

ERIE COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY
MINUTES
Thursday, April 16, 2026

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

Board Members Excused:

Others Present: Gus Pine, Ed Snyder, Jim Walczak, Solicitor; TJ Hesch, Dave Gerber, Tony Ferraro, Steve Morvay, Neal Wurst, Ray Williams, Lisa DiLuzio

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 of the March 19, 2026, meeting.

Mr. Riley motioned to approve March 19, 2026, minutes. Mr. Glass seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Kissell said last night there was a public hearing held at Erie City Council. He said overall, I thought it was a little bit on the weak side in that the young lady who was a presenter, I never heard of the company that she represented. Mr. Kissell said I thought maybe if she did a better introduction of herself on what projects might have been done, either here in Erie or somewhere, we could go look at it. Mr. Kissell said the other thing was, for those people who might not have been around back in the 80s, the grain elevator was shown as your project area. He said I know there were some explanations on that, but I don't know why the GAF site wasn't shown with the development that's taking place down there, but it was the Erie grain elevator on Holland Street, Port Authority property and Scott property, that was shown on this slide. Mr. Kissell said also there's a lot of criticism that went on. He said they had an attorney from Erie City, line some people up that this was a public hearing on your project. Mr. Kissell said a lot of them went into housing and they were saying that the monies that are coming in for this could be better used in the Erie Community, He said it should have been explained that the money received, the \$3 million to buy the GAF property and the \$7 million to renovate it or clean it up, was basically state monies. Mr. Kissell said it wasn't local money although it's all tax money. He said I think a little bit of a better explanation might be for the Market House is what will be going in it. Mr. Kissell said I know Mr. Pine spoke a little bit about that, but I think one thing that came up was a fish market which I think is a good idea. Mr. Kissell said I also wanted to mention contact information, I know you have a website and some of the people who were down there last night probably weren't aware of it but people who frequent this area should be made aware of where they can get information. He said and, lastly, I know I mentioned to the board some time ago that up on the top of Sassafras Street, where the walkway is going to be coming over, there was a piece of land that was for sale. He said I believe I mentioned at one of the board meetings or to some on the staff and to the Transportation Authority that the authority should have gotten that piece of land as a staging place for people to drop off passengers on top of the bluff. Mr. Kissell said they can walk across the bridge down to the Market House or any of the events and come back instead of waiting on the Bayfront Parkway. Mr. Kissell said there's nothing up there yet, it is Hamot's lot, and I don't know who bought that lot, but there may be a condo or something else going up on the top of that hill. He said those are things that I think are important for the board to know, and I thank you for your time.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Mr. Pine said Mr. Hesch has been presented with a tremendous opportunity. He said that Mr. Hesch and his wife have an Amazon distribution business. He said that Amazon has changed some of the requirements that they're requiring of the distributors. Mr. Pine said Mr. Hesch is going to have to step aside so that he can focus on that business. He said I want to thank Mr. Hesch. Mr. Pine said you've done a lot including implementing a new software program for us, which is going to take us to all sorts of levels, so thank you for your time with us. Mr. Pine said Mr. Hesch and I added the assistant director's position back in October. He said I was planning to do that at the start of this year through the budgeting process, but we received approval to go ahead and add the new position which I'm extremely glad we did. Mr. Pine said Mr. Dave Gerber has been on board for six months and has gotten up to speed on everything. Mr. Pine said this is the exact scenario that you can't anticipate in accounting and finance that is such a critical item with an organization like ours. He said losing the top person can be debilitating for an organization, especially as we've grown. Mr. Pine said I am happy to announce we have offered Mr. Gerber the director position, and he's accepted. Mr. Pine said while we're sad to see Mr. Hesch leave the organization, we're in great shape with Mr. Gerber. He said that Mr. Gerber said we have three or four interviews next week for the next assistant director, so we are moving forward. Mr. Pine said Mr. Hesch has agreed to stay on staff until we get that new assistant director hired and onboard.

