

ERIE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

REGULAR SESSION

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21, 2024

ALL PRESENT

President Shenigo called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. at the Services Center and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

On motion of Mr. Shoffner and second of Mr. Old, **Board approves the August 7th and August 15th Erie County Commission Meeting Minutes;** Roll Call:
All Aye

County Administrator Hank Solowiej re Various Issues.

County Administrator Hank Solowiej noted that there is a conflict next week and would like to move the commission meeting to Thursday at 9:30 a.m. if the Board approves.

On motion of Mr. Old and second of Mr. Shoffner, **Board changes the Wednesday, August 28th Commission meeting to Thursday, August 29, 2024 at 9:30 a.m.;** Roll Call: All Aye

Director of Board of Elections re Amendments and Revisions to Personnel Policy Manual.

Director of Board of Elections Alex Jones, Deputy Director Adrienne James, Assistant Prosecutor Jason Hinners, Board of Elections' members Tom Ferrell, Mary Ann Groot and John Adams were present for this session.

Mr. Jones stated that he and his Board have had lengthy discussions about Erie County's Personnel Policy Manual, which the Board of Elections staff follows. There are also specific policies that the Board of Elections has to follow through the State. The Clerk distributed a list of those amendments to the Board of Commissioners for their review and approval.

Mr. Old stated that the Board of Elections has been trying to amend those policies for the eight years he has been a Commissioner. He stated that there have been problems with employees accumulating a significant amount of comp time. An agreement was made with the Board of Elections President Tom Ferrell and past Board member Jeff Krabill. The agreement was, the Board of Commissioners would appropriate funds one-time to solve the budget shortfall that the Elections Board created in exchange for the Board of Elections adopting the Board of Commissioners' personnel policies.

Assistant Prosecutor Jason Hinners stated that since there are three Board of Elections members present, Mr. Hinners will be speaking on their behalf, following the Open Meetings Act. Mr. Hinners agreed with Mr. Old that the Personnel Policy has been a long-standing item with the Board of Elections. He stated these policy amendments have not been addressed with the full Board of Elections as of yet, as there is a meeting on Monday to discuss them.

Mr. Hinners stated the Board is still determining what changes will be made. Mr. Hinners noted that there are some policies not listed in the County Personnel Policy Manual that the Secretary of State mandates. He mentioned that the Board of Elections would like the Commission Board to be involved in this process.

Mr. Old stated that the office has run well under the new Director and does not understand why the Board is worrying about tiny tweaks in the policy to micromanage the staff.

County Administrator Hank Solowiej stated that it has always been the County's assumption that the Board of Elections employees will follow Erie County's personnel policies, unless it conflicts with the Secretary of State's mandates.

Mr. Old mentioned that, in his time in office, there have never been three Board of Elections members present at a Commission meeting. He stated the Board should be focused on running a perfect election and not minor personnel policy changes, considering there are only 70 days before the General Election. Mr. Old believes a lot of the directive regarding these policy changes are coming from a former Board of Elections member who harassed and micromanaged the staff and was removed from her position by the Secretary of State. Mr. Old believes these amendments are trivial and the Board of Elections has better things to do with their time than micromanage the office. Mr. Old stated the discussions regarding these amendments are a waste of time and should be done during staff downtime, not 70 days before an election.

Mr. Shoffner stated he was unaware of any issues with the personnel policies, and believes the Board of Elections Office has been running well. Mr. Shoffner mentioned that it was assumed that the Board of Elections employees would follow the county policy manual unless it conflicts with the Secretary of State policies. Mr. Shoffner asked Mr. Hinners if adopting their own policies would have any effect on us. Mr. Hinners replied no, they are permitted to establish their own personnel policy manual. Mr. Hinners noted, by coming to the Board of Commissioners about the amendments, it shows the Board of Elections' willingness to work together with the County.

Mr. Shoffner appreciates the courtesy of the Board of Elections for being transparent, but believes the Board of Elections should hold their meeting on Monday, and if anything comes out of that meeting, then the Board of Commissioners are open to hearing the amendments. He did note, that, the only issue Mr. Shoffner has is the comp time build up, but believes that issue has been addressed and changed.

