



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

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

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Erie County Council

WATCH A MEETING ON
YOUTUBE –
LINK AVAILABLE AT
www.eriecountypa.gov



Kim Clear, Chairman
Scott Rastetter, Vice-Chairman
Carl Anderson, III
André R. Horton
Mary Rennie
Ellen Schauerman
Brian Shank

4:00 PM

May 21, 2020

Join us via Zoom Conferencing:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81829598914?pwd=U1JqblkrdDZlZ3prT1RJRm1ldjVHQT09>

OR

DIAL IN: 1-253-215-8782

Use Meeting ID: 818 2959 8914

Password: 052120

FINANCE AGENDA

1. Presentation by Cory Johnson, CPA, Partner, and Daniel Sefick, CPA-Manager at Zelenkofske Axelrod, LLC of the Comprehensive Single Audit for Erie County and Related Funds. Audit is for the year ending December 31, 2019.
2. Update on Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority COVID 19 Related Assistance Programming (Perry Wood, Executive Director).
3. Ordinance Number _____, 2020, " _____ 2020 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$24,334 for Insurance Coverage Change in Office of Controller"
When the 2020 budget was passed in November 2019, two positions in the Office of the Controller received single insurance coverage. New employees in those positions have dependent coverage rather than single. There are not sufficient funds in other lines to cover the cost increase, so an appropriation is needed.
Page 3
4. Ordinance Number _____, 2020, " _____ 2020 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$1,500 and Creation of Line Item for Protection from Abuse Fees"
A new revenue line is needed for fees associated with Protection from Abuse Orders sought by claimants in Erie County. The funds in the line represent an estimate of what may be collected in 2020. Page 6
5. Ordinance Number ____, 2020 " Amending Ordinance Number 26, 2018, for the Temporary Waiver of County Health Department Annual Licensing and Late Fees for



Business Recovery Grant

Application Deadline: June 19, 2020

The Girard Borough continues to invest in the business community through the availability of façade improvement reimbursement grants, and now the new Business Recovery Grant.

Girard Borough is using a portion of the Mission Main Street funds provided by the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, with their permission, to meet the immediate and short-term needs of the downtown business community to remain viable and thrive through the COVID-19 pandemic and the new challenges that come with it.

This grant is specifically for businesses located within the designated downtown boundary, which is Main Street from the east borough line (just west of Westgate Drive) to Old Ridge Road, and Rice Avenue from Main Street to Vine Street.

Girard Borough has allocated \$10,000.00 for the Business Recovery Grant Program.

Grant funds may be used for the items detailed below and may be applied to eligible and approved costs incurred no earlier than March 6, 2020, the date of the Governor's COVID-19 Emergency Declaration.

Grant Approval and Notification

You will be notified of grant approval by Tuesday, June 23, 2020, just four days after the application due date, which is Friday, June 19, 2020. If funds remain after this date, applications will be received and accepted on a rolling basis until all the Business Recovery Grant funding is awarded.

If you are approved for a grant, the Girard Borough will make payment directly to your vendor or consultant if the approval is for a service to be provided or for a service that has been provided and not yet paid in full, or as a reimbursement to you if you can submit proof of payment.

Submission Requirements

Completed applications may be mailed or delivered to the Borough Office during regular business hours, or emailed to Rob Stubenbort, Borough Manager at robs@girardborough.com. The deadline to apply is June 19, 2020.

Grants are available to eligible businesses in amounts up to \$1,000 or half of the total project cost, whichever is less. A 50/50 financial match is required. The applicant must provide a quote or estimate

from a legitimate professional and/or vendor to show proof of project costs. Proof of completion and payment must be submitted to Girard Borough upon completion of the project.

Grant funding is to be used to offset unanticipated technical assistance costs caused by the COVID-10 Emergency Declaration. Funding may be used for any of the following, alone or in combination:

- Development of an e-commerce or online selling platform
- Development of gift cards for your business
- Development of a business contingency plan
- Hiring a professional to help you manage your expenses and revenues, and related contracts, which were negatively affected by the impact of the COVID-19 Emergency Declaration
- Hiring a professional to help you communicate with your customers online
- Hiring a professional to help you research, review, and apply for grant and loan opportunities
- Hiring a professional to help you understand, plan for, and react to employment issues
- Hiring a professional to help you create and/or implement employee and/or customer safety protocols required by applicable Department of Health Orders, and/or CDC or other applicable governmental guidelines to enable you to resume business
- Purchasing safety equipment/supplies
- Implementing customer capacity management and fulfillment logistics to include business floor plan layout, signage, contactless transactions

If you have questions about this grant and your eligibility:

If you have questions regarding the completion of this application or the eligibility of your project, contact Borough Manager Rob Stubenbort at (814) 774-9683 x 203 (Office), (814) 392-4169 (Cell), or robs@girardborough.com.

With your application, please make sure you complete and include the following:

- Grant Request Application
- Signed Agreement
- Reinvestment Forecast (*Help us understand your business, its needs, what steps you've taken to thrive, and how this grant will sustain your business.*)

Grant Approval and Distribution of Funds

You will be notified within four business days of the application deadline, which is June 19, 2020. If you are approved for a grant, the Girard Borough will make payment directly to your vendor or consultant if the approval is for a service to be provided or for a service that has been provided and not yet paid in full, or as a reimbursement to you if you can submit proof of payment.

