

ERIE COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY
MINUTES
Thursday, January 15, 2026

Board Members Present: Dahlkemper, Deitrick, Glass (Teams), Hilbert, Johnson (Teams), Nuber (Teams), Richards (Teams), Schmitt (Teams), White & Zaphiris

Board Members Excused: Deitrick; Riley

Others Present: Gus Pine, Ed Snyder, Jim Walczak; Solicitor; TJ Hesch, Dave Gerber, Barry Copple & Neal Wurst

Ms. White called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS: None.

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MONTH:

Ms. White asked for approval of the minutes from the December 18, 2025, meeting.

Mr. Hilbert motioned to approve the December 18, 2025, minutes. Mr. Zaphiris seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Mr. Hesch said for December the event activity was relatively in line with our budget across all of our active venues, just some lighter attendance figures than what we had initially budgeted for some of those events. He said as we noted last month we are going through our promoter incentive and making sure we had all our processes and reports from our new ticketing system lined up. He said you will see a large variance with promoter incentive. Mr. Hesch said we do have that all caught up, and we have a process in place of doing it monthly moving forward. He said so just noting that because there's a couple venues that were affected.

Mr. Hesch said the arena event activity was about in line with our budget just some lighter attendance figures at some of the events. He said one of those events was the Disney on Ice show, which typically comes here every year. He said it is a multi-day event. Mr. Hesch said we had budgeted for some stronger attendance figures than what happened so that had a negative impact. Mr. Hesch said additionally, the Happy Blue Year event, which had been held annually at the arena, was moved to the theatre. He said the good news is that we saw the benefit of that event, but it just negatively impacted the arena. Mr. Hesch said the combination of those two events drove a revenue miss of about \$90,000 and at the bottom line about \$121,000 miss.

Mr. Hesch said the theatre saw the benefit of Happy Blue Year and also the Erie Insurance Town Hall event, which is typically held at the convention center. He said those two large events drove some strong performance from a revenue standpoint, specifically their facility fees and food beverage revenues. Mr. Hesch said their total revenues exceeded budget by \$185,000 and they had a positive variance of about \$44,000 at the bottom line. Mr. Hesch said the theatre had a strong December.

Mr. Hesch said nothing major to comment on at the ballpark, just some small variances as it relates to some utility payments that were made in December, and then some small repair and maintenance items for about \$1800 for some small repairs that were made.

Mr. Hesch said the convention center missed their revenue budget by about \$18,000 in December. He said this was largely due to the Erie Insurance Town Hall event, which was budgeted to happen there but was moved to the theatre. He said that negatively impacted their performance. Mr. Hesch said the biggest miss was in their food and beverage, which fell short of budget by about \$41,000. He said on the expense side they had a negative variance in repair maintenance of about \$30,000. Mr. Hesch said there were some large repairs that needed to be made and some of those bills were paid in December. Mr. Hesch said there was a power outage, and a component of our electrical system was

damaged, so we paid \$6,000 in December to get that repaired and we had a handicap door that was swung open in the wind. He said the cost to repair was \$4,000 when the mechanism broke. Mr. Hesch said those are the types of things that happened that drove that negative variance in December. He said all in, they missed their bottom line by \$64,000.

Mr. Hesch said nothing major to comment on at Liberty Park. He said we are just cleaning up the books to wrap up the year there. He said there is a \$7,000 negative variance. Mr. Hesch said as we reviewed the numbers and checked the settlements, there was some talent expense that we needed to reclassify over to Liberty Park which is what you're seeing there.

