

MINUTES

**Erie County Council**

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

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, March 3, 2020**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**OPTIONAL PRAYER OR INVOCATION**

Mrs. Clear addressed the room with inspirational words from Dr. Martin Luther King, stating that he acknowledged the importance of using our words to make change, and we need not be afraid of using our words: "The measure of a man is not where he stands in times of comfort but in the times of controversy and that is the ultimate measure of a man." She asks that all of us be brave enough to stand up for what we believe in, and have the integrity to be the voice of our constituents.

**ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mr. Anderson; Mrs. Clear; Mr. Horton; Mr. Rastetter; Mrs. Rennie; Mrs. Schauerman; Mr. Shank

Also Present: Douglas R. Smith, James Sparber, Tracey Fugagli, Thomas Talarico; Nicole Inan

**HEARING OF THE PUBLIC**

**Jon Whaley**

Did not come forward to speak.

**Julia Calipo**

Speaker stated that within the City of Erie there are numerous incidents of false protective order, and that people often use them to exclude others from households. Ms. Calipo spoke to an incident in January 2019 between Scott and Marie Brawley. She explained that while Scott was jailed, Marie sold his belongings. Over a period of time, similar incidents occurred, and although time and again the charges were dismissed, the District Attorney's Office continued to

file. When Mr. Brawley went to press criminal charges against his wife with State Police, the District Attorney's Office refused to press the charges. Ms. Calipo emphasized that the need to be innocent until proven guilty, stating that due to failure of investigation, false imprisonment, violations of due process, and dereliction of duty, Mr. Brawley was just one example of this issue.

Mr. Horton stated that the District Attorney is the top law enforcement officer in the County and has total authority on who he charges files with. Mr. Horton clarified that Council can not speak on behalf of other municipalities, the police, or the mayor, but advised her that may be a better option for her. He stated that County Council is for legislation, not investigation. Ms. Calipo clarified that because the District Attorney is a mode of the County proceedings. If there is a problem with the District Attorney, Mr. Horton advised that she speak to President Judge, John J, Trucilla.

### **Randy Barnes**

Mr. Barnes is a resident of District 5. Speaking on workforce development. Workforce development is close to his heart because his job is in manufacturing. In training that he has provided, it has given an insight to the local manufacturing and workforce development. He stated that he is a strong supporter of the Northern Regional Pennsylvania College, which is funded by everyone in the state, it is here, and have trained over 380 people in the past year. He stated that an issue that bothersome to him, is that Gaming Revenue will be used for the first five years, and then additional funding will be sought from donations from grants, businesses, and philanthropies. Mr. Barnes questioned why we would wait five years to retain funds this way. Mr. Barnes suggests that the Manufacturing and Business Association isn't on board yet because training and workforce is being done by NPRC already. Mr. Barnes states that Senator Scarnatti has been portrayed as a villain in the midst of controversy because he is defending the money that the people of Erie County have put into the workforce development. Have to assume that there is a credible Board of Directors at a school, unless they have proven otherwise. During his time, Mr. Barnes referred to the NPRC as a community college; Mr. Horton asked that the record reflect that NPRC is not a community college by statute and they are expressly forbidden from referring to themselves as such.

### **Kathleen Fatica**

Mrs. Fatica is a resident of District 1. States that the attempts to undermine Erie County's efforts for a community college need to be addressed. She named these facts: 1. A factual in-depth study indicated business, manufacturing, educational, and community leaders an educational and technology void that a community college would fill. 2. An application was submitted to the Pennsylvania Board of Education. 3. The Board engaged in an ongoing conversation with Erie County Government for over 2 years to answer questions for clarification and for updates. 4. The application was sent to the Pennsylvania Department of Education for an independent investigation and review to determine if the

County met or exceeded criteria as per the Pennsylvania Community College Act of 1963. 5. The sub-committee of the Board of Education received confirmation from Department of Education that Erie County met or exceeded criteria to become Pennsylvania's 15th community college. The criteria include: Educational needs are not being met; Population is sufficient to support a community college; Financial wealth is sufficient to support a community college. 6. The Board refused to accept the recommendation, but instead scheduled an evidentiary hearing. She went on to say that the formation of community college will be transformational. Just like other transformational changes that this body has brought forth, a small but vocal group of nay-sayers and fear-mongers always exist; with limited knowledge of the big picture, and in some cases they are opposed to such projects for personal or political gain. This body voted in favor of such projects, but for one vote: the Ball park, Erie Regional Airport Authority, the Next Generation Radio Project, and the relocation of the library to the bayfront. One of the things that was said to the library move is that "people will never able to access the bayfront," and "The books will warp." This was passed in a 4-3 decision. She compared the transformation of the bayfront with the library in place to the transformation of the economic, social, and technological states of Erie County with the addition of the Community College.

