

ERIE COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY
MINUTES
Thursday, July 17, 2025

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

Board Members Excused: Hilbert, Richards

Others Present: Gus Pine, Ed Snyder, Jim Walczak; Solicitor; Neal Wurst and Steve Morvay

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 June 19, 2025, minutes.

Ms. Dahlkemper motioned to approve the June 19, 2025, minutes. Mr. Riley seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Kissell said I came down Monday for lunch with a few people and we were going to sit outside down here, but we were told it was not open, even though they were serving the inside. He said I am not sure what the policy is but it was nice outside, but they did not want to serve anybody outside. He said I left and went across the street to Pier Six.

Mr. Kissell said in the hallway in Pier Six, those walls there are so bare that maybe advertising from the Authority with what is going on, or murals of Erie's downtown for people visiting. He said it is just blank and there is nothing on the walls in that hallway. He said it is kind of dark going to the parking garage. Mr. Kissell said you might want to look at that elevator. He said I think it needs some possible paint because on the edge on the west side, it looks like it is rusting out along the bottom.

Mr. Kissell said who regulates the gate closing on North Bay Drive from the Cove Restaurant back to the Sheraton. He said they put a gate across there, at times, preventing people from driving along there. He said I know that at one time there was some concern about what was going on down there.

Mr. Kissell said I believe there was supposed to be some type of maintenance done on that whole pier, and it was put off because of budgetary and it's been, I think, the second or third year, the pedestrian walkway, where the trees are planted, the bricks are raising.

Mr. Pine said regarding the Courtyard and the outdoor seating did you bring that up to management. He said did you get a specific answer on why they were not seating outside. Mr. Kissell said no. He said when I went in and asked if we could sit outside the waitress and other staff said there was nothing available. Mr. Pine said thank you for sharing that information, I will look into that concern.

Mr. Pine said regarding your comments on the entryway to Monacella Massage, I have the same thoughts. He said it is kind of a strange hallway, because it is a rather large hallway. Mr. Pine said we are in the process of putting bids in a package together for expansion of that ramp by two floors. He said and as part of that we have identified that area to include that in the renovation whether it is soft seating, something on the wall, replacement of the carpet. Mr. Pine said we are thinking about putting a digital board in that area as well with upcoming events and other information.

Mr. Pine said as I understand it the back driveway at the Sheraton is, by and large, a service driveway. Mr. Kissell said there is signage that says there is no parking. Mr. Pine said historically, as I understand it, that has been done just because there have been some challenges with weekend traffic down there and people would park down there and cause issues. Mr. Pine said those decisions are made by the Sheraton. He said I will get some more information because they should be shutting that down as minimally as possible. Mr. Kissell said it gets busy and I know there have been concerns down here over the years, there was parking allowed on the south side of that drive, not the north side. Mr. Pine said we will look into it further and get a better understanding of why we are shutting it down.

Mr. Pine said regarding the pedestrian walkway, that is part of a three-year project. He said if you walk around our entire property, you will see a ton of improvements to particularly the landscaping. Mr. Pine said that is the third phase. He said the idea is to pull out those loose brick pavers and redo it with a stamp look, which will match what has been done up on State Street. He said it will have more durability because it would be a single pour versus those pavers which are creating a trip hazard. Ms. Dahlkemper said that takes the permeability out of that space. A brief discussion followed.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Mr. Hesch said June was a mixed bag as it relates to event activity across the different venues. He said a couple of the venues did very well as it relates to event activity and surpassed their budget expectations and then we had a couple that missed their budget expectations due to cancelations, and we had an event that was rescheduled. He said I'll touch on those in a moment. Mr. Hesch said, ultimately, the shortfalls exceeded the wins for June, so the Authority missed their bottom-line budget by \$274,000. He said I will touch on some of the big points here that I think will make some of this stuff up in a few months here. Mr. Hesch said the arena was scheduled to have the Nate Bargatze show that was budgeted to occur in June. He said I think we budgeted about \$150,000 in revenues on that, but they rescheduled the show for August. Mr. Hesch said now we have just have a timing difference. He said June looks bad, but we will see that show happen in August and should look pretty good as it relates to the arena's performance. Mr. Hesch said as we look at June, you will see there is a budget shortfall of \$163,000. He said this was largely due to the Nate Bargatze show not happening in June.