Mr. Gerber said activity across all the venues was in line with the budget for the month of March. He said we did miss in the arena and the theatre, but we did see a gain in the convention center. Mr. Gerber said the misses in the arena and the theatre drove the bottom line miss by about \$128,000 across all venues.

Mr. Gerber said the arena was under budget in revenue, however, they were able to mitigate their expenses being lower than budget. He said they saw a miss of \$95,000 for the month. He said that was driven mainly by a negative revenue variance of \$159,000 which was weaker than expected concession and box office sales. Mr. Gerber said this was mainly related to two events that didn't happen. He said we had a concert that we anticipated in March, and we also were anticipating the Otters playoff games that did not happen. Mr. Gerber said as part of that, the concession sales were below budget by \$72,000. He said expenses to help mitigate that revenue variance overall was below budget by \$64,000 on top of that.

Mr. Gerber said the theatre missed budget by \$61,000. He said that we had one less show than we budgeted for, but we also saw lower than anticipated attendance figures for the theatre events throughout the month. Mr. Gerber said their expenses were right in line with that.

Mr. Gerber said at the ballpark really nothing out of the ordinary. He said they didn't open until April, so we'll start seeing more activity coming in next month.

Mr. Gerber said the convention center had a very busy month. He said they were above budget by \$26,000. Mr. Gerber said part of that was about \$9,000 up in revenue. Mr. Gerber said the big factor was that their concession revenue was up by \$34,000. He said they were able to maintain their expenses that were \$17,000 below budget. He said the main areas where they saw the savings were wages, fringe benefits and their repairs and maintenance from what we had budgeted there.

Mr. Gerber said Liberty Park had no activity. He said we do have some expenses, but they were all in line with budget, as we anticipated.

Mr. Gerber said for the Erie Zoo; we did account for the next \$150,000 payment in the budget. He said that payment will be made on April 30th.

Mr. Gerber said for the year to date through March our total revenues across all venues were under budget by \$345,000. He said total expenses were also under budget by \$127,000 leading that variance down. He said then our overall budget miss was \$218,000.

Ms. Dahlkemper motioned to accept the March 30, 2026, Financial Reports as presented to the board. Mr. Hilbert seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

MANAGEMENT REPORT:

Mr. Pine said I want to highlight the PA250 celebration. He said on April 9th Mr. Ray Williams and I went to Hershey for the announcement for this historic event. He said Pennsylvania is presenting a free concert series across the Commonwealth. Mr. Pine said there are five cities that have concerts that have been scheduled in addition to the sixth being in Philadelphia on July 4th. Mr. Pine said these concerts are Governor supported. He said we have a group called The Fray which is very popular among millennials. He said it is a free concert at the arena on June 6th which will kick off Erie's celebration of PA250. He said Marshall Tucker Band will be performing at Rebich Investments Amphitheater on

July 3rd. Mr. Pine said this is not a free concert but is very reasonably priced at \$25 a ticket. He said that the PA250 celebration will end with Celebrate Erie in August so there will be a lot of activity around PA250 in Erie.

Mr. Pine said I want to provide you with an update on the Market House approval. He said I didn't have a picture of the GAF site available for the presentation at the Erie City Council meeting. He said I was going through some of the history with city council on where we started and how we got here. Mr. Pine said our architect was presenting the actual facility and building plan. He said I was hoping for a little more enthusiasm at the meeting for our project, because I think this is really a public facing project that we're adding down here. Mr. Pine said just in terms of follow up with that, I'm going to meet with Erie City Council President Tyler Titus and Erie City Council member Andre Horton to go through a little more detail. He said there was a desire to have more details about the project, which is very difficult for me to give in public, because we don't have a signed contract. Mr. Pine said I must be very careful with how much I share without putting somebody out there that we don't technically have a relationship with yet. A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Pine said there is a meeting today on the bond refunding. He said we've been mainly working with the finance director and the director of administration for Erie County, who are our liaison with council on this. He said they have an adequate understanding of bond financing, so they're trying to walk county council through this. Mr. Pine said they have a meeting today. He said their objective is that before we go for a vote to council they can meet and from their perspective, explain exactly what we're asking for from a bond refunding standpoint. He said we should know more, hopefully today.