## Other

Freda Tepfer of District 3. She states that she has been both a student and employee among 5 community colleges. She stated that the agenda for the March 18th evidentiary hearing is quite staggering; they will be cross examining, and then having a closing argument. Make sure that technical and professional preparation are near to perfect in preparing for that hearing. The President Pro Term of the Senate wanted to take your Empower Erie and the County's ability away to even testify at our own Community College Hearing. She states that without her ability to have attended a community college, she doesn't know what her life would have been. She states, having taken many online classes, that synchronous video classes are probably the least effective way to do an online training because of the lack of interaction with the instructors. There is no end to the good that will come from the community college. We need to be joining the other 14 community colleges in Pennsylvania in receiving the states tax money to support our Community College.

Bob Casillo, of the City of Erie. He thanked Mrs. Fatica because his comments mirror hers, and thanked Council for voting in favor of a community college. The support for the Community College needs to be in total. He states that his goal as a member of the School Board in Erie was to raise the level of education; education is becoming more uniform and it is beginning to increase the broad breadth of the educational process. After leaving the school board, he has turned his efforts towards Empower Erie; disclosing that he was asked and accepted a

role on the Board of Directors because it is a continuation of what he tried to push in public education. Students who enroll at the Erie County Community College will have an opportunity that they wouldn't have had if applying to a traditional college. One of the primary reasons, is the financial burden. Right now there is in excess of \$24,000 to \$25,000 per year in tuition as a traditional college, where as ECCC will be able to provide a more direct benefit to the students immediately at a cost of less than one third of what a traditional school would cost. He invited Council and public to join in on March 18th at the Blasco Library in support of the Community College

Lou Alitota , resident of Millcreek Township and former school board director. Not disbaring education; he stated he has a masters in hospital administration. Western PA Forum, including Empower Erie is a nonpartisan organization and a 501c3 private non-operating foundation. He found that there is a lobbying firm of this organization, but could not find what that lobbying firm was. Also found the list of trustees, directors, foundation managers is nonpartisan; however there are no Libertarians, Republicans, or Independents on the Board.

**MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

**February 18, 2020 -- Regular Meeting**

Ellen Schauerman moved to approve the minutes from the February 18, 2020 Regular Meeting. This was seconded by Kim Clear and carried in a 7 - 0 vote.

**REPORTS OF COUNTY OFFICIALS**

**County Executive and/or her Designee**

No reports from the County Official or Designee.

**Finance Committee -Mrs. Clear**

Mrs. Clear stated the Finance Committee met on February 27, 2020, and offer Old item: Ordinance 8, 2020: "Sixth 2020 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$2,000 Donation by the Disabled American Veterans to Erie County Veterans Treatment Court"; and New items: Ordinance 9, 2020, "First 2020 Library Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$20,000 for Matching Beehive Grant from Friends of the Library"; and Ordinance 10, 2020, "2020 General Revised Fund Budget Expenditure of \$200,000, Creation of Line Item For Community College Professional Expenses."

**Personnel Committee - Mrs.Rennie**

Mrs. Rennie stated the Personnel Committee met on February 27, 2020, and offer for the agenda New Business the appointments of Lacie Luddy, Cindy Wells, Donald Crenshaw, and Michael Fuhrman.