Mr. Hesch said the Warner had a good month. He said they had eight event days over the course of June and those events did well. Mr. Hesch said they generated good operating revenues and they exceeded their operating revenue budget by \$55,000. He said the team did a good job managing expenses, and so a lot of that \$55,000 in excess revenues flowed through to the bottom line. Mr. Hesch said they exceeded their bottom-line budget by \$48,000 for June.

Mr. Hesch said the ballpark did well. He said they had good event activity with just a few small variances. Mr. Hesch said the largest of which is in their personal services. He said we started an internship program this year for turf grass management. Mr. Hesch said we have some interns that have been working this summer at the ballpark. He said it is a great program, but I think by the time we finalized that program and rolled it out, it was not budgeted for, and so our personnel services is a little over budget. Mr. Hesch said the ballpark did miss by \$9000 in the month of June. He said I think that the main driver of that miss. Ms. White said are the interns part of Gannon Internship Program. Mr. Pine said yes, they are all three Gannon University students. He said they are in this Sports and Marketing Department at Gannon University. Mr. Pine said, long term, we look to partner with Penn State. He said that Penn State has a specific Turf Management Program, which we would like to tap into. Mr. Pine said we think we will get some good, qualified candidates and provide them with some great experience.

Mr. Hesch said the convention center felt the impact of the Erie Insurance cyber-attack. He said that Erie Insurance had two scheduled events to occur in the month of June. He said, unfortunately, those events were around the same time that they were going through that attack, and so they canceled those events. Mr. Hesch said there was another large conference or convention that was canceled. He said I think it was First Energy. Mr. Hesch said the Authority, as a whole, still saw the benefits, but there was an event that was scheduled to happen at the convention center that was moved up to the Warner. Mr. Hesch said, unfortunately, the convention center, with those three cancelations and the one moved event, missed out on about \$350,000 worth of revenues in June alone. He said the good news is that I think Mr. Snyder and his team did a great job of controlling expenses with those missed revenues, and so at the bottom line, they only missed by \$90,000.

Mr. Hesch said Liberty Park did well. He said they had two unbudgeted events happen which were Soul Fest and Pride Fest. He said those events did well, and they ended up exceeding their bottom-line budget by \$15,000.

Mr. Hesch said as we look at our year-to-date, noting the Nate Bargatze show being rescheduled, as well as the impact of the canceled events at the convention center, the Authority as a whole year-to-date through June, is missing at the bottom line, by \$457,000. He said, however, I do believe that we will make up most, if not all, over the course of the rest of the year. He said noting that we will see the Nate Bargatze show in August, and two concerts at the arena in September that should perform well and put us back in line. Mr. Hesch said at this point, I do not see any need to make any forecast adjustments to where we will finish the year. Mr. Glass said were they ticketed events held at Liberty Park. Mr. Snyder said that Soul Fest was a health and wellness event that was ticketed through them and Pride Fest was free. Mr. Snyder said we sold concessions and had alcohol sales. He said the revenue was primarily driven by the rental of the park, some staff reimbursement and equipment rental. Mr. Snyder said we made about \$4,000 in concessions at Pride Rest. Ms. Dahlkemper said in terms of the cancelation of these larger, uncontrolled reason for that, but do we end up getting anything for those. Mr. Snyder said that we will retain the deposit for those two events. He said, obviously, we will work with them if they are able to reschedule but at this point, it does not look like the convention center will be receiving rescheduled dates for those events. Ms. Dahlkemper said is that pretty much standard policy for a cancelled event. Mr. Snyder said it depends on the nature of the cancelation. He said sometimes we have events that will push their event out a year and then we will roll the deposit for the future event. Mr. Snyder said but, in this situation, because of the short-term notice of the cancelation, we will retain the deposits. He said this has been communicated to Erie Insurance and they have signed off.