Mr. Old stated he believes the Board of Elections reached a fiscal cliff due to overspending, which caused the comp time payout issue. In the past, the Board of Elections allowed their budget to get out of control. Mr. Old complimented Mr. Jones and Ms. James on their efficiency in running the office.

Mr. Old asked Mr. Jones and Ms. James if they are prepared for the election. They stated that everything is going well and running smooth. Mr. Old thanked them and complimented them again for their professionalism and service to the community.

Board of Elections Member Tom Ferrell stated that there are new members on the Board that come from different backgrounds, other than government, and they inquired about how things were being operated. Mr. Ferrell noted that the Board of Elections did not attend the meeting today to ask for money or more comp time for its employees. He mentioned that the Elections Office is different from others due to having mandates from the State to follow. This Board ultimately wants transparency with the public and is trying to be as transparent about the policies as possible. Mr. Ferrell stated he respects the Board of Commissioners' position.

Mr. Caleb Stidham, Chairman of the Republican Party, stated the Board of Elections staff are dedicated employees and has no issue with the staff. As Chairman of the Republican Party, Mr. Stidham stated he visits the Elections office frequently. He asserts that one previous Board member, with a menacing agenda, has continued her agenda through two board members. Mr. Stidham stated that the accusations of elections employees' texting election results before they have been posted and the Director being followed and accused of being at a winery during work hours, are all unsubstantiated. Mr. Stidham stated residents in Erie County will not understand the context of what it meant when the Director was at a winery and will believe these accusations, which hurts the credibility of the Elections Office. He noted that the two board members present have not apologized to the Director for these unfounded accusations. Mr. Stidham stated it is hard to run an election when two of the four Board members only care about the agenda of one person.

Mr. Stidham also noted that the personnel policy manual gives the Board of Elections Director and Deputy Director discretion, but two members of the Elections Board are seeking to micromanage the office. Mr. Stidham stated the Board of Elections has a functional staff and a dysfunctional Board, where two members are following the lead of a menacing past Board member.

Mr. Ferrell responded and said that the Board of Elections are appointed to do a job. Mr. Ferrell stated it is his duty to investigate complaints. He mentioned that the entire Board of Elections voted to do an investigation as to the allegations of the Director being at a winery during work hours. Mr. Ferrell stated he was just doing his job and the investigation proved unfounded and everyone moved on. Mr. Ferrell stated transparency is paramount and it is his job to see that that takes place.

Mr. Shoffner stated he cares about the policies and how they are implemented. If the Board of Elections would like to have their own policy, he is in agreement to that, but he stated he will have an issue if he sees a request for a large sum of comp time to be paid out at the end of the year from the Board of Elections.

The Commissioners made a deal with the Board of Elections to address the comp time issue. Mr. Shoffner reiterated that if the Board of Elections administration would like to put their own policies in place, he has no objection to that other than allowing a comp time build up.

Mr. Ferrell assured the Board of Commissioners that the comp time issue has been taken care of and the Deputy Director and Director are no longer permitted to receive comp time. Deputy Director Ms. Adrienne James noted that two Clerks in the office receive overtime in lieu of comp time and two Clerks do receive comp time, but they are not building up a large sum and use it frequently.

The Commissioners thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Public Comment.

Erie County Resident Rick Scheel noted he likes the idea of employees wearing their name badge. He stated it would help citizens identify each county employee and what office they work in when coming into the county building. Board of Elections member Mary Ann Groot had the policy language regarding name badges and read that portion of the policy manual. It is noted, that it is strongly encouraged that employees wear their name badges.

Mr. Scheel also stated he is a new member to the Fair Board. He mentioned with global warming taking affect, he was inquiring if the Commissioners have given any thought to purchasing and installing solar panels on the buildings at the fairgrounds. There are also no trees and thought about the need to plant some trees as well. Mr. Old stated planting trees around the boulevard between sidewalk and road along Columbus Avenue by Fairgrounds is a good idea.

Mr. Shenigo stated that the County is working to reduce the footprint by having a methane gas conversion to electricity at the Landfill. Mr. Shenigo stated Mr. Scheel makes an interesting point but there really is not enough land here for solar panels.