Mr. Pine said I presented a draft copy of the Zoo Board Assignment Policy for our organization, so we'll have three or four assignees to that board. Mr. Pine said I think the hope is, by our May meeting, we will incorporate those documents, and then we can start assigning our nominees for the zoo board. Mr. Pine said we hosted a press conference at the zoo. He said we had good attendance, both from the public, our staff, staff of the zoo and local politicians. Mr. Pine said the press conference got some good media coverage.

Mr. Pine said one of the first steps with the zoo is the contemplation of a general master plan. He said it's recommended that we work with a company called Canopy. Mr. Pine said that recommendation came from Ms. Roo Kojancie. Mr. Pine said Ms. Kojancie forwarded to me a proposal. He said it is a very expensive proposal, over \$300,000. He said there's a couple of things we're doing. Mr. Pine said first, we're looking at, can it be phased. He said I think part of the reason why it's so expensive is because it's not just a proposal for Erie Zoo expansion it looks at the entire 100 acres, when ultimately all we really need to do is the 15 acres. Mr. Pine said if we're to contemplate what we're doing with that entire 100 acres we ultimately would need that anyway. He said one of the conversations I had with Ms. Kojancie is that this is too expensive and we can't be saddled with this right out of the gate. Mr. Pine said we talked about staging it perhaps over two years. He said we're going to talk to Canopy to see if they can do that. Mr. Pine said number two, there's probably several local partners that we can have look at this for financial support. He said this could be a transformational project for the community. Mr. Pine said there are organizations out there that do grant funding that we're going to approach to try to get some help in paying for this. Mr. Pine said I'm going to set up a meeting with Canopy and our executive committee to ask some more details specific to the plan, with the goal of understanding how they arrived at the specific tactics that they've laid out, how they get to the financial number, and I think to vet them as the professional. A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Snyder said we have announced since the last board meeting that our partnership with PNC Bank is the title sponsor for 8 Great Tuesdays. He said the lineup is announced, and we're now working on some programming for the series. Mr. Snyder said, as Mr. Pine mentioned, we have five ticketed concerts now that Marshall Tucker Band has been announced, so it'll be a busy season there.

Mr. Snyder said we have a current sales manager position, that's a cluster position with White Lodging, that we're actively looking to fill.

Mr. Snyder said to highlight some sales notes, we finished quarter one nearly \$100,000 ahead of budget, or about 20% of the budget, and with everything we had going on in the campus with construction as well as our kitchen remodel, I am very proud of the team for putting us in a good position to continue to move forward for the rest of the year. Mr. Snyder said quarter two is already looking strong, with some good pieces of business, including First Energy. He said if you recall last year, we had planned on having some business from them here, and they canceled that about a month or so before the event happened, which put us behind.

Mr. Snyder said lastly, we have a Familiarization Tour with Visit Erie that we'll be hosting on the Bayfront Landing at the end of the month. He said we have 12 meeting planners that will be here to look at our hotels, our campus and will be attending a Seawolves game.

Mr. Pine said regarding the ticketed concerts at the amphitheater, you mentioned we have five concerts. He said do you recall what we budgeted. Mr. Snyder said we budgeted 3.

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

OLD BUSINESS:

Mr. Glass, Construction Committee Chairperson, said last night we did have our public hearing for the Market House. He said Erie City has 45 days to place any conditions on a project. Mr. Glass said if no conditions are placed then it's automatically approved. Mr. Glass said the drawings have been at BIU for two weeks. He said the bids should go out probably within a week. He said we're waiting for the specifications from the architect. Mr. Glass said we have got drawings. Mr. Morvay said we are cleaning up the bid packages, and we should get those out the door next week.