**Other**

Mrs. Rennie thanked those who spoke or are giving support for community and civic engagement. She stated for the record that the community college application is in the hands of the State Board of Education. It is not something this Council will be voting upon, however that doesn't mean that it's still not an important issue. Whether it is approved or not, it is likely to remain an issue and point of contention. As a former library director, she is supportive of education, including lifelong education. She voiced support to the community college a number of times during last year's political campaign, however also spoke critically of the plan. Publicly, there is not a lot of balance from official sources, even the ones that should be neutral, and should cover all aspects of an issue are not, and that has been eye opening and disappointing. No one benefits by a culture of 'yes-men.' Most issues have their pros and cons, and that is how things become stronger. Criticism allows us to revise, revamp, and re-imagine things. There are a lot of reasons to be critical of the community college initiative (and here I would like to point out that our Council Chairman actually encouraged me to have my say this evening, in spite of the fact that I would be discussing the negatives. That is integrity.) Beware of anything that appears to limit discussion, input, scrutiny or even hints at hiding information. The ends do not justify the means. Many have pointed out that the County has a poor track record when it comes to various big initiatives. It's an argument that gets dismissed and yet it is a valid point. Mrs. Rennie stated that she was the Blasco Library Coordinator during the time of NPTI and Camtech, and saw it unfolding every day. She wasn't aware of the financials, however they were operating much of the time out of the brand new Library Computer Lab. Sometimes initiatives are worth a try, because there is always a chance that something good will come of it. But we are talking about initiatives for which all critical thinking and scrutiny was suspended. At that time they took no action to set goals, desired outcomes or safeguards. She states that she finds this is not uncommon for county-wide initiatives. If she were consulting a financial advisor to invest money in something, she would want to make an informed decision, and to have a professional expertise to guide in making the best choices, and to know the risks. She doesn't feel that has always been done with County initiatives. People tend to walk on the sunny side of the street, proclaiming all the good things, while ignoring the potential negatives. Public justification for a community college has frequently been thin and anecdotal. Everyone is "for" Education. An Educational institution is not the same thing, and can only be judged by its outcomes. The other common statement is that "everyone else has it," so we should have it too. That argument, frankly, harkens back to conversations I had with my parents as a child. It does not necessarily follow that we will all have the same things. She states that her main problem is with the plan itself and all the related documents. She has written grant applications and administered them, has overseen many large programs and projects, including several strategic planning processes. First, since we have no community college locally, it make sense that those developing the application would try for a "home run." Instead they seemed to recreate a

somewhat dated version of what a community college should look like. She would have started with the potential of Erie and then the overwhelming need, identified the target audience, desired goals, strategies, action steps and concrete outcomes. Our plan meanders for quite a while before stating finally that it wants to provide a “pathway” to higher education and that it wants to bring Erie up to “parity” with the rest of Pennsylvania higher ed. Seeing as PA is ranked 50th nationally in terms of higher education, that is a safe goal. She states that she would have gone for larger goals—ones that addressed poverty and certainly, at least, concrete educational attainment goals. She states she has an interest in disenfranchised communities with education, and has studied for many years. The assumption is that the target audience for the community college are those people coming largely from the lower two income brackets within the Erie area. It’s been a national scandal for at least the past two decades. Just as an example, Lorain County community college, which was presided over by our expert consultant, Dr. Church, most recently had a graduation rate of 15% under his tenure. The rate gets worse in the lower income brackets and minorities across the states. The people who come from the lower income brackets have a well-documented history, as documented by the American Association of Community Colleges, of defaulting of student loans. This may seem like a small amount of debt to some, but for that population it can be very easy to be overwhelmed by debt and default on loans. Community College students have the highest rate of loan default for student debt even though they borrow the least. It’s 20% for those in the lower income brackets. Despite the poor outcomes, there are initiatives in several states, aimed at bettering outcomes. There is one model in particular at CUNY which has seen success, and has been adapted for colleges in Ohio, which in turn have seen the doubling of graduation rates within control groups. Unfortunately for us, the types of innovative solutions these community colleges have employed—including waivers, encouraging full time enrollments, intensive first year curriculum and counseling services, subsidies and so forth--- are not contained within our plan or our budget. She stated rhetorically, that at this point she is betting most think that she is against the community college; she is not. However, she is for initiatives that work, and thinks that this needs to be looked at critically. We have had a number of excellent studies and reports on Erie County over the years. Every single one, without exception has identified low educational outcomes and attainment as the single biggest shortcoming/ challenge/ weakness of this area. Without question, education is the linchpin of need. That is the fertile ground that makes individual growth possible. Individual growth is good for everyone touched by it, and it just creates a very positive cycle. If your neighbor is strengthened, then you are also strengthened by the same measure. We are caught in a real catch 22 lately, largely because education is over controlled and test driven. It’s too expensive. It’s too competitive. It’s not the great equalizer that it should be. Our Chairman reminded everyone at the last meeting that in Erie County government, we spend an obscene amount of money every year addressing all the ills: Crime.