Mr. Glass motioned to accept the June 30, 2025, Financial Report as presented. Mr. Deitrick seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

MANAGEMENT REPORT:

Mr. Pine said we were talking about the parking ramp expansion in the meeting previous to this. He said we have engaged with FourScore Consulting, which is the consulting firm that the local CRIZ Authority is using to get this program underway. He said specifically we are working with Ms. Deana Zosky, who is the owner of that organization. He said she is working to ensure that all the proper tax collection information is being collected with all the businesses within 30 acres of CRIZ. Mr. Pine said, however, from our standpoint we have already received approval from the local CRIZ, it now must go to the state. Mr. Pine said Ms. Zosky is consulting with us to make sure that our application to the state checks all the boxes before we submit. Mr. Pine said it is an eight-month build. He said I was talking with Mr. Glass today, and it sounds like we can begin the process if we are ready to build this ramp in the winter, we do not have to wait until the spring to pour concrete. Mr. Pine said the objective is to get this project started as soon as possible. Mr. Snyder said regarding the temporary parking we have engaged with Ashley Porter Engineering from Meadville. He said their firm and Mr. Porter, in general, has a lot of experience with activity down here. He said he works at the Port Authority a lot on different projects and has good relationship with the city. Mr. Snyder said there is a storm water retention concern, from the city standpoint, of us putting in temporary parking and what that looks like. He said, apparently, there was a variance that changed in 2011 that does not allow us to direct drain into the bay or utilize the remaining grass acreage as drainage. He said there is a process for us to put things there, but we will have to navigate that with the city. Mr. Snyder said we are going to engage with him to go through that process. He said it will help us, short term, with parking overflow but it can also set a good precedent for future GAF development. Mr. Glass said it would be good to have a site plan to show where the temporary parking is going to go. Mr. Snyder said we have a basic version that we have shared with contractors, because we did receive three bids to put in temporary parking from Perry, EE Austin and Shivers. Mr. Glass said because the contractor that has got the ramp, is going to have to have various layouts of the areas for the equipment. He said then once he leaves, you are going to have it across the street from the Market House. Mr. Pine said I have spoken with EE Austin requesting construction management services. He said they are already on contract for the Market House Project, and we see these projects going on at the same time. He said it makes perfect sense to have one construction manager managing both projects, because there might be some efficiencies that we can gain from that, in terms of scheduling when concrete is poured but there is also that issue with trying to share space, when we have got different contractors. Mr. Pine said it certainly helps if we have one construction manager that provides that coordination.

Mr. Pine said regarding the Erie Zoo there is not a whole lot to update here, but I just wanted to let everybody know where we stand. He said on July 2, 2025, Erie City Council passed a resolution supporting negotiations between the administration and Erie Events. Mr. Pine said, quite frankly, there's not a lot in that resolution, or really anything in there that provides any material that we can move forward with. Mr. Pine said, however, it does get Erie City Council on record that they are supportive of moving forward with this partnership. Mr. Pine said I am meeting with Mr. Hesch and Ms. Roo Kojancie hopefully next week. He said our objective with that meeting is, obviously, we need an agreement with the City of Erie, but then secondarily, we need an agreement with Zoological Society to be able to manage that property. Mr. Pine said we are going to start digging into their financials, particularly for this year, where we will see if we are participating from a financial standpoint, what does 2026 look like; where are those dollars going; when do they need those dollars; is it up front or is it throughout the year. Mr. Pine said the objective is if something does move forward quickly with the City of Erie, we are prepared to get an agreement with the Zoological Society, as well. Mr. Pine said, related to the City of Erie, we have not heard from the administration since the resolution was passed. He said there has been an August 1, 2025 deadline that has been communicated to the City of Erie. Mr. Pine said at our Executive session our discussion revolved around reaching out by getting a letter to the administration that identifies the fact that we have not heard something in two weeks, and time is of the essence. Mr. Pine said with an August 1st deadline, coming very quickly, I think we will outline what we have done to this point with the objective of showing, wherever this goes, it is important that we make clear that we are not the element here that is in the way of this potential resolution for the zoo. A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Pine said regarding PA250 next year, there likely will be multiple events around this event within the city. He said I think it is important that there is some coordination around all of events. Mr. Pine said we have Lights Over Lake Erie, fireworks and we are looking at two potential concerts, one on July 3, 2026, and one on July 4, 2026, at Liberty Park. He said that is just conversations right now, but we do not want that competing with other events that are going on within the city. He said the idea is to create a task force. Mr. Pine said I think we are going to obviously be asked to sit on that. He said it is similar to the planning that was done for the solar eclipse. Mr. Pine said this obviously is not the same size of event, but this is going to be a once-in-the-lifetime celebration. He said we want to make sure that we are taking