Mr. Hesch said as we look at the authority's revenue year-to-date total revenues are \$280,000 ahead of budget. He said that is a 2.1% positive variance. Mr. Hesch said that is a strong year with some good revenue growth over budget. Mr. Hesch said our expenses are also up over budget by about \$986,000 or 6.6%. He said these are largely driven by the things we've been talking about throughout the year. Mr. Hesch said the chargebacks are one of those larger expenses, our repair and maintenance, and professional and legal services. He said the overall positives for 2025 are that we saw some good revenue growth more than budget and year-over-year. Mr. Hesch said we made some good strategic investments that are going to help bring our systems current, keep us state-of-the-art, and help us prepare for future growth and development. Ms. Dahlkemper said when those events get moved, are you seeing that the revenue is about the same or is it less moving to the theatre. Mr. Snyder said for the convention center, it's drastically less, because we don't have the food and beverage buy. He said the theatre is allowing the use of catering.

Ms. Dahlkemper motioned to accept the December 31, 2025, Financial Report as presented. Mr. Hilbert seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

MANAGEMENT REPORT:

Mr. Pine said the only highlight I want to mention from my management report is related to the zoo update. He said since our last meeting, the city approved the resolution for the land transfer of the zoo property over to Erie Events. Mr. Pine said we will have a conversation when I present the resolution later in the meeting which is related to the management agreement with the Erie Zoological Society. Mr. Pine said we still do have a couple of things to check off related to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). He said there is a document that needs to come from the city requesting the transfer. He said there were some emails I saw this morning that we're requesting that from the city. Mr. Pine said that it seems to be in process and there is not a lot of concern that that's going to get transferred, but that box will need to be checked before we can have that final agreement with the city and with the zoo. Mr. Pine said that's been indicated in the in the resolution. He said there's language in the resolution, particularly related to financing for the zoo. Mr. Pine said this is their slow time, obviously, they are closed. He said they do have revenue streams from the ice rink, but they don't have their standard summer revenue, so we're willing to give them a payment as early as February 1st. He said that's indicated within the resolution as well.

Mr. Richards said I had a meeting with the governor yesterday afternoon on CRIZ matters. He said his chief of staff was there, and she is now involved with DCNR and with Washington DC on their approval. Mr. Richards said I think it's getting the attention that you want, and she'll get back with you shortly.

Mr. Pine said Ms. Nealon will be sending out the annual State Ethics form that will need to be completed, signed and mailed to the state. He said the completed form does not get sent to us. He said it should be filed directly with the state. Mr. Pine said a copy should also be sent to the county. He said the deadline to file is May 1, 2026.

Mr. Snyder said a couple notes regarding sales at the convention center; we did achieve our city-wide room night goal for 2025. Mr. Snyder said our senior sales association manager, Amy O'Connell, will be attending the Connect North Conference in Pittsburgh next month. He said this conference is for event professionals from the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast regions.

Mr. Snyder said preparation is underway for our spring consumer show. He said we have the Auto Show here at the end of the month. Mr. Snyder said it should be one of the larger shows we've had as this is the first time all county dealers will be participating.

Mr. Snyder said the kitchen renovation is moving along as planned, which we have talked about in previous meetings. He said the dish machine is underway. Mr. Snyder said it is trending about a week or so ahead of schedule. Mr. Snyder said Mr. Wurst has done a great job of leading the contractors on this project. He said if anybody wants to see that, it's still under construction, but would be happy to give a tour after the meeting.

Mr. Snyder said at the Rebich Investments amphitheater, we have about half of the 8 Great Tuesdays booked and 9 other events right now for summer. Mr. Richards said why is the amphitheater now called Rebich Investments

Amphitheater. Mr. Snyder said it was previously the Highmark Amphitheater. He said that deal expired the end of 2024, so the Port Authority reached an agreement with Rebich Investments for the naming rights of the amphitheater.

Ms. Dahlkemper said I have a question about us taking over the consumer show. She said are we adding any events. She said that was one of the things we talked about and where we are with that. Mr. Snyder said our goal at this point is to grow the current shows at the convention center. He said I would say about half of them have a lot of growth potential, and that's kind of what we're focusing on at this point. A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Hilbert motioned to accept the Management Reports as presented. Mr. Zaphiris seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

Mr. Glass, Construction Committee Chairperson, stated that the Courtyard Refresh Project is moving along well. He said we expect to get the furniture in our warehouse next week. Mr. Glass said the second floor should be completed by the end of the week. He said we are currently carpeting the rooms. Mr. Glass said the contractor has moved up to the fifth floor and is doing the demolition necessary to bring up the painter to paint the ceilings and start hanging vinyl. He said May 1st is still our target date.

