ERIE COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY
MINUTES
Thursday, May 21, 2026

Board Members Present:	Deitrick, Glass, Hilbert, Johnson, Nuber, Richards (Phone), Riley, Schmitt, White & Zaphiris
Board Members Excused:	Dahlkemper
Others Present:	Gus Pine, Ed Snyder, Jim Walczak, Solicitor, Dave Gerber, Ryan Patsy, 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 from the April 16, 2026, meeting.

Mr. Deitrick motioned to approve April 16, 2026, minutes. Mr. Riley seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mr. Deitrick said the Erie County Convention Center Audit Committee met with Maher Duessell and received the 2025 Audit Report. He said at this time I will turn it over to Ms. Jennifer Croft and Ms. Laurel Prokopchak from Maher Duessell to provide the presentation.

Ms. Croft said I am the manager on the audit and with me today is Ms. Laurel Prokopchak who is in charge on the audit. She said we just have a brief overview for you. Ms. Croft said there is a PowerPoint on your screen to go over some of the highlights from the audit, and if you do have any questions, please feel free to let us know.

Ms. Croft said we issue three separate financial statements on the Authority as a whole including the Sheraton Hotel and Courtyard Hotel. She said we also issue the DCED report, which is your required state filing, as well as the communication to those charged with governance, the management letter, and the agreed-upon procedures. Ms. Croft said regarding communication to those charged with governance I will just share a couple of key points. She said the first being our responsibility under GAAS, which is to express an opinion about whether the financial statements prepared by management are fairly presented in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the US, and gain a reasonable assurance that they're free from material misstatement. She said as part of the audit, we do look at the Authority's internal controls, but we do not express an opinion on those controls. Ms. Croft said as far as the planned scope and timing of the audit is concerned, nothing has changed with the scope from prior years, and we do plan to have these finalized by the end of the month. Ms. Croft said regarding significant accounting policies, those are noted in the footnotes to the financial statements. She said, however, there were no new accounting policies in the current year that were adopted, and no significant changes to existing policies. She said there were no sensitive estimates that we noted. Ms. Croft said some disclosures are considered to be more sensitive than others within the financial statements. She said the most sensitive disclosure that we noted affecting the financial statements is the disclosure of the failure of the Authority to meet the debt service coverage ratio in 2025. Ms. Croft said this is a continuing disclosure. She said 2023 was really the first year that you did not meet that debt service coverage ratio, and it has been increasing over the past couple of years. Ms. Croft said, however, the Authority continues to not meet that ratio. She said we have discussed this with Mr. Gerber, and at the meeting yesterday plans for going forward and getting different wording to put within the footnotes to describe what happened there. Ms. Croft said we did also note no difficulties while performing the audit. Ms. Croft said there were no corrected or uncorrected misstatements noted during the audit, which is important for you to understand, just knowing that as you're getting financial statements from month to month, that you're able to rely on those, and we're not coming in at the end of the year and making some big adjustments. Ms. Croft said we had no disagreements with management throughout the audit. She said these are currently still in draft form. Ms. Croft said once we get the approval and we're ready to finalize, we will get a management representation letter that will be signed by management taking responsibility for the financial statements. Ms. Croft said, as far as we were aware, there was no month management consultation with other independent accountants during the audit, and there were no issues discussed prior to the retention. She said we do also include required supplementary information, as well as supplementary information within the report. Ms. Croft said the required supplementary information is the management's discussion and analysis that's completed by Mr. Gerber, and the supplementary information is the debt service covered rate sheet or schedule. Ms. Croft said I'm going to turn it over to Ms. Prokopchak for the summary of the audit results.

Ms. Prokopchak said the summary of results goes over your independent auditory report on the financial statements. She said the main takeaway is that we issued separate audit opinions for the Authority, the Sheraton Hotel, and the Courtyard Hotel, and all three opinions were unmodified. Ms. Prokopchak said that means in our opinion, the financial statements for each entity are fairly presented in accordance with the generally accepted accounting principles. She said overall, this is a positive audit result for the board. She said the statement of net positions, the total assets decreased by about four and a half million, primarily because of non-current assets declined as the depreciation was recorded and liabilities also decreased. She said this is mainly due to scheduled debt payments, and then overall the net position decreased by about 1.2 million from $176.1 million in 2024 to $174.9 million in 2025. Ms. Croft said there is the net position for capital and net position unrestricted, that capital amount is really taking any of your capital assets less any debt that's related to capital items to get your $171 million. She said after taking the capital items out, you're left with about $3.6 million in unrestricted net position. Ms. Prokopchak said next the statement