Mr. Glass said the Courtyard Renovation Project is on schedule and should be finished by the first week in May. He said they're down to the third floor. He said the north bend is done and the third-floor west should be wrapped up in about a week, and things are looking good. Mr. Glass said they found a leak on the first floor in the common hallway that goes back along the meeting rooms. He said they've torn up the deck stones on patios, on the second-floor balconies, and the leak is not in that area. Mr. Glass said they've been chasing it for years. He said then they'll finish their wall covering in the first-floor stairwells last and that may drag out until the middle of May. Mr. Glass said, for the most part, the project is coming along well.

Mr. Glass said the Courtyard Parking Ramp Project has a lot of activity at the ramp. Mr. Glass said they've got the forms up for the first pour and then next the tenons and rebar will be installed. He said they're planning on their first concrete pour at the end of April, and then they'll go around the horn, and hopefully we'll finish the late summer with the parking ramp with all the concrete pours. A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Pine said I'll just add something about Pier Six. He said Pier Six opened this week. Mr. Pine said the one elevator that we have that's functioning up there has been broken for a month. He said it didn't necessarily affect them in the beginning, because they don't open until weather is decent in April. He said the challenge was the elevator companies who essentially have a monopoly on what they do and you can't get others to work on an elevator, except for the manufacturer. He said it was repaired Monday and the elevator is now in good shape in terms of supporting the business. Mr. Pine said that they're concerned with all the construction and the challenges we're dealing with and they're dealing with as well. He said we have three things that we're focused on to help them through the summer. Mr. Pine said number one is to ensure that the elevator stays repaired, and if something happens, we work hard to address it quickly. He said the second thing, and Mr. Snyder is really stepping in to take the lead on this, is to make sure that that stairwell and that entry point into their building is attractive. Mr. Pine said right now we have some scaffolding there, and it's functional, but from an esthetic standpoint it doesn't look like a front door, and we need to do a better job of trying to make that look as attractive as possible, so that we're supporting our tenant. He said and then lastly, we're working with their marketing team, along with the Monacella Massage, to get some appropriate signage as we open season up on the fences out by the road. Mr. Pine said I have been waiting on them for a couple of weeks to give me some creative so we can start making the signs, but we're going to commit to paying for that. Mr. Pine said we are supporting our tenants and I think those three points are our level best in terms of what we can do to help them. He said and of course, we'll send business to them when we can as well. A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Roger Richards, Strategic Planning Committee Chairperson said, I attended the hotel meetings remotely this week and the only question I ask is, revenues are down, therefore profits are down, therefore we're not meeting budget and I'm assuming that it's basically related, not to the industry, but to the construction in front of all those businesses. Mr. Richards said I didn't really get a good answer to that question, but common sense would seem to suggest to me that's what's affecting business. Mr. Pine said they had a very challenging first quarter, and there's a lot of headwinds that the construction is certainly an issue. He said the renovation of the Courtyard has certainly caused some displacement for them. Mr. Pine said there's a lot of uncertainty in the economy. He said one of the areas where they were impacted was corporate individual travel, which in an uncertain market, corporate is going to at least cut back travel to some degree just until the international headwinds start to clear. Mr. Pine said the good side of this is that their second quarter looks good. He said they gave us an estimate for the second quarter, which they finalized on March 24th. Mr. Pine said they will need to revise that estimate because they built in that the construction at the Courtyard was going to go into mid or late May. He said now that we know that we're going to have guest rooms back by the start of May, they're going to redo their forecast, and it's going to improve financials overall for the hotels. Mr. Pine said they had a tough first quarter, then looking up for the second quarter, and then the third quarter is generally a strong quarter for the hotels finishing out summer. He said related to customer service; the Sheraton is top 10% in brand across the board on their scores. He said they've got a team that has some time working together and they're really hitting on all cylinders from a staffing standpoint and management standpoint. Mr. Pine said they're number one in elite satisfaction, so service is great and customer service is looking up.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Tim Riley, Sales and Marketing Committee Chairperson said on Tuesday the committee met with Ms. Erica Pavlov, our Director of Marketing. He said Mr. Pine, Ms. Dahlkemper and Mr. Johnson and I attended. He said Ms. Pavlov's PowerPoint slides are in front of you, and I would encourage you to look at them, because it's really impressive what you've done. Mr. Riley said I think one of the first things you did upon taking on the Executive Director role, Mr. Pine, was tell us that we needed to ramp up marketing. He said Ms. Pavlov is impressive and speaks a language that I do not understand. He said there are a million acronyms used in her presentation and I was asking her to explain exactly what that is, but she knows what she's talking about. Mr. Riley said if you look at the numbers, and if you look at what's increasing, it's all really good news. Mr. Riley said it is a great thing that we're finally sort of in the game with respect to our marketing. He said just a couple of quick points, Ms. Pavlov went through what happened in 2025 and what the goals are for 2026. He said they do a lot of marketing on social media. He said we had 9 million Facebook views last year and on our website 1,200,000 views on our website which is 414,000 new users. Mr. Riley said we have some digital billboards that she has arranged that enables them to tailor messages for particular events and also to offer promoters the opportunity to partner with us on those digital billboards with immediate time of day information about what's available, what's going on, being direct with respect to our marketing. Mr. Riley said she talked about AXS, which is our new ticketing partner which is a huge step up for us, both in terms of ease of operation of users, but also as I understand it, we're going to have fewer credit card charge backs, which have cost us revenue at various events where people buy tickets and then tell their credit card company they never got them, or they didn't go, and the credit card company gives them the money back and we don't get paid. He said that AXS is now in charge of that, and they're aggressive in making sure that they respond when people make those claims. Mr. Riley said with our relationship with AXS we are also going to have a new website. He said that is in process and will be developed and in place in May or June.