GRANT APPLICATION

Business Name: _____ TIN: _____

Primary Contact Person: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please enter the amount in grant funding you are requesting: \$ _____ (amount must be half of your total project cost up to \$1,000)

Please confirm that you have a 50/50 match contribution toward this project: *Commitment letter(s) from matching sources such as banks or other granting sources should be included with your application.*

Yes

No

Please indicate for what you will use the grant (check all that apply):

- Development of an e-commerce or online selling platform
- Development of gift cards for your business
- Development of a business contingency plan
- Hiring a professional to help you manage your expenses and revenues, and related contracts, which were negatively affected by the impact of the COVID-19 Emergency Declaration
- Hiring a professional to help you communicate with your customers online
- Hiring a professional to help you research, review, and apply for grant and loan opportunities
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- Purchasing safety equipment/supplies
- Implementing customer capacity management and fulfillment logistics to include business floor plan layout, signage, contactless transactions

AGREEMENT

I have read and understand the terms of Girard Borough's Business Recovery Grant Program, and I am prepared to meet the specified terms if this application is approved.

I confirm that I have no delinquencies with any municipal payments (may be subject to verification).

I understand that this project is approved for grant payment in accordance with approved application that is attached to, and incorporated in, this agreement.

I understand any grant money awarded cannot be applied to any other uses not outlined and approved prior to grant payment.

I understand that all work must be completed, and the grant must be closed out, within 60 days of the approval date of this application, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by both parties. Unless otherwise agreed to in writing, any portion of an award not utilized within the 60-day period shall be considered to be forfeited by the applicant.

I understand that any change to the project must be first approved by Girard Borough.

I understand that I am required to complete the Business Recovery Grant reporting upon completion of my project.

I understand that failure to comply with this agreement may jeopardize receipt of grant funds or the request for funds to be returned to Girard Borough.

Business Owner

Date

REINVESTMENT FORECAST

Please share with us how this grant benefits your business.

ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

How many years have you been located in downtown Girard? _____

Do you own the building from which you operate?

- Yes
- No

Will your project help retain current employees?

- Yes
- No

How many people do you currently employ? _____

How many people did you employ prior to the COVID-19 Emergency Declaration? _____

COVID-19 IMPACT

Your operation status is?

- Open regular hours
- Open limited/reduced hours
- Not open at all

If you are currently open, how long do you estimate your business can survive in its current state before having to close permanently? _____ (weeks/months)

If you are NOT currently open, will these grant funds help you reopen at some capacity?

- Yes (If yes, please indicate targeted reopen date: _____)
- No

How confident are you in your business's ability to reopen at full capacity after restrictions are lifted?

- Very confident
- Somewhat confident

Not confident at all

Have you applied for business assistance loans as a result of COVID-19?

Yes

No

If yes, please list which loans, the amount of the application and whether you have been approved? (Examples: PPP, EIDL, Other): _____

Have you applied for other business assistance grants in the last sixty (60) days?

Yes

No

If yes, please list which grants? _____

How much in financial assistance have you applied for from other sources?: \$ _____

How much in financial assistance have you received to date from other sources?: \$ _____

Do you have a Business Contingency Plan to help your business through the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes (If yes, please attach your plan or an outline of steps taken)

No

TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR NEEDS

You may attach separate sheets for your answers.

Please describe the challenges you have faced as a business during the COVID-19 pandemic and your greatest needs as a result:

Please **describe the steps you have taken as a business** during the COVID-19 pandemic to address the above challenges including minimizing risk to the public, improving business practices and processes, communicating with employees and customers, as well as your overall plan for recovery:

Please **describe how this grant will help you thrive** through the COVID-19 pandemic so that you can reopen at full capacity when restrictions are lifted:

Please **describe your timeline** in implementing your project for this grant so that you can reopen at full capacity when restrictions are lifted:



NEWS*NEWS***NEWS***NEWS***NEWS***NEWS***NEWS*****

Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund Provides Face Shields to Erie County Public School Teachers, Administrators, Staff

Five new grants awarded to support Erie County

CONTACT: Kate Philips
philips@parkerphilips.com
215.850.4647 | mobile

Erie, PA (June 5, 2020) – The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) has authorized the purchase and supply of 5,530 face shields for employees of the 13 public school districts, of Erie County.

“Thanks to the ECGRA Board for being proactive for the safety and security of our students and teachers in Erie County,” said State Senator Dan Laughlin. “Getting schools prepared to reopen will be a daunting task. ECGRA’s investment in over 5,000 face shields will give them one less thing to worry about.”

“On behalf of the parents and teachers across northwest Pennsylvania, I am extremely happy to see our community come together to protect both young and old from the spread of COVID-19,” said State Representative Ryan Bizzaro. “Our children need a safe and secure opportunity to learn and grow, and this effort by ECGRA to supply face shields for school employees in our region will make a noticeable impact on our battle against the pandemic.”

“As 2020-21 school year reopening plans are drafted, the teachers, administrators, and staff in schools across Erie County will be equipped with face shields to help reduce the spread of COVID-19,” said Perry Wood, Executive Director, ECGRA. “This provides equal access to PPE equipment across Erie County and allows administrators to focus on planning to help students return to school and succeed.”