Prison, Drugs, Alcohol, Mental and Emotional Illness, Family Instability, and Abusive Relationships. These are problems that are not going away. She met late last year with one of the department heads, and that person reminded her how much money gets pumped into the local economy every year. In that moment that she realized that we have created a whole industry around misery, dysfunctionality and inhumanity, and loss of human potential, and the breakdown of relationships. She stated that she has issues with the way this has come together, and various other things, but really—kudos to the people who have at least looked for another way, who have addressed a foundational need, something that would be proactive. A Community College initiative has problems, but we are on the threshold of possibly having it approved whether we like it or not, and it does have possibilities. If it's approved later this month, we can do a lot with selection of forward thinking trustees and hopefully an excellent, progressive president. What if—collectively--- we took the bones of this plan in our laps and worked together to make it better. To insist on true transparency. To insist on excellence. To insist on people first. To provide the linkages badly needed back to K-12 education, and the collaboration, partnerships, with technical schools, the building trades, other colleges and universities, and so on and so on. That's what I am suggesting and challenging each of you to do. We could create a new model for Pennsylvania. We could create a new model for the country. We've always had that potential locally. She has always believed that. Courage to rise to it and participate, it's not perfect by a long shot but we can make it so.

Mrs. Clear stated that, as an educator, she believes that the Community College has the ability to be something that changes the trajectory of Erie County. As an educator, she sees the return on her investment every single day, and has seen what happens when someone invests in themselves. Education builds bridges, does not build walls. Education is not partisan. What she sees as the future for the Community College looks like: workforce advancement, development, & training, advanced technology training, and building trades. Community college is set up to meet the needs of the community; the community creates it. We have the opportunity to take charge of it. Want to see support systems in place for all socio-economic groups. This would be, sitting down with students young and old and ensuring they are having the systems in place to be successful, mentoring programs, differentiated instruction, trained to teach those who don't learn like everyone else. She emphasized that we all learn differently, and this needs to be something that is set up to do that. Community College is not something traditional; this is something better and bigger to address needs of individual learners. NPRC is non accredited cannot use those credits at any other program; the for-profit institutions here in Erie are not accredited. It is not training in one area it's training in many. Every person in this room and in Erie County will take a part in creating something to be proud of. Be a model for the US. Without education we are doomed to dormancy, She believes in the future of Erie County and the future of the students she teaches every day, that don't

have another way up. She believes in the adults who want to challenge themselves and find something better for themselves. She believes in investing in Erie. She quotes Benjamin Franklin "An investment in knowledge pays the best returns."

Mr. Anderson reported on the Election Board. It has met twice in the past two weeks. Discussed the new voting system and the changes that have been instituted. Mr. Anderson recognized County Clerk Smith and staff in appreciation of the work that is being done. Staff are advocates who are fair and impartial so that the citizens of Erie County can be confident in the outcomes of the elections that we have. He stated that the Board is looking at new and innovative ways to ensure that voting is accessible to all voters and to have participation on all levels. At the Election Board Meeting earlier this evening, a policy was instituted to pre-stamp all mail-in and absentee ballots to allow for those who are disenfranchised from voting to ensure their voices are also heard. In addition, a policy was put in place to have a lock box available in front of Erie County Courthouse which will be available 24/7 in a secure location. He explained that there was consideration for lock boxes throughout the County, however there are issues with the legality of the chain of custody of such mail-in or absentee ballots; so, by having one in front of the Courthouse where there is plenty of light and secure cameras allows the chain of custody to be secure. He stated that the Election Board continues to work towards progressive ideas as there is change across the Commonwealth and the Country, while giving us a balance to build on those options and continue to make sure that everyone is aware of the voting system. There are options and opportunities to test that system out before the actual voting date. He stated that on the County website there are several locations available to try the machine. and encourages the public to take advantage of those opportunities.