full advantage of it. He said I just want to let everybody know that we are getting ahead of it and we will be at the seat to help plan this celebration.

Mr. Pine said regarding the arena improvements and the Erie Otters, I gave some updates last week on some of the things that we are looking at in terms of improvements. He said it was food equipment updates; the new ticketing system and we are looking at getting a new Zamboni as well, which we will want to promote since fans always love that. Mr. Pine said we are moving to package sales for beverage service, and we are working with the Otters to make some improvements to the in-game production, whether it is the music, the quality of the lighting, the quality of the entire production of the game, we are working with them to improve those experiences. He said since we are making all these improvements, I think there is also an opportunity, as they start the season, to talk about Matt Schaefer, perhaps talk about the new kids they have coming in that are replacing, and talk a little bit about the season. Mr. Pine said we are looking to work with them to do a media day where we will invite our premium ticket holders, our season ticket holders, and the media. Mr. Pine said we are working that out, but I envision something less of standing at a podium and speaking to the crowd, and more of a sit down with a moderator who is asking specific questions so that we can dig into some of these things. He said from our standpoint, it is going to be important, because we want our fans and the public to start getting comfortable with our new ticketing system. He said the system is going to be a big improvement on what we have now, but it is also change, and we want to start getting people comfortable with that change, particularly as it relates to the tickets and our changes at the concession stands. Mr. Pine said at the concession stands, we anticipate the lines are going to move much quicker. He said we will continue to make improvements there.

Mr. Pine said the hotel soft goods renovation project; I have in my report that we are looking at a December start date for that project. He said I received some updates from the hotels yesterday and based on their occupancies, and some things that they have done to plan for this project they have been able to improve that to a November 1st start date, which is great, because the timeline we are up against is having this done before the summer season, which fast approaches. He said it's about a month per floor to renovate. Mr. Pine said the plan is to take out an entire floor at a time to do half the floor and then do the other half.

Mr. Pine said I traveled to Bethesda last Friday with the hotel general manager, Paul Hudak, along with Ms. Shelley Buehler, our designer, to meet with Marriott to review one of the sample rooms. Mr. Pine said they have a model room that we were able to look at and see some of the products. He said we do have some choices of options, so we are going through that process with Marriott. Mr. Pine said, additionally, we got on the phone call with them yesterday, and we have requested several variances. He said there are certain things that they have identified as part of their package, that really do not apply to us as a Bayfront type hotel. He said they were very receptive. Mr. Pine said the only ones they wanted more information on were some of the vinyl choices that we chose. Mr. Pine said the vinyl is a good example in that we have a lot of vinyl left over from the Sheraton renovation, enough so that we could probably bring it over here, and the vinyl is very close to what their actual choice is, so our request is that we are able to use that vinyl. Mr. Pine said that will save us some costs. He said we are just going through final approvals, and it looks like we are on target for November 1st start date.

Mr. Deitrick said is this new ticketing system going to be able to help with that problem of the chargebacks that you have spoken of in the past. Mr. Pine said yes that it is part of the agreement, the chargebacks are their responsibility, so we are not in any financial risk with the chargeback. Mr. Pine said I think, with TSO, we had \$13,000 in chargebacks. He said that it would be their responsibility which was written in to the contract.