The 13 public school districts of Erie County supplied ECGRA with the following face shield requests:

District	Face Shields
Corry	380
City of Erie	1,200
Fairview	375
Ft. LeBoeuf	400
Girard	265
General McLane	275
Harbor Creek	375
Iroquois	350
Millcreek	831
North East	329
Northwestern	300
Union City	200
Wattsburg	250
Total	5830

Non-profit organizations can still request free face shields through Project Face Shield here:
<https://www.ecgra.org/covid-19-face-shield-form>

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA) has awarded five additional grants through the **Erie County COVID-19 Human Relief Fund** to support those in need throughout Erie County. The latest round of grants awarded to local organizations include: **Sacred Heart Food Pantry, ServErie, Youth Leadership Institute of Erie, Sarah Reed Living Center, and International Institute of Erie.**

The Erie County COVID-19 Human Relief Fund was created by ECGRA and Erie County Council to support those in need throughout Erie County. The Human Relief Fund is part of the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund, established by ECGRA to provide flexible and patient loans to non-profits, and small businesses. As part of the latest round of grants, the ECGRA Board of Directors awarded five additional grants (FULL LIST BELOW). **A total of \$673,434 has been awarded since the launch of the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund on March 19.**

Grant Request #38: Sacred Heart Food Pantry

Amount Awarded: \$2,000
Project: Food and Personal Items

Grant Request #39: ServErie

Amount Requested: \$8,710
Project: Community Corp Outreach Team

Grant Request #40: Youth Leadership Institute of Erie

Amount Awarded: \$13,960
Project: Technology Equipment to Continue Youth Leadership Program Remotely

Grant Request #41: Project Face Shield for Public Safety & Human Services

Amount Awarded: up to \$20,000

Project: Purchase & Supply of Face Shields for Erie County Public Safety & Human Services Employees

Grant Request #42: Sarah Reed Senior Living

Amount Awarded: \$5,200

Project: Shelter in Place Food Equipment

Grant Request #43: International Institute of Erie

Amount Awarded: \$17,210

Project: Pre-School Child Care, Summer Program for the Children of Refugees & Immigrants

Grant Request #44: Project Face Shield for Educators

Amount Recommended: \$22,120

Project: Purchase & Supply of 5,530 Face Shields for 13 Public Schools Districts of Erie County

IMMEDIATE HUMAN RELIEF GRANTS AWARDED TO DATE

Grant #1: Second Harvest Food Bank of NWPA

Amount: \$168,000

Project: Purchase life-sustaining food for Erie County families facing food insecurities

Grant #2: Emergency Shelter System

Amount: \$12,500

Project: Emergency shelter funding for the homeless

Grant #3: North East Community Food Pantry

Amount: \$1,000

Project: Funds to supplement additional need during time of crisis

Grant #4: Erie Family Center

Amount: \$7,500

Project: Diaper Depot for those in need

Grant #5: YMCA of Greater Erie

Amount: \$16,000

Project: Childcare Center for Life Sustaining Personnel

Grant #6: Mercy Center for Women

Amount: \$9,525

Project: Emergency homeless shelter-related costs due to COVID-19 regulations

Grant #7: The Upper Room

Amount: \$5,000

Project: Costs associated with increased regulations due to COVID-19

Grant #8: Metro-Erie Meals on Wheels

Amount: \$2,000

Project: Transportation costs related to food distribution for homebound elderly

Grant #9: Penn State Behrend

Amount: \$6,700

Project: Face Shields for medical professionals and first responders

Grant #10: Community Shelter Services

Amount: \$30,750

Project: Emergency sheltering increase due to COVID-19

Grant #11: Saint Patrick's Haven

Amount: \$2,500

Project: Men's shelter costs

Grant #12: Erie City Mission

Amount: \$39,085

Project: Homeless shelter and kitchen

Grant #13: Safe Journey

Amount: \$9,000

Project: Women's shelter for domestic abuse victims

Grant #14: Erie DAWN

Amount: \$10,000

Project: City of Erie domestic violence safe house provider

Grant #15: Gannon University

Amount: \$23,000

Project: 3D printed face shields for distribution in Erie County

Grant #16: Sarah A Reed Children's Center

Amount: \$11,000

Project: Technology costs related to social distancing/remote therapy

Grant #17: HVA Senior Living Alliance

Amount: \$6,800

Project: Technology costs related to telemedicine for seniors

Grant #18: Erie United Methodist Alliance

Amount: \$2,365

Project: Homeless shelter-related costs

Grant #19: St. Martin's Center

Amount: \$7,300

Project: Childcare center preparation costs

Grant #20: Bethany Outreach Center

Amount: \$7,600

Project: Emergency hygiene and food distribution

Grant #21: MECA Senior Care

Amount: \$3,850

Project: Sanitizing the Senior Center for future opening

Grant #22: Penn State Behrend

Amount: \$46,500

Project: Expansion of face shield project and N95 level face shields

Grant #23: Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network

Amount: \$25,400

Project: Staff costs due to lost volunteer base

Grant #24: Millcreek Counseling & Mental Health Advocacy Partnership

Amount: \$2,500

Project: Telemedicine

Grant #25: Urban Erie Community Development Corporation (UECDC)

Amount: \$56,408

Project: Temporary supplemental food box preparation and delivery to Housing Authority residents