Mr. Glass said for the Courtyard Parking Ramp Project we are in a holding pattern waiting for the submittals for the engineering drawings for the design of the tension cabling for the deck.

Mr. Glass said for the Market House Project during the month of February we will be getting our zoning approval, Waterfront Review Committee approval and BIU approval. Mr. Glass said the project will go out for bids at the end of February for the general construction. He said we are looking at bidding the piles individually within the next couple of weeks so he can get a jump on that portion of the construction. He said the piles hold up the foundation of the building.

Mr. Glass said the Ballpark Lighting Project is underway. He said they're switching from their halogen to LED fixtures.

Mr. Richards Strategic Planning Committee Chairperson said there have been meetings of the Strategic Planning Committee with our investment banker of previous credit facilities that were approved. Mr. Richards said there are some recommendations for changes that will improve our cash flow significantly. He said I'm going to ask Mr. Hesch to explain what is involved.

Mr. Hesch said we were approached by Mr. Peter Phillippi who works for Piper Sandler Company who was very intimately involved with the initial bond issuance for the Sheraton Hotel. He said he was also part of the financing for the Courtyard Hotel. Mr. Hesch said he reached out to us at the beginning of 2025 to start the conversation that the Sheraton bond became callable and given the current rate environment we could achieve some significant savings on our debt financing of about \$396,000 at minimum. Mr. Hesch said we have been having conversations with him just to see what those savings would look like. He said I think we're looking to proceed with those discussions.

Mr. Pine said there are several versions, including rolling in the financing for the Courtyard which would add to the savings. He said there is also the option of keeping the term as it currently is, adding five years or adding 10 years. Mr. Pine said we have to decide which of these options best fit our needs. He said there is probably positives and negatives to all of them. Mr. Pine said one of the items that we discussed at length during the strategic planning committee meeting was the plan going forward to have these conversations with Erie County leadership because Erie County guarantees the financing for the hotels. Mr. Pine said that Ms. Dahlkemper sat as County Executive and has a lot of experience going back to when this was originally done. He said I think the next step is that we need to determine which avenue we think is most advantageous for us, and which one we think we can get Erie County comfortable with. He said at the end of the day it's going to save Erie County money over time as well.

Mr. Richards said in the strategic planning committee meeting that we had this week that there was a discussion regarding the CRIZ commitment to the project for the parking garage. He said following the meeting that I had with Mr. Tim Necastro and myself with Governor Shapiro yesterday afternoon it is fair to say that everything is back on track, and there's no reason for us to slow down the bidding process for the Park Ramp Project.

Mr. Pine said I sent out a communication Monday that had a summary of some critical items that are included in Zoo Management Agreement Resolution 2026-01. He said we had some conversations at strategic planning about how we want to structure our board involvement and what that board is going to look like. Mr. Pine said I don't think we will get a lot of push back from the Erie Zoological Society, but we can figure out those details. Mr. Pine said 3 members of that board will be nominated and approved directly by the authority board. He said those don't necessarily have to be board members of ECCCA. Mr. Pine said there is an argument to say we might want to identify somebody other than our board members to be on there, because there could be several scenarios where somebody is going to have to abstain from a lot of the votes that would happen at that level. Mr. Pine said the other key piece is the additional board members for the