Mr. Riley said we agreed that our committee will now begin to meet quarterly so we stay on top of this instead of this being something we talk about once a year when she tells us what her plans are for the year. Mr. Riley said we are going to try to meet quarterly, look at the data and try to tweak things as necessary. He said overall, I was really impressed. He said I think she's done an incredible job along with her whole team. Mr. Pine said it really sets us up to grow in the future too. Mr. Pine said when promoters come in, they're going to look to us to promote their show. He said we know our community and we know what works and what doesn't. He said the more we have to be able to do that, the more confidence the promoters are going to be to bring shows, and the more tickets we're going to sell. A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Gerber said I am presenting Resolution 2026-005 recommending the Authority obtain a line of credit. He said with the construction projects moving forward, we talked internally and with the committee that we needed some financial flexibility with a line of credit. He said we had reached out to a couple banks, and Marquette Bank came in with a very aggressive rate. He said they came in at a prime minus 1% so at a 5.75% rate, which is good in the current market right now. Mr. Gerber said a \$3 million loan gives us flexibility. He said the collateral that they are looking for is to have the first lien position on the naming rights sponsorship. He said I believe that was something they had before on a previous loan that has been satisfied, so it got shifted over to this line of credit as collateral.

Mr. Glass motioned to adopt Resolution 2026-005 as presented to the Board. Mr. Deitrick seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Pine said I am presenting Resolution 2026-006 to the Board requesting approval to update the auto lease for the vehicle used by the Executive Director. Mr. Pine said I met with a representative at Auto Express Mazda and discussed leasing the same vehicle that I currently drive, which is a Mazda CX 30. He said we also discussed increasing the mileage from 12,000 to 15,000 a year. He said that it was very difficult to remain under 12,000 miles a year. Mr. Pine said they offered a lease for essentially the same monthly fee we currently pay. He said my request is that the Authority lease the 2026 version of the same exact car, a Mazda CX-30 for the use by myself as Executive Director.

The Executive Committee motioned to adopt Resolution 2026-006, as presented to the Board. Ms. Dahlkemper seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS: None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

The meeting adjourned at 3:49 PM.