Grant #26: Corry Salvation Army

Amount: \$9,500

Project: Refrigerator, hygiene, sanitization related things

Grant #27: Penn State Behrend

Amount: \$10,121

Project: Mental Health Mobile Application

Grant #28: Christian Cupboard (Girard)

Amount: \$3,000

Project: food pantry supplies

Grant #29: Ellan Cochran Food Pantry of Harborcreek

Amount: \$1,000

Project: food pantry supplies

Grant #30: Northwestern Food Pantry (Albion)

Amount: \$5,000

Project: food pantry supplies

Grant #31: Union City Food Pantry

Amount: \$2,000

Project: food pantry supplies

Grant #32: Waterford Food Pantry

Amount: \$5,000

Project: food pantry supplies

Grant #33: Harborcreek High School

Amount Awarded: \$1,000

Project: Ear Savers – 3D printed pieces that save ears from excess chaffing from face masks

Grant #34: Elmwood Food Pantry

Amount Awarded: \$2,000

Project: food pantry supplies

Grant #35: Edinboro Community & Economic Development Corporation

Amount Awarded: \$9,370

Project: food relief packages and supplies

Grant #36: Erie Family Center

Amount Awarded: \$13,000

Project: diapers

Grant #37: YMCA of Greater Erie

Amount Awarded: \$22,960

Project: food cost, food prep, sanitization supplies for childcare centers, registered nurses

Grant Request #38: Sacred Heart Food Pantry

Amount Awarded: \$2,000

Project: Food and Personal Items

Grant Request #39: ServErie

Amount Requested: \$8,710

Project: Community Corp Outreach Team

Grant Request #40: Youth Leadership Institute of Erie

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Grant Request #44: Project Face Shield for Educators

Amount Recommended: \$22,120

Project: Purchase & Supply of 5,530 Face Shields for 13 Public Schools Districts of Erie County

Organizations can apply for grants via the ECGRA online application system:

<https://www.ecgra.org/covid-19-response-fund>

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The Elmwood Avenue Presbyterian Church
2816 Elmwood Avenue Erie, PA 16508
814-864-4809

Rev. David Edmunds, Pastor

May 21, 2020

Dear Members of the ECGRA,

Thank you so much for your generous grant to the Elmwood Food Pantry. During this pandemic, we have a greater need than ever to support those members of our community that cannot afford some of the basic necessities.

Many needy families and individuals in our community go without proper food, shelter and essential medical care every day due to a variety of factors including low wages, job loss, injuries, illness, age, domestic violence or divorce. While all of us are susceptible to hard times, children and the elderly are at the most risk, and they make up the largest number of clients we serve.

Our food pantry has a dedicated group of 15 to 20 volunteers, who work to assemble bags of food to distribute to 40 to 60 families in need, though during this pandemic, most food comes pre boxed from the Second Harvest Food Bank. We have gotten to know our clients. The most rewarding part of the process goes beyond distributing food. It's about building relationships with those in the community. It feels good to give back to those who really need help.

With your generous support, we will be able to help many of these families and individuals meet essential daily needs.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Keith Bennett
Elmwood Food Pantry Director

KB/glg

Church Email: gailgiaco@aol.com

**Waterford Community Food Pantry
P.O. Box 755
Waterford, PA 16441**

May 23, 2020

Erie County Gaming Authority
5340 Fryling Road
Suite 201
Erie, PA 16510

Dear Members:

The Waterford Community Food Pantry would like to thank you for providing us with a \$5,000.00 grant. In these unprecedented times the grant will provide our Families with much needed food to get through.

During these times we have developed a drive through process to continue to serve our Families on a monthly basis. We will continue to do that until no longer required.

With gratitude,



The Waterford Community Food Pantry is located at 12723 Route 19 south, and is incorporated and operates under the Nonprofit Corporation Law of 1988 of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania exclusively for charitable purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code for the establishment, operation, maintenance, and support of a community food pantry.

The Waterford Community Food Pantry is a qualified 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. No goods or services were provided in return for your gift. As your gift may qualify as a charitable deduction for federal income tax purposes, you may wish to consult your tax adviser with questions about your deduction.



— SENIOR LIVING —

sarahreed.org

227 West 22nd Street
Erie, PA 16502

p 814-878-2600
f 814-878-2607

June 4, 2020

Perry Wood
Executive Director
Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
5340 Fryling Rd suite 201, Erie, PA 16510

Dear Mr. Wood,

I am writing to thank you, Tom Maggio, and the Board of Directors of ECGRA for approving our COVID Human Relief Grant request. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, communal dining restrictions have been in place since March 15 with no end date in sight. As such, we have been delivering meals to over 200 residents in our facility. The granted funds will assist us with the purchase of commercial grade equipment to transport meals to our residents at appropriate temperatures.

Sarah Reed has a long-standing history of serving the elderly in our community, and now, more than ever, we are working to the best of our abilities to care for this most vulnerable population. It is a comfort to know that Erie has such a great resource in ECGRA. Your organization recognized the insurmountable needs to our community agencies, reacted, rallied, and responded. For this effort, we remain grateful!

Sincerely,

Gale Magyar, NHA CASP
CEO

Trusted for Generations

Residential Apartments • Personal Care • Memory Support • Skilled Nursing • Short-Term Rehab



The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority will continue to make payments to municipalities and nonprofits while Presque Isle Downs & Casino in Summit Township is closed. (JACK HANRAHAN/ERIE TIMES-NEWS)

Winning bet

Casino remains closed but still funds local causes

By Jim Martin
Erie Times-News

The slot machines remain silent at Presque Isle Downs & Casino, where the vast parking lot is all but empty.

