Thank you. Now, let's move along and get some other things out of the way.

Ms. Hess and Mr. Winschel left the meeting during presentations.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Treasurer's Report: Mr. Cleaver: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I reviewed this month's Treasurer's Report; it's all fine and in order. We're two months into the year and everything is on the up and up. We're not overspent; we're not underspent. We're in good shape for the first two months.
Mr. DiPaolo 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 5-0.
- b. Strategic Planning Committee: No meeting was held so there is nothing to discuss.
- c. Update from County Council: Mr. Shank is not present, so Councilwoman Mary Rennie has some comments.

Ms. Rennie: Thank you. I appreciate the time to speak. I know this has already been a fairly long meeting. I would like to extend my thanks to the ECGRA Board members and your service on behalf of all Erie County. Mr. DiPaolo, in particular, I want to recognize; he was appointed by my predecessor, Mr. Fiore Leone. I'd like to recognize his capable representation for District 3.

In reading over the agenda and minutes, I asked for time to speak today because I am concerned about some of the discussions and some of the things that are being said to this Board. Some of you know me already, Carol and Whitey in particular; I've worked with you for years. I don't think you can say I'm a progressive person politically or governmentally; I'm actually fairly conservative. And over the years there have been different things that I haven't always agreed with as far as funding projects for ECGRA, but that sort of thing is expected – we don't have to agree. The fact, right now however, is that County structure and power systems, they have been under stress and strain lately and I need to underscore the fact that it's very important that Boards and Authorities operate independently and have that internal knowledge and awareness that they are independent. They are formed by County Council, whether that is a County Department or a Board or Authority Commission; they don't exist as an extension of the Administration nor do they exist as an extension of anyone on Council. You don't represent me, necessarily. You're on this Board for the outlook, the experience, the knowledge that you have, and you are there as public servants and you should be respected for what you bring to the Board. I know I do respect that.

I have a lot of concern right now because Erie County Council has been told from day one of this particular Administration that the county is flush with money and that the Gaming Revenue fund is also flush with money. The acceptance of reports from the Finance Director at virtually every meeting of County Council - all cash basis reports - which if you are a past County Council member, you know that we operate on an accrual basis. You don't look at funding without knowing what your gets are and your liabilities are on the other side. This uncertainty, this deficit spending, resulted in our financial advisor quitting on us, Maloney & Reed, after 40 years. They are a well-respected firm.

With regards to public safety funding, I will remind you that public safety was funded under the County's American Rescue Plan dollars. And it was funded capably. The outlying municipalities were told essentially that they were being cheated and that funding was retracted. Later, it was given to other big-ticket projects. But if there was a crisis, which there is, in the emergency and firefighting operations, then why was the funding that was there, why was that removed and why was that retracted?

If the County coffers are now so flush with money, why are County department heads coming, cap in hand, to ask for ECGRA funding? That should be a big question that each of

you has. I've looked at some of the studies that have been put out on funding of EMS and firefighting services. It is a nationwide problem, certainly a statewide problem, and it isn't going to be cheap. Some of the studies that I have seen from counties that do fund various, either fully-funded programs for EMS and firefighting or hybrid programs paying many millions of dollars on an annual basis for the services that they provide. I also find it hard to believe that we could make any sort of contribution to an Authority when there is no consistency presently on what the residents are charged throughout Erie County. It isn't just Erie City that doesn't pay for EMS services; there are other municipalities that do not charge, as they are required to do, they do not charge their residents which is why the tax rate is low. For instance, in Harborcreek where I used to live, and I pay so much more now in the City of Erie now that I live here.

I want to remind everyone too, that Governor Shapiro was here not that long ago and with the County Executive present and some of the members of County Council, not myself, he announced a large initiative on behalf of state EMS services, fire, police, and so forth, and many millions of dollars in support of that, and I would like to say that this is really much more of a state issue than a local issue. Obviously, we feel the effects on the local level but the problems and as has been pointed out by some of the people from public safety, the problems really exist with an antiquated state system of funding and law for EMS and fire services.

The fact that municipalities have the authority and the responsibility, I think we have to be very careful about ponying up millions of dollars with no set idea of what it will cost over the long term because it's going to be much more than that, I can tell you. It's almost like a show game in the County with the funding. I think you should be cautious with that as well.

We were warned by Joe Maloney just last year that the County share of gaming revenue, the fund balance in gaming revenue, would be depleted by 2024. That includes the money that was pledged on behalf of a RACP grant that the County received for capital project for the Community College, as some of you may be aware. Whether you support the Community College, or supported the establishment of it, or not, the fact is that the County is on the hook for it. Testimony was given on the state level that this stream of funding would be earmarked and dedicated to the operation and the capital projects of the Community College. And yet that fund was yet further depleted by the pledge of \$1.5 million from the gaming revenue fund recently.

It's a terrible precedent because that money is just about gone, and we have other commitments. The constant removal of funding that is dedicated for worthwhile projects and then supplanting it with other funds, it should set off alarm bells for you; I hope it does. Most of you are very financially astute people and businesspeople and I know you're aware of the needs of having to balance a budget. I just want to again state my concern that you maintain your independence, do not be intimidated in carrying out your duties. County Council would have to be the ones to take any action on the Board of ECGRA, and I just don't see that happening. You do a fine job and I want to thank you again for your service. Thank you.