Mr. Riley said going back to the switch to package goods at the arena, just to confirm my understanding, that there will be draft beer available at some locations. Mr. Pine said, yes. Mr. Riley said will customers get a can of pop instead of a fountain pop. Mr. Pine said it will be a bottle. Mr. Riley said will they have the option of getting a cup and ice, or will it simply be a cold bottle. Mr. Pine said my initial thought would be no because that adds waste. A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Snyder said 8 Great Tuesdays kicked off on July 8th. He said we have had two of them and they have been very popular, but I think a lot of that has to do with the weather. He said I am very proud of our team. Mr. Snyder said it has been a task force of folks from the Warner and the convention center working together. He said it has been something new for us and everybody has worked hard.

Mr. Snyder said on that security update for Bayfront Landing. He said we have had some incidents across the campus, so we are going to increase some staffing at peak hours, both in the Courtyard garage and the convention center, to try to curb that before anything drastic happens. Mr. Snyder said if you are down here having dinner and you see anything that looks out of the ordinary, please let me know. He said we want to make sure our guys are on top of that before we have any type of problem. Ms. White said what type of problems you are seeing. Mr. Snyder said there has been an increase in aggressive loitering in the Courtyard parking ramp, specifically on the second floor behind John Melody's property in the evening. He said, in one incident, some younger folks in cars were blocking access to the ramp totally down on Sassafras. Mr. Snyder said we had some unhoused folks try to spend the night in the sky bridge and the

Marriott connector. He said and then there has been some small petty theft. He said a bicycle was stolen from the Sheraton parking ramp. He said nothing major but obviously not the type of activity we want on our properties. Mr. Snyder said Tony Ferraro, our security director, is all over it, and his staff will be down here. He said they have a new ATV that says Erie Events Security that we are using at both Liberty Park and here.

Mr. Snyder said an update on sales of the convention center second quarter. He said Mr. Hesch mentioned we had some challenges, but the team did a great job finishing 94% of budget, and we are on pace to finish at 95% of budget, with the primary focus for in-the-year sales in September, November and December. Mr. Snyder said Ms. DiLuzio has the team geared up to fill those gaps, and I feel confident that we will finish strong.

Mr. Snyder said, it is not in my written report, but I want to highlight the North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Convention that is currently occurring and the reason that we are in this room. He said this is one of the key conventions that we really strived to get. He said Ms. DiLuzio and the team have been working for six years to get this to come here, and these guys have been great all week. Mr. Snyder said they are all over the community, doing different activities. He said they are in all three properties down here and eating in our restaurants. He said it is a full campus event. Mr. Snyder said we look to use this to leverage ourselves to get more events like this. Mr. Snyder said I know we talked yesterday at the White Lodging meeting about airlift being a challenge, this is an event that we overcame that challenge and we still had a national event here. He said I am proud of the team for getting this event and executing it as well. Ms. Dahlkemper said how do you measure the other people they bring with them, like family members, to the conference. She said how do you track that. Mr. Snyder said we have a metric to track how many room nights that we are selling, both in our properties and across the city, based on the demand of what the convention has. He said this one has a great story where they go out and use the restaurants and other activities. Mr. Snyder said that its economic impact is beyond just the Bayfront. He said it is across the city and the county. A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Snyder said my final note is on our marketing team. He said I want to give them a shout out. He said if you recall we had a marketing firm, Cogwell, that we had utilized to create the Bayfront Landing brand and help us get that off the ground. He said in 2025 we no longer use their services and rely more on Ms. Pavlov and her marketing team. He said Ms. Pavlov and her team have done a great job of taking that on and advertising Bayfront Landing, which is our brand for the whole campus outside of the market, to help us reach meeting planners and other event coordinators. Mr. Snyder said they have achieved their yearly goals already, specifically on Instagram and Facebook followers and interactions. He said they have been doing a lot with LinkedIn as well. He said it is a noticeable difference. Mr. Snyder said I think the biggest notice is our wedding sales leads are up based on their activity. He said they understand the analytics. He said they were able to work with Meta to get our Instagram and Facebook accounts linked to our business accounts, which were not done before, and they understand Google analytics to find out how people are finding us and getting to our website. Mr. Snyder said we appreciate their efforts, and I think we have seen forward momentum because of those efforts. A brief discussion followed.