For some, the continued shutdown of the Summit Township casino makes sense as we try to slow the spread of COVID-19, the novel coronavirus.

While others make the case that the economy needs the casino and the jobs it provides, there is an upside.

Even during this prolonged shutdown, the local revenue share, mandated by the Pennsylvania Race Horse

Development and Gaming Act, continues to flow to Erie County government and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

"The reason is because of the way the gaming legislation is written," said Perry Wood, executive director of ECGRA. "You (local residents) either get your local share, which is 1 percent of gross revenue of slot machines, or \$10 million a year."

Although Presque Isle Downs performs well for the size of the population, it's one of the smaller casinos, Wood said.

As a result, the 1 percent threshold has never applied.

And that means year after year, Erie County

government and ECGRA have split \$10 million from the casino annually.

Even now, when the casino business is reduced to online sports betting, the money continues to flow to local stakeholders.

Officials at Presque Isle Downs have shown no reluctance about turning over the funds.

"They are not looking for a way out," Wood said of the casino. "They are glad they can provide the funding they are."

With the governor's announcement Friday that Erie is likely to move into the green phase on June 5, the shutdown at Erie's casino — the county's 14th-largest

See CASINO, A4

CASINO

From Page A1

employer, according to the state Department of Labor — could soon be coming to an end.

That means that the darkened slot machines and empty restaurants could soon be a memory.

"I think this is a bump in the road," Wood said.

And there's reason to believe that gamblers are eager to get back to gambling. According to a Motley Fool report, opening week racing at Churchill Downs, with no one in the stands, produced wagers of \$26.6 million, an increase of 185 percent from the previous year.

Wood said talks with officials at Churchill Downs, which owns the local casino, have him feeling confident about the future of Presque Isle Downs and of ECGRA, which has distributed more than \$57 million in casino money since its inception.

"They are interested in investing and expanding here," Wood said.

In normal times, ECGRA's own investments are focused on "empowering non-profits and small businesses toward economic and community development."

The focus has shifted in recent weeks as the organization has awarded more than \$600,000 in grants since the March 19 launch of its Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund.

In addition to money for emergency shelter and to purchase locally-made face shields for free distribution, ECGRA has made numerous grants to shelter and food programs. Those grants have included \$168,000 for Second Harvest Food Bank.

Back in early April, money still flowing from an empty casino was a game-changer for Karen Seggi, CEO of Second Harvest.

"Help from the Erie

Community Foundation and ECGRA right from the beginning enabled us to order food immediately and order aggressively," she said. "The food isn't going to run out. We've got enough to last a while."

Wood said he and his board are giving constant thought to the role that ECGRA can play in not only helping feed hungry people, but also helping businesses get back on their feet.

"We are clearly part of the human relief component," he said. "We have to be part of the

Even during this prolonged shutdown, the local revenue share, mandated by the Pennsylvania Race Horse Development and Gaming Act, continues to flow to Erie County government and the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

recovery component well. Grant-making is to be flexible and it is to shift."

Contact Jim Martin at jmartin@timesnews.com.

VIEWPOINT

OUR VIEW

ECGRA seeds hope and resilience

The issue: Gaming revenues uninterrupted
Our view: Funding vital to region's needs

The COVID-19 pandemic raises dark questions about the future. Stopping the spread of the virulent disease requires near total suspension of commerce.

Now we confront the fallout: how to backfill staggering revenue losses by companies and the loss of tax revenues that enable government services.

Presque Isle Downs & Casino remains idled. No flashing lights or bells sound the bets made or winnings earned.

But thanks to the strings attached to the legalization of gaming in Pennsylvania, the question of how to make up for gambling revenue shortfalls in Erie County is moot, as reporter Jim Martin detailed. The deal struck to host a casino continues to pay off in ways vital, unexpected and welcome.

The local revenue share as outlined in the Pennsylvania Race Horse Development and Gaming Act dictates the county and Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority receive 1 percent of slot machine gross revenues or \$10 million a year. There is no clause offering pandemic reprieve.

Thus, Erie County and ECGRA continue to split \$10 million a year, even though the owner, Churchill Downs, now relies on online wagers alone. That means a critical funding stream, which has so far generated \$57 million to seed transformational initiatives and support key assets, nonprofits and small businesses, goes on, not just unabated, but available to target new needs that have emerged related to the crisis.

COVID-19 struck just as efforts to reverse the region's decline galvanized. That is why it is welcome to see ECGRA's ongoing contributions to those efforts, such as the Mission Main Street program, forging ahead, pandemic or no. As reporter Valerie Myers detailed, hard-hit Union City's sweeping plans for a deserved refresh are largely proceeding in spite of the pandemic. ECGRA, one of several entities enabling the projects, will help pay for new amenities in Caffisch Park and grants to improve tired downtown buildings.

At the same time, ECGRA has pivoted to meet emergency needs via the new Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund, which has distributed more than \$600,000 in grants for emergency shelter, protective gear, child care for essential workers and food. As ECGRA Executive Director Perry Wood said, they look now to help businesses get back on their feet.

This dangerous, damaging time offers plenty of incentives to lapse into grief, self-pity, frustration and blame. The news about ECGRA should seed hope and stir gratitude.