Erie Zoological Society; all must be approved by this board. He said while we pick three, we will approve all of them. Mr. Pine said we did have some conversations about scenarios where perhaps once the boards is in place, if we're running into conflicts, if there needs to be some language within the document that allows us the ability to make some changes to that board so that we can continue to move things forward. Mr. Walczak said what was sent out to you on Monday was a draft of the management agreement, which we negotiated with the Erie Zoological Society, and a resolution that would approve this agreement in this draft form allows Mr. Pine to negotiate the final details. Mr. Walczak said there are a couple minor modifications which have occurred since then. He said one to the resolution is simply adding some language in paragraph four, which makes it clear that one of the things that Mr. Pine can do in negotiating the agreement is to agree to the completion of the exhibits to the agreement. Mr. Walczak said the exhibits are, you'll see in the draft that was sent to you, are all blank. He said they are just simply placeholders. Mr. Walczak said some of the items are just pro forma, like the Articles of Corporation of the Erie Zoological Society, the list of current board members of the zoological society, a map of the zoo area, that type of thing. He said the one that we want to be very specific about is the insurance requirements. He said we're pinning those down right now about who's going to be insuring what and make certain that there's full coverage for everything there, either through the Erie Zoological Society's insurance policies, or in our policies. He said we are in a little different situation than the Erie Zoological Society because we have statutory limits of liability and they do not. He said we need to coordinate all that and I know Mr. Zaphiris has been working on that issue. He said we'll have to populate that exhibit so this resolution was slightly changed to allow the completion of the exhibits to the agreement. Mr. Walczak said other than that the resolution is exactly as you was sent to you on Monday and was also included in your board packet. He said that is what we will be approving today. Mr. Walczak said in the agreement itself the Erie Zoological Society requested three changes which were very minor. He said two of them related to making it clear that some of the animals there are not owned by the Erie Zoological Society and that they are on loan to the zoo. Mr. Walczak said and then the other one relates to the board members that Mr. Pine alluded to that their council had concern about these potential conflicts and interest, or that sort of thing. He said we agreed to say that our appointees to the board will not be members of this board or employees of the authority in the current document. He said that's something which I think is relatively minor. He said we will identify three people who we think are appropriate representatives of the authority on the board, but not necessarily board members or employees of the authority. He said the remaining board members must all be approved by us. Mr. Walczak said if there's anybody that's on that board or that's nominated for that board it must first go through us. He said and typically a nonprofit organization such as the Erie Zoological Society the board elects its own successors. He said that's very typical for a nonprofit, but in this case, they're going to have to get our approval. He said that gives us a measure of control. Mr. Walczak said you can see in the agreement we tried to nail down everything we possibly could and think about what we're going to encounter in the future. He said it is a very unusual relationship we have here because the Erie Zoological Society owns the animals and they manage the zoo. Mr. Walczak said it's a little different than our situation here at the hotels, where White Lodging is simply doing what they do for lots of other people providing service. He said it is still similar in the sense that we own the hotels, and we have a management agreement with White Lodging, and we will now have a management agreement with the Erie Zoological Society. He said there are tremendous number of protections here for us on almost every level. Mr. Walczak said their budget must be approved by us. He said all capital expenditures have to be approved by us. He said there are standards that they must adhere to with the American Society of Zoological and Aquarium. He said those are the standards that the goal is to get recertified by that organization. Mr. Walczak said we're trying to integrate them with us in the sense that naming rights, pouring rights, other things like that are all covered in this agreement. He said they must report to us on a quarterly basis, and we do approve their budget. He said there are a lot of constraints, and they have agreed to all. He said their biggest concern was the governance provisions about the board and their independence. A brief discussion followed.

Ms. Dahlkemper motioned to accept Resolution 2026-001 as presented to the board. Mr. Hilbert seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Mr. Nuber, Nominating Committee Chairperson, said I spoke with the current officers, and they have agreed to serve another term. He said Ms. White, Chairperson, Mr. Riley as Vice Chairperson, Mr. Glass Treasurer and Mr. Hilbert as Secretary.

Nominating Committee motioned to accept the current slate of Officers for the Erie County Convention Center Authority Executive Committee for 2026. Mr. Zaphiris seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Hilbert motioned to adjourn. The motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 3:42 PM.