Mr. Barney: Thank you, Councilwoman. Are there any questions or comments at this time?

- d. Update from County Executive's Office: Mr. Smith: We have already taken our allotted time. Thank you.

Dr. Wood: Good morning, everyone. I have an Executive Director's report in the Board packet that talks about our involvement with Infinite Erie, there's a nice thank you note from one of the nonprofits that received funding from us, it's the typical stuff. However, based on today's discussion, one of the things I'm realizing, and I think I can be helpful with this, is that there is not a very good understanding of where gaming revenue comes from and how it flows in Erie County. One of my takeaways here is, I want to bring back to the Board some more information about how it flows, what are the laws associated with it. I want to do a presentation of this probably at next month's Board meeting.

When you become a Board member, some of this stuff is in your orientation binder, but not to the in-depth level of what I'm talking about here. What are the major laws governing gaming revenue, what does gaming revenue currently benefit? I keep hearing that it's not serving as property tax relief or it's not going to public safety; that's not accurate. That's part of the reasons we spend our money on economic and community development because there is already a huge amount that is spent on these other things. So, understanding why they're flowing in this direction, how much, and how those laws work, I think, would help clarify some of this in the minds of Board members.

After I prepare this presentation, I'll have Tim take a look at it, because there are legal aspects that are very important to this like PA Horse Racing Gaming Law in 2004 and then it gets revised in 2016, there is the Economic Development and Financing Law of Pennsylvania, the Settlement Agreement which it always help to refresh our minds on this settlement. Like I said to Dom earlier, we are spending a significant amount of money on public safety in the contiguous municipalities around the casino. If we ended up funding something like this, I would want to know how those funds - would they still be eligible for ECGRA funds based on the fact that we're already funding them for this. There's just a lot of unanswered questions associated with that. But the fundamental knowledge piece, I think, for you as Board members to be able to do your job would be, can you get a clear and concise understanding of the legal and financial infrastructure around gaming revenue – how it flows to the County, how it flows to ECGRA and the landbank, etc. I'll pause there and see if anyone on the Board has any questions.

That being said, that's how I will spend my Executive Director's Report at the next Board meeting and if any of you have any specific questions you want me to address in that report, feel free to ask. For example, somebody asked me the other day, there is a state fund for public safety, how much goes to it? I worked with Tammi and we did the research – I have a binder this thick analyzing where the fire and EMS funding is. Because there is a steady stream of it that comes in – about half million a year comes into Erie County from the state gaming revenue. So, instead of it coming from us, it's already coming from the state, which is why we, historically, we never created any kind of EMS or fire bucket. I think that's a good historical context as well.

Thanks, folks.

SOLICITOR'S REPORT

Mr. Wachter: I had a reason last week to have a meeting with the Governor's Secretary of Legislative Affairs, Mike Barrett, in which this issue had come up in another county. One of the proposals that I made to him that I wanted you to be aware of was that there is a Local Services Tax that is currently \$52 that is charged to every employee that works within a municipality that is able to be used by that municipality for whatever they deem to be Local Services. It has been suggested that the Local Services Tax could be expanded at a local option, up to say, \$200 or so, with all of that money being able to go directly to pay for emergency services as a funding stream that wouldn't typically be a tax on property residents, but rather it's a tax on employment. So, you would get those monies from all those people who work in a municipality even though they may not live in that municipality. And that's something he has suggested that they are going to explore during this particular budget season. It

may be an additional line-item of revenue that could come out of the fiscal code when they pass this year's state budget. So, I just wanted you to be aware of that communication.

Dr. Wood: That's interesting. Does the County already have the enabling legislation to raise that?

Mr. Wachter: No, each municipality has it, but it's limited to \$52; one dollar a week is how they came up with the math. It used to be known as the Occupational Privilege Tax, which was \$10 per head, and then it became known as the EMS Tax and the municipalities balked and said they didn't want it to be an EMS Tax because they wanted to use it for other things. Now municipalities are looking at that as a means of getting fee dollars from nonresidents who are using emergency services when they come in and are working 8-10 hours a day within that municipality. There is no authorization for that to be expanded beyond the \$52.

Mr. Barney: But if they did expand it, like you mentioned \$200, would that be able to be used any way they want, or would it then be just for the EMS?

Mr. Wachter: The proposal I made to the Secretary was that it would be specifically for EMS so that it would help solve the crisis. Now, that's not going to help every bedroom community that doesn't have a lot of people living there, but it's going to be able to help those poor urban communities where most of the employment is so that they would be able to see some additional funding there. It's definitely not a cure-all. I think it's just one piece of a larger puzzle. To say, I'm just one guy who made a proposal that he thought was a good idea; I'm not saying that it's getting jammed through the budget.

OLD BUSINESS

There is no old business to discuss at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. Resolution Number 8, 2023 – Resolution to Adopt the Funding for the Erie County Learn and Earn Program, formerly known as the Summer Jobs and More Program

Dr. Wood reads the resolution.

Mr. Cleaver makes a motion to approve the resolution. Mr. DiPaolo seconds the motion. There is no further discussion of the resolution. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Barney: I want to thank everyone for devoting so much time. It's been a productive morning, but I'm sure we have a lot more work to do.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Cleaver moves to adjourn. Mr. Oberlander seconds the motion. Meeting is adjourned at 10:22am.