Erie County, for all of its losses, has so far weathered the crisis better than some thanks to nonprofit, business and elected leaders who know how to identify priorities and act collaboratively, and because we enjoy the benefits of assets like ECGRA. Its efforts have positioned us well to weather the crisis with resilience and emerge from it intact, with focused, forward motion.

ANOTHER VIEW

GUEST VIEWPOINT

Quick action helps Erie County weather COVID-19 storm



Perry Wood

Erie County is showing its mettle and doing good work in the face of what is simultaneously the worst health and economic crisis of our time. The pandemic is also pushing local governments like counties, cities and boroughs to their limits, with Erie County leaders earning strong reviews across the board.

For some Erie residents, that combination of circumstances is far worse than others. Erie's homeless, those families facing food insecurity, and seniors are among our most vulnerable citizens in the best of times. More than a little empathy is required for each of us to put ourselves in the shoes of those facing poverty during these unprecedentedly trying times.

Local leaders acted before the virus hit Erie County's borders, positioning it for success. Erie County and the Erie County Department of Health organized quickly in the face of the public health

crisis, while Erie County Council turned its collective eye toward human services. County Council utilized the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority's grant-making expertise and infrastructure to create the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund. So far, that Response Fund has moved the needle, garnering national attention for Erie County.

The Response Fund's first and primary goal is to save lives by supporting those on the front lines of the COVID-19 battle. Grant-makers are uniquely positioned in a crisis because they are regularly in touch with nonprofit institutions that provide a range of lifesaving and life-enhancing services. Rapid communication with the leaders in this sector led to an early conclusion: Capital was not flowing and therefore they could not help the people who depend on them.

The event-style fundraiser, so popular among Erie County's nonprofits, would immediately grind to a halt because of social distancing. Philanthropy had slowed because the stock market was taking a massive hit. How could we wrap our heads around this?

One helpful source early on was the "Disaster Philanthropy Playbook."

Serving as a framework for the Response Fund, the Immediate Human Relief component was structured as a grant program focusing on four primary areas:

- Food insecurity, food banks, food pantries, food delivery to the homebound.

According to the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania, Erie County had 30,000 food-insecure individuals prior to the crisis. Once COVID-19 hit, that number was growing by the hour.

- Homeless shelters.

New requirements for the homeless amid a pandemic included limiting shelter sizes and regulating social distancing for a mentally ill population. Dozens of people were facing the cold, with nowhere to turn.

- Elderly care, telemedicine, protective personal equipment (PPE) for human services workers, and sanitization supplies.

- Child care centers for essential workers who needed a safe place for their children so they could go to work at hospitals, grocery stores and in public safety. Like elder care, the child care providers were struggling to protect the health of both the children and their workers. PPE became essential.

New standards for sanitization were being pioneered.

All on the fly. During calmer times, the grant-maker has a process for soliciting grant applications. This involves grant writing, grant review panels, and careful back-and-forth with applicants answering questions. In short, it requires deliberative behavior. In a time of crisis, the grant-maker's primary role shifts to one of information clearing house, resource provider and matchmaker in addition to grant reviewer.

Here's one example of what that theory looks like in application. Anticipating that the food bank and pantry system would quickly run out of food, we reached out to the Second Harvest Food Bank and asked them to quantify the challenges that lie ahead. The first grant awarded supported 6,000 meals to be distributed to those in need throughout Erie County over the next two weeks. We connected their team with Meals on Wheels to work on home delivery to the homebound seniors. The swift action of Erie County Council and the ECGRA board of directors allowed for a solution in anticipation of a problem — not a lifeboat when the ship has already sunk.

Our preexisting relationships with many sectors uniquely positioned us to communicate across sectors with ease. In swift form, working in lockstep with Erie leaders, we were able to find the highest and best use for our valuable local share gaming revenue. The Response Fund allowed us to react swiftly and with flexible resolve, which should be established as a go-to model when a health or even a weather crisis hits the health and economy of Erie County.

Erie County is often described using the word grit — stemming from a century of innovating, manufacturing and fighting to weather our region's storms, be it brutal weather or a long-enduring economic evolution. As we begin to emerge, we can all sense the Erie spirit that makes living here so amazing. It's bubbling up with each high school graduation parade, as the line forms up Peninsula Drive toward Sara's, and in the knowledge that we are in this together.

Erie is strong, and together we will weather the COVID storm.

Perry Wood is the executive director of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

ECGRA grant to help families

By Sandy Rhodes
Editor, FLAG area

EDINBORO — A grant of more than \$9,000 will help those in need in the Edinboro community.

Edinboro Community & Economic Development received a \$9,370 grant from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority recently. The grant will help support efforts in the community to assist people in need due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ECED worked with the General McLane School District, Boro Women & Family Services, Edinboro Food Pantry, and community churches to identify the local need.

See Grant, P. 2



Contributed photo

From left, Kevin Opple, an Edinboro Community & Economic Development board member and Edinboro Borough manager; Brenda Cannell, ECED Chairwoman; Betty Jo Lyons, executive director of Boro Women & Family Services; and Pat Hargest, ECED treasurer, were on hand as ECED officials delivered a \$6,000 check to Boro Women & Family Services for family relief packages, thanks to a grant from Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

Grant

Continued from Page 1

One of the projects funded was the Relief Packages, Coolers for Lunches, and an information sheet that will go out as a special wrap around the West County News-Journal's June 5 edition.