Mr. Rastetter commented that Mr. Barnes always has a lot to say but never listens, and takes off right away. He thanked his colleagues for all of their points. Representing the constituents while not promoting a personal agenda is the ideal purpose of an elected official. Finding the collective opinion of the true majority is much harder than just listening to the loudest naysayers; those that feed on ever evolving misinformation. Finding common ground solutions takes a lot of listening and investigating. He stated that his grandparents only went to school thru the 6th grade; that was all that was mandatory back then. In the late 1800's into the 1900's high school for commoners was a new concept. His grandfather told him that wealthy people did not want to have their children commingling with commoners. Commoners, mostly farmers and trades people back then did not see the importance of schooling; they wanted their kids at home working. That was their American Dream that their kids would follow in their footsteps there was nothing better. These practices sound like discrimination and child abuse which today is Un-American, unfair and illegal. Both sides fought in the streets and picketed the schools, kept their kids home, and overall just acted

moronic, until some of them got arrested and went to jail. So for Mr. Rastetter, to just listen to those who contradict and distort would not be serving the constituents. There are about 40,000 people in each District of Erie County. So if he hears a dozen or two negative people or even a hundred or two that does not override the silent majority. As a representative, one must listen to all opinions and all the facts. He states he actually enjoys it, and in his regular job he has traveled the county and beyond for more than forty years listening to all kinds of opinions on many subjects. He thinks it is necessary to hear diverse opinions and research the facts because that way you find out what concerns to be wary of and what results to expect from the investment toward the goals. How else would one get to an informed opinion? The topic of the Community College is most likely the most important topic all of us will ever face. Mr. Rastetter feels that the Erie County Community College has already been a victim of an attack of misinformation; a smear campaign. As evidenced by the advertising put out by NPRC, their over the top claims and staunch rejections of any of our negotiations. He want to shed some light on some of the very important facts: The number one comment or objection is that he has heard is that Erie already has enough colleges. A Community College is not the same as a four year institution, and most people do not understand the difference. He gave a comparison in relation to Erie: Johnstown Population 21,000 has 5 colleges with 1 community college; Uniontown Population 45,000 has 3 colleges, Allentown Pop. 118,000 has 6 colleges, Reading Pop. 88,000 has 7 colleges with 1 community college, York County Pop. 435,000 has 6 colleges, Philadelphia has 115 colleges with 3 community colleges, just to name a few. Having four colleges in Erie is not a large number at all. If community colleges were such a bad idea there would not be 1166 of them in the US and 14 in PA. Together they enroll nearly half of the undergrads in the U.S. The community college idea was conceived in the fifties as education and job training for GI's returning from war. A community college is not a Republican, Democrat, or a Dahlkemper idea as some have said to him. Talk of an Erie County Community College has been ongoing since the PA Community College Act of 1963. The original plan was for 24 community colleges throughout the state but, no new colleges have been started since 1964. Our Community College would be geared to fill the needs of our community, mainly aimed at filling the needs of area employers; building a creative workforce to address employers changing demands. He stated it is not just for young students, but also displaced and older workers. People that go to community college are more serious students; they want to go to college, their goal is a good job and employers know that. When I went to college if you missed more than 3 classes you were kicked out of that class, to bad, better luck next semester; so you better be serious. He stated that people have also said to him that there are a lot of other things to spend the money on. So true and always is; always will be. Again we need growth of good paying jobs that can sustain a healthy economy. It is simple Economics. Now is the time to invest in your future; soon we will depend on the young to take care of us. Competent help in the health care field is critical. Qualified help is hard to find in all fields, it is