The Commissioners suggested that Mr. Scheel speak with the Fair Board and get their approval and then come back to the Commissioners.

On motion of Mr. Shoffner and second of Mr. Old, Board **cancels the following September Commission Meetings:** Monday, September 2, 2024 (Labor Day); Thursday, September 5; Monday, September 9; Wednesday, September 11; Monday, September 16; Wednesday, September 18; Monday, September 23; Thursday, September 26; and Monday, September 30, 2024; Roll Call: All Aye

On motion of Mr. Shoffner and second of Mr. Old, Board adopts resolution entering into an agreement with **Griffin Pavement Striping, LLC**; Roll Call: All Aye (#24-287 - 2024 pavement marking on various roads in Erie County - \$38,972.20)

On motion of Mr. Shoffner and second of Mr. Old, Board adopts resolution **authorizing payment for services and supplies** provided to: Lake Erie Grinders; Roll Call: All Aye (#24-288)

On motion of Mr. Shoffner and second of Mr. Old, Board adopts resolution executing payment of **Then and Now Certification** presented by the County Auditor pursuant to O.R.C. 5705.41(d)1, and authorizing the drawing of warrant(s) in payment of amounts due upon contract or order; Roll Call: All Aye (#24-289)

On motion of Mr. Shoffner and second of Mr. Old, Board adopts resolution entering into an agreement with **the Erie County General Health District/Erie County Community Health Center Dental Clinic**; Roll Call: All Aye (#24-290 - providing dentist services for inmates at the Jail - \$5,000)

On motion of Mr. Shoffner and second of Mr. Old, Board adopts resolution declaring certain items surplus and ordering same to be **discarded or salvaged**; Roll Call: All Aye (#24-291)

Board approves Revised Auditor's Certificate to **ICP, Inc.** in an additional amount of \$30,000 re providing pharmaceuticals the Erie County Jail.

Board authorizes expenses for **Tim Jonovich**, EMA, attending Perry Nuclear Power Plant full scale exercise in Chardon/Middlefield, Ohio, on 9/23 - 9/25/24 in an estimated amount of \$322.00. (paid for through Davis Besse Grant)

Board authorizes expenses for **Tim Jonovich** and **Kim Johnson**, EMA, attending EMAO Winter Conference in Lore City, Ohio, on 12/5 and 12/6/24 in an estimated amount of \$700.00. (Will be reimbursed through EMPG grant funds)

Board authorizes expenses for **Beth Schmitz**, Common Pleas Court - Judge Tone, attending 2024 Ohio Association for Court Administration Fall Conference in Lewis Center, Ohio, on 10/9 - 10/11/24 in an estimated amount of \$375.00.

Board approves Personnel Action Forms for **ECDJFS** re **Sharareh Feizkhah**, Social Service Worker 3, resignation effective 9/6/24; **Kim Leibacher**, Eligibility/Referral Supervisor 1, resignation effective 8/23/24.

Board approves Personnel Action Forms for **The Meadows at Osborn Park** re **Malinda Davis**, full-time LPN, rate decrease due to switching shifts effective 8/18/24; **Taylor Turner**, full-time LPN, employee is going full-time effective 8/18/24; **Katherine Fleitz**, full-time RN, resignation effective 8/26/24; **Veshea Lee**, full-time STNA, rate decrease due to switching shifts effective 8/4/24; and **Susan Old**, full-time LPN, rate increase due to completion of probation effective 8/15/24.

Board approves Equipment Outlay and Request Form for **IT** re three replacement computers in the amount of \$8,880.

Received copy of support letter to Ohio Public Works Commissioner from Commissioner Shenigo re **Village of Milan's application for funding to rehabilitate their water tower.**

Received copy of letter to The Honorable Robert C. DeLamatre, Juvenile Court, from Ohio Department of Youth Services re **approval of Amendment #1 for the FY 2024 Subsidy Grant.**

Commissioners have no objection to transfer a liquor license from Riser Foods, Co dba Vermilion GetGo 3238 to GetGo Operating LLC, dba **Vermilion GetGo 3238**, Vermilion Township.

On motion of Mr. Old and second of Mr. Shoffner, Board **adjourns** at 10:25 a.m.; Roll Call: All Aye