Officials said that one issue that needed resolved was getting the word out about the resources available to families. And while it can be posted throughout the area and on social media sites, the group wanted to help get the word out in other ways, too.

"The intention is to send out information to routes that encompass around 85% of the General McLane School District as well as the area from Cambridge Springs to Edinboro, since this is in the Edinboro Food Pantry's service area," officials said.

Borough Manager Kevin Opple announced the news about the grant at the May 11 Borough Council meeting and said many facets of the community are involved.

"A number of organizations and business have been raising money and trying to help neighbors in need," Opple said.

The focus of effort is to be preparation for expanded delivery of school lunches and food pantry supplies, family relief packages, and gift certificates for special meals at local restaurants," according to the grant request. The group asked for \$17,990.92 and while the entire amount was not funded, members are still grateful for what was allotted to help those in need.

In the past, the General McLane School District has not been eligible for summer food programs, but through the grant, officials will be ready.

Coolers and ice packs will be used to help with lunch distribution for students of the General McLane School District.

"The U.S. Department of Agriculture has authorized

school districts to provide lunches for all students under 18 without certifying financial need," Edinboro officials said. "In order to prepare for expected increases in meals for delivery, bagged meals, including milk, will need to be transported via coolers over the eight delivery routes designated by the district. The summer food program is being planned for the same delivery routes and also have to four static distribution sites, who will also need coolers."

According to Rick Scaletta, superintendent for General McLane School District, there are 2,100 students in the school district. This means this program has the potential to help 1,400 families.

The program is administered by the Intermediate Unit 5 and the meals are prepared by the Fort LeBoeuf School District employees.

"We are only responsible for distribution," Scaletta said.

Boro Women & Family Services will benefit through the grant with the distribution of family relief packages.

"Funding for the family packages will provide for both typical family needs, such as diapers and personal care items as well as items specific to COVID-19, like anti-bacterial soap and protective masks," officials said.

This funding could provide 120 packages; 30 of the packages would be for families with infants/toddlers.

Other items partially funded include providing certificates to local restaurants and Zoom meetings.

Zoom meetings have been a necessity given in-person meetings have not been allowed.

ECGRA has awarded more than \$600,000 in grants since the March 19 launch of its Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund.

Renaissance Grant awarded for Corry neighborhood

BY SARA JUKES
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Neighborhood revitalization will be taking place in Corry thanks to Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority's Renaissance Block Matching Grant Program.

It was recently announced that Corry is a grant recipient and was awarded \$100,000, which is the highest amount that could be awarded per application.

That amount will fund about half of the neighborhood selected to be the first to receive funding — School House Block.

◀ See Grant, P.11

The Corry Journal, Friday, June 5, 2020

Grant

(Continued from front page)

Nineteen properties within four cluster groups are slated to receive funding toward property projects. There are 17 properties remaining from School House Block that are next in line to have projects funded.

Community Development Director Chuck Gray said a

next step is to meet with funding recipients, discuss planned projects and possible permitting needs.

"I'm grateful programs like this exist for investment into homes to help people who want to make that investment and let their dollars go further," Gray said.

Gray went on to say how the faith shown by the community has helped this program become a reality.

"When we started in November, we didn't have any money, we only had hope of starting this program," Gray said. "People turned up anyway and they

believed it was a good idea."

Gray said she intends to pursue more grants to finish funding the rest of the neighborhood's applicants as well as find additional grants to continue to be able to offer funding opportunities to more neighborhoods throughout Corry.

June 12, 2020

West County News-Journal

Local school districts to get face shields thanks to ECGRA grant

By Sandy Rhodes
Editor, FLAG area

ERIE — More than 1,200 face shields are now available for all four school districts in the West County area, thanks to a grant from the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

A total of 5,530 face shields will be given to administrators, teachers and staff of Erie County school districts and a 1,215 will be given to the four local school districts — Fairview, Girard, General McLane and Northwestern.

The breakdown is as follows: Fairview, 375; Girard, 265; General McLane, 275; and Northwestern, 300.

"Thanks to the ECGRA Board for being proactive for the safety and security of our students and teachers in Erie County," said State Sen. Dan Laughlin, R-49. "Getting schools prepared to reopen will be a daunting task. ECGRA's investment in over 5,000 face shields will give them

one less thing to worry about."

Laughlin's district includes the Fairview, General McLane, Girard and Northwestern school districts.

State Rep. Ryan Bizzarro, D-3, echoed Laughlin's statements. Bizzarro's area includes the General McLane School District.

"On behalf of the parents and teachers across northwest Pennsylvania, I am extremely happy to see our community come together to protect both young and old from the spread of COVID-19," Bizzarro said. "Our children need a safe and secure opportunity to learn and grow, and this effort by ECGRA to supply face shields for school employees in our region will make a noticeable impact on our battle against the pandemic."

Perry Wood, executive director for ECGRA, said his agency wanted to help in making sure everyone is safe when school resumes in the fall.

"As 2020-21 school year reopening plans are drafted, the teachers, administrators, and staff in

schools across Erie County will be equipped with face shields to help reduce the spread of COVID-19," Perry Wood said. "This provides equal access to PPE equipment across Erie County and allows administrators to focus on planning to help students return to school and succeed."