estimated that 50% of our workforce will retire in the next ten years. Developing a qualified work force is a must right now and it will help attract employers too. Smart employers want smart ambitious, employees. That's what attracts employers to invest in a location and existing employers are more likely to stay and expand. How many more employers can we afford to drive away? Some people are concerned because of the CAMTEC scam from 30 years ago. That was a privately run school endorsed by Erie County and funded by the state with little or no oversight, a similar arrangement to the NPRC model. It involved computers and rented classrooms, PC type computers and internet were fairly new back then. It was advertised as a college without walls, even though you had to go to a building for class. They used classrooms in multiple locations. The administrators inflated the number of students that they were receiving State money for; that was their scam. It could happen again but is less likely because we know what to watch for and what type of oversight is necessary. Now people are more familiar with computers and more wary of scams. You can't live in the past when the future is knocking on the door. Colleges don't just spring up overnight, well maybe cyber schools, but look at Gannon and Mercyhurst; It took a big investment of time and talent by the Catholic Church to get to where they are and they made school a profitable business by tuition and donations. As with any higher Ed institution appreciative alumni help secure the future of their Alma Maître. Edinboro started as a State Normal School in the 1857 then became a State Teachers College in 1927 until 1960 when it dropped the word teachers, and in 1983 went from a college and became a University. Behrend College now part of Penn State also around for a long time; both investments by the State of PA and their Alumni, a lot of hard work by a lot of people, and both have evolved over time. They all show that education is a good investment. Point being we are not expecting to go out and spend a gazillion dollars on buildings and facilities, and raise taxes to fund this school. To put it in perspective we are only talking about a school the size of a Middle School enrollment. It will only grow with demand and proceeds; not tax dollars. We won't need a lavish, unique, sprawling campus. The attraction will be an affordable education. Some people think this is a bailout for the city or another hand out to minorities but, sorry to say it is a bailout for all of us; it has to be a community effort to be a Community College. There is a lot happening in our beautiful county right now but can we attract more revenue to sustain this renaissance. We need more businesses, more manufacturing more taxpayers earning a living wage. Without that kind of growth we will have the opposite, growing poverty. We will have more burger franchises, more beer joints. More people unaware of what is good and what is bad for themselves, less hope, less reasoning, more crime, more drug addicts, more demand for social services, more immigrants to prop up our declining population numbers, less people paying taxes; these all add up to the cost of poverty; think of all the costs to taxpayers that poverty really contributes to. There is no profit in keeping the down trodden down. It is costing us all a fortune. I think we have had enough of all of that already. It's time to take another direction. NPRC the Northwest Pennsylvania Rural Regional College; a

great idea, but not an original idea there are many online colleges throughout the US and beyond. Online college for rural Pennsylvania is a noble cause, but without a rural broadband delivery system students still have to travel to a building for classes; much like the old CAMTEC model. Except that computers are much more familiar now than thirty years ago. It will be at least ten years before rural broadband is close to complete even in Erie County. When complete you could have a rural college study at home system. He said that Erie needs a community college that is geared specifically to answer Erie's needs and to partner with Erie's industries and medical establishments. That's the difference between a community college and a 4 year college. Graduates from a 4 year college usually have to find work away from Erie, mainly because of lack of local opportunity and of student loan debt. NPRC moans that we asked them to let Erie County be part of their target area. Yes we invited them to come here; why should that prohibit us from seeking more options. Brick and Mortar Community Colleges coexist quite well with On Line schools; in fact they compliment each other. Nine of the 14 PA community colleges offer online training and so do many of our nation's community colleges. For example Ohio has 14 that offer online and New York has 22 online. Not all students want to take classes geared to a four year degree and not all students want to take classes on line; not all classes can be taught nor should they be taught on line. We asked NPRC if they wanted to partner with us to be part of our community college providing our online needs. Their answer was that unless we would buy a building and provide them space and give them control over our entire curriculum, they were not interested. County Council declined their short sighted stipulations. Mr. Rastetter reminded everyone that this is not up for vote by County Council. This is now totally in the hands of The PA Board of Education and even if approved school would not open until at least next year. He agrees with Mr. Farnham of Fairview, and his "Your View" comments of 12/19/19, that money is not always the first concern about the community college but it is at least the second. Mr. Rastetter has contacted the Gates Foundation about their Completion by Design Program and is aware that there are other programs involved with modernizing education. As he said before, colleges do not just spring up over night. His thought is that we could get started by utilizing facilities we already have without buying or building or taking properties of the tax rolls. Having facilities throughout the county would be more practical and accessible for students. It is a County project not just for the north of I-90 population. Since the inception of the Pennsylvania Community College Act of 1963 there has been an established amount of money set aside in the state budget to be split between the 14 community colleges in the state. If the Board of Education approves Erie County's Community College that same amount of money will be split 15 ways. The state already has earmarked money for the start up and operation of the Erie County Community College. The money in itself is the reason why NPRC is so dead set against this Community College; they stand to lose a chunk of their support from the state. Jefferson County, home of State Senate Pro Tempore Mr. Joe Scarnati staunch supporter of NPRC, will lose part