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

OLD BUSINESS:

Mr. Glass, Construction Committee Chairperson, said the Market House drawings are 65% to 70% complete. He said Mr. Hesch has got his financing bids for the bridge loan.

Mr. Glass said the parking ramp we talked about moving it up to construct it during the winter months. He said you were going to tell Ms. Buehler to submit her drawings for BIU because it takes 30 days to get approval and then if we are going to bid that another 30 days which takes you into September. He said we will need to set up bridge financing for that project too.

Mr. Glass said I have a couple of questions. He said what is the status of the seawall repair. Mr. Snyder said when we met with Mr. Porter regarding temporary parking, we also discussed the seawall. Mr. Snyder said he had divers in looking at some projects for the Port Authority so while they were mobilized in Erie, they looked at our seawall. Mr. Snyder said there were some concerns with the underwater wooden cribbing. He said it is not in danger of imminent collapse, but it is not in great shape. Mr. Snyder said I have asked him to create a proposal to give us some idea of scale and scope of what kind of work would need to be done and then we can take that to see what funding would be needed and potentially complete that project. Mr. Snyder said he is working on that initial proposal now.

Mr. Glass said what is the status of the bollard replacement or refinishing. Mr. Snyder said on Monday we sent one of our silver benches and one of our bollards out to get sandblasted and powder coated. He said we got a price to do a large chunk of them, but we wanted to get one of each done to see if it looks okay. He said we will get those back from the vendor on Monday, and if we are okay with the quality, we are going to send 18 benches and 36 bollards out to get

done this year, and then we will do the rest next year. Ms. White asked where are the benches located. Mr. Snyder said these are the silver benches along the walkway, around the outside of the convention center. He said a lot of the paint is flaked off, and they really stand out especially now that we have elevated the landscaping.

Mr. Riley asked the status of the windows. Mr. Glass said we took a hiatus because rooms are not available to replace them. He said we will probably start up again in September and October. He said we only have 22 to go.

Ms. White said Mr. Pine will give us a Strategic Planning Committee update. Mr. Pine said we met with HVS, our asset manager for the hotels yesterday, along with White Lodging. He said I have a report on quarterly performance for Q2. He said, overall, a good quarter for both hotels. Mr. Pine said the Courtyard, if you remember from our last report three months ago, they struggled coming out of the gate for the year in Q1, but they have since turned that around in Q2 and had a fantastic quarter. Mr. Pine said between the two properties, they both beat net income for the quarter. He said things are looking very good for the hotels, and that is in the face of some general market softening within the hotel industry, not only here in Erie, but in general. Mr. Pine said travel is down slightly year after year. He said the nice thing is that our hotels are getting more than their fair share within the market and they have all sorts of ways and companies that they work with to measure that, as well.

Mr. Pine said, a couple of highlights, as Mr. Snyder mentioned marketing, I did have it on my notes as well, because they highlighted this during the meeting of their appreciation for our marketing team. Mr. Pine said they use a third-party to assist them with marketing, but the collaboration with Ms. Pavlov and her team has been fantastic and they specifically mentioned that. He said our marketing department was really beefed up. He said we went from one person to five employees. He said it is really making a difference and making a difference to our partners as well.

Mr. Pine said throughout the first six months of the year, the Sheraton Hotel, their catering department measures their customer service similar to how it is measured for guest rooms, as well. Mr. Pine said there are about 165 Sheraton hotels in the country, and they are currently number one for the first six months in terms of service based on those surveys that we had from customers.

NEW BUSINESS: None

OTHER BUSINESS: Ms. White said we want to move our August board meeting to the following Thursday, August 28th. She said primarily because the day of our meeting is the first day of Tall Ships and it will be very congested on the bay front and will make accessing the convention center complicated. She said is anyone opposed to moving the meeting out a week. Ms. White said seeing no hands, the meeting will be moved to Thursday, August 28, 2025.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None.

ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Dahlkemper motioned to adjourn. The motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 3:54 PM.