Non-profit organizations can still request free face shields through Project Face Shield here: <https://www.ecgra.org/covid-19-face-shield-form>

The Erie County COVID-19 Human Relief Fund was created by ECGRA and Erie County Council to support those in need throughout Erie County. The Human Relief Fund is part of the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund, established by ECGRA to provide flexible and patient loans to non-profits, and small businesses.

A total of \$673,434 has been awarded since the launch of the Erie County COVID-19 Response Fund on March 19.

Downtown Girard Committee, borough offering grants

Façade grant program enters its 3rd year

By Sandy Rhodes
Editor, FLAG Area
GIRARD — The Downtown Girard Committee is hopeful the third time continues to be a charm for the Façade Improvement Grant Program.

The committee, along with Girard Borough, announced that applications are now being accepted for the façade program, which was created in 2018 when the borough has awarded more than \$67,000 in façade grants. This has resulted in \$140,000

See Façade, P. 8

Money available for business affected by COVID-19 pandemic

By Sandy Rhodes
Editor, FLAG Area

GIRARD — Help is on the way for downtown Girard business owners.

Girard Borough, in partnership with the Downtown Girard Committee, has created the Business Recovery Grant Program, which is designed to help businesses in downtown Girard to recover from economic and operational challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Businesses can apply for up to \$1,000 to help pay for a multitude of supplies and services that have come about because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

See COVID-19, P. 8

June 12, 2020

Facade

Continued from Page 1

in completed and scheduled improvements in two years in downtown Girard.

All buildings within the designated downtown boundary, which is Main Street from the east borough line (just west of Westgate Drive) to Old Ridge Road, and Rice Avenue from Main Street to Vine Street, are eligible for these grant funds, provided that all improvements are in compliance with the codes and ordinances of Girard Borough. Property owners, as well businesses in the downtown, are encouraged to apply for the grants.

The economic vitality of Girard is dependent upon a vibrant and well-maintained downtown and this opportunity can help business owners along the way.

"We're seeing investments in the downtown are helping to create a compelling place for businesses to exist and residents and visitors to spend time," said George Drushel, chairman of the Downtown Girard Committee.

These façade grants will be made on a 50/50 matching basis. Girard Borough will provide up to 50% of the project cost as a grant

with the remaining 50% of the cost being the property/business owner's responsibility. The maximum grant awarded will be \$10,000, but applicants may request as little as \$200.

Given that many businesses have had to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic, officials are not sure how many will apply for or can afford the 50/50 match of the grant, but they want to make the funds available regardless.

"We are putting it out there if someone is in the position to apply if they can," said Girard Borough Manager Rob Stubenbort.

Part of the agreement of the façade grant is that the money is made available for three cycles, with 2020 being the third cycle.

The deadline for applicants to apply is July 17.

More information can be found on Girard Borough's website, girardborough.com.

Funding for the 2020 Façade Improvement Grant Program is from a Mission Main Street Grant awarded to the borough by the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority.

COVID-19

Continued from Page 1

An individual grant may be up to \$1,000 to cover new expenses or applied to eligible and approved costs incurred no earlier than March 6, the date of the governor's COVID-19 Emergency Declaration.

A 50/50 financial match is required.

"Our downtown businesses are an important part of the fabric of our community, and they are being significantly impacted by the pause in economic activity caused by the necessary stay-at-home order, as well as the new requirements for operating safely during the pandemic," said Borough Manager, Rob Stubenbort. "We are hopeful that this program will provide our businesses some much-needed support during these tough times."

The deadline for businesses to apply is June 19. Funding decisions will be made within four days of the deadline and those applicants who are awarded the grants will be notified by June 23.

Stubenbort said the Committee is using money that was left over from last year's Façade Improvement Grant.

"We were allowed to set aside \$10,000 for that," he said of the COVID-19-related grant.

Those interested in using the grant money can use it on the following items:

- Development of an e-commerce or online selling platform
- Development of gift cards for the business

- Development of a business contingency plan

- Hiring a professional to help manage expenses and revenues, and related contracts which were negatively affected by the impact of the COVID-19 Emergency Declaration

- Hiring a professional to help business owners communicate with their customers online

- Hiring a professional to help business owners research, review and apply for grant and loan opportunities

- Hiring a professional to help business owners understand, plan for and react to employment issues

- Hiring a professional to help business owners create and implement and/or customer safety protocols required by applicable Department of Health Orders and/or CDC or other government guidelines to enable business owners to resume business

- Purchasing safety equipment/supplies

- Implementing customer capacity management and fulfillment logistics to include business floor layout plan, signs and contactless transactions.

The eligible area mirrors that of the Downtown Façade Grant Program, which was expanded this year to the Taco Bell area in the eastern part of the borough on Main Street.

The new area includes all buildings within the designated downtown boundary, which is Main Street from the east borough line (just west of Westgate Drive) to Old Ridge Road, and Rice Avenue from Main Street to Vine Street.

"Many business owners have been concerned about reopening and this may make a difference for them and we wanted to make the funds available right away," Stubenbort said. "If we could get a grant that could help everybody we certainly would, but with this, we can help as many people as we can."

This money was secured from last year's façade grant program, which is funded by the Erie Gaming Revenue Authority.

More information is available on the borough's website at girardborough.com.