of the funding for the existing Jefferson County Community College also. Yes, they already have their brick and mortar community college yet they want to prevent us from having one. NPRC claims that Erie does not need a community college because they are our community college; that's just false advertising, NPRC is not a community college; they are a very limited, very expensive cyber school not funded or regulated under the Community College Act of 1963. They claim that they will bring free college to Erie. That statement is just political bunk and they love to spread the rumor of taxes going up if we get an Erie County Community College. He emphasized that our Community College would be about the size of a middle school; that charges tuition and has community and state support. If taxes go up it won't be for at least 5- 10 years. And it won't be your federal taxes or your State taxes or your school tax or your local tax it would only be your county tax. And if that goes up it would be between 50 and 150 dollars per year. The Community College Act prevents municipalities (Erie County) from raising taxes to support a college more than 1 mill; that is \$100 on a \$100,000 home. It would be worth it in order to have more intelligent neighbors and relatives, not to mention your own family. Actually the savings to the county, state and municipalities would off set any need to raise taxes; due to the college. We, the taxpayers of Erie County have been paying into the pool of community college dollars since 1964, and it is about time we get some benefit from the Community College Act of 1963. We pay PA State taxes and part of our tax money goes into a pool of money that is split between 14 community colleges most of them in the eastern part of the state. The closest one to us is 70 miles away as the crow flies. So, he said, we have 3 choices: (1) Do nothing stay the course settle for more of the unintelligent and all that goes along with that; let the chips fall where they may. (2) Take a chance on educating at least those that we can; to invest in our community and our future in order to improve our situation. More than 50% of our county residents will find a use for our college. So we should all show support for our community and the pursuit of this college that we have paid for ten times over. or (3) Write to Education Board to tell them that we support and embrace stupidity and hope to cultivate more of it locally by sending our money to other parts of the commonwealth.

Mr. Horton thanked the other Council Members for their well thought-out comments; stating that we always welcome everyone's input an opinions, even though we may not always agree. Mr. Horton feels that with the Erie County Application, initially they did swing for the fences; however, the Department of Education asked to lower numbers and expectations. The application was not writing a thesis paper on a community college; there is a specific matrix and set of questions that need to be responded to. By any matrix, Erie County has exceeded every component established by community college application. The County was very transparent, had meetings all over the city, with superintendents, manufacturing and alike who stand to gain greatly. The Erie Community Foundation did a gaps analysis that sought out 11 variables,

including stopping the flow of brain drain to decrease the educational attainment gap in the Erie County graduated more high schools than the rest of the country on average. He stated that we have a lot of two-year degrees and some four-year degree graduates as well, but we were still behind the national level ten years ago. He noted that the three things that were called for were: 1. To decrease the educational gap, 2. to stop the flow of brain drain, and 3. to be economical driving. With those, the three options that developed were: 1. Develop a Community College stand alone, 2. a multi-campus facility via video (similar to NPRC), or 3. Feel out the ways the manufacturers way of piece-mailing. NPRC model of college is actually a system, and the state statute felt so strongly about it, that they wouldn't even allow them to use the word Community College because the community college is driven by the community, not by someone from some other county; it is driven by the needs of the community. Mr. Horton commented that Erie is getting national news on it's renaissance, with Erie Downtown Development Corporation doing fantastic things, but no one can believe that this county does not have a community college. Mr. Horton submits to argument that no progressive vibrant growing community could even call itself such without one. he is concerned about the return on the investment; failing out and owing is an enormous burden. The curriculum of a community college is chosen by the community; it has the alacrity to pivot on the dime including a certificate program, degree, one last class to fulfill a need, or diploma regardless of age. He stated that most of NPRC's students are dual enrolled high school students so the numbers are inflated. It costs about \$113,000 to \$120,000 per full-time equivalent student to attend NPRC. He stated we are number 47 in the country in job creation, and currently hold the poorest zip code; stating all of Pennsylvania should be disturbed by that fact. He noted that inmates are charged 75% of the commissary while we are still transporting them in sandals and without jackets in the middle of winter. Mr. Horton stated that at the community college it would cost approximately \$140/credit, in comparison to NPRC which is about 40% higher. He states that even with an inferior system, it would still not begin to match the scale of the problem throughout the county. It should be duly noted that in the City, 100% of the kids receive free or reduced meals. Success should not be determined by the zip code you're born into. Mr. Horton stated that the median income in the city is \$16,000-\$20,000, and this County has fallen behind on all matrices. We are living in a Commonwealth, where they think that \$9.50/Hr is too much; at \$10/Hr that would be \$400/ week after taxes. Mr. Horton stated that in the original application for the community college, there were big plans, big curriculum, big numbers, but the reality is that the Board directed for it to be scaled back. The reality is that the Department of Education has already said Erie has already met every matrix, and has every year since it has been brought forth but now there is political will to push it forward. Numbers have gotten worse, opiate use has gotten worse, the social fabric network is decaying; the only thing increasing is probation officers and prison use. He quoted his grandmother by saying "an ounce of prevention will always be more prohibitive

and more effective than a pound of cure." He said that he believes that education is one of the largest civil rights issues of our day. He compared the present situation to Brown vs. the Board of Education of the past where the formula is so that the school districts that are enriched are being funded at the same rate and not being penalized, and the taxes get balanced on the poor people. He admits there have been mistakes over the past, but that we hear more about what's wrong than what's going right in a community. He stated that this body has acted transparently and that, as for Empower Erie they are an autonomous entity and any concerns with them need to be handled directly with them. He encouraged that if there are individual issues that anyone has with a member of Council, they should write or email them for a response, and those concerns should not be voiced in the Council Chambers. This is not a County Council plan, or a County Executive Plan, this is the work of duly elected officials in a democratic process who have voted to advance the Erie County Community College Application. He is confident that the vote will be "yes" because to be any other way will be prejudice in that we have met and exceeded anything that the other 14 were asked. He is excited for Erie County as we go through the most transformative time in County history since 1975 with the adoption of the Home Rule Charter. Council is not perfect, but it is committed. He went on to say that less than 1 in 3 African Americans have a job in Erie County; he emphasized wanting more for the future generations. Mr. Horton stated that he first got involved in County Council because he had been placed on the Community College Advisory Board by a past County Executive, and after attending several meetings, people could only recall the vitriol from the last meeting and when he would ask people about a community college they would immediately jump to taxes; after bitter comments he began asking about what people know about a community college instead, and found that people were not educated on the facts. Mr. Horton is thankful that there are individuals with character and fortitude in our community to think about all of the residents young to old in the community.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Second Reading of Ordinance Number 8, 2020, "Sixth 2020 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$2,000 Donation by the Disabled American Veterans to Erie County Veterans Treatment Court." (Finance Committee)**

Mr. Smith gave a Second Reading of Ordinance Number 8, 2020, "Sixth 2020 General Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$2,000 Donation by the Disabled American Veterans to Erie County Veterans Treatment Court." This was moved by Carl Anderson, seconded by Kim Clear and carried in a 7 - 0 vote.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**First Reading of Ordinance Number 9, 2020 " First 2020 Library Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$20,000 Match from Friends of the Library for ECGRA Beehive Grant" (Finance Committee)** Mr. Smith gave a First Reading of Ordinance Number 9, 2020 " First 2020 Library Fund Budget Supplemental Appropriation of \$20,000 Match from Friends of the Library for ECGRA Beehive Grant."

**First Reading of Ordinance Number 10, 2020, "2020 General Fund Budget Revised Expenditure of \$200,000 for Community College Related Expenses" (Finance Committee)** Mr. Smith gave a First Reading of Ordinance Number 10, 2020, "2020 General Fund Budget Revised Expenditure of \$200,000 for Community College Related Expenses."

**Possible appointment of Lacie Luddy as Alternate #2 on the Erie County Planning Commission for a three-year term ending December 31, 2022. (County Executive) (Personnel Committee)** Mrs. Clear motioned to combine items C, D, E, & F for approval to one vote; seconded by Mr. Anderson. Amendment was approved in a 7-0 vote. Mr. Smith read aloud all appointments. Approval of all appointments was passed in a 7-0 vote.

**Possible appointment of Cindy Wells as Alternate #3 on the Erie County Planning Commission for a three-year term ending December 31, 2022. (County Executive)(Personnel Committee)**

**Possible appointment of Donald Crenshaw as on the Erie County Planning Commission for a four-year term ending December 31, 2023. (District 3**

**Representative)(Personnel  
Committee)**

**Possible appointment of  
Michael Fuhrman to the  
Erie County Land Bank for  
a five-year term ending  
December 31, 2024.  
(District 3 Representative).  
(Personnel Committee)**

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Rastetter moved to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:51PM.

**The next  
Finance/Personnel Meeting  
is scheduled for March  
12th, 2020 at 4:00 PM in  
Room 114A of the Erie  
County Courthouse. The  
next Regular Meeting of  
Erie County Council is  
scheduled for March 17th,  
2020 at 7:00 PM in Fiore  
Leone Erie County Council  
Chambers, Room 117 of  
the Erie County  
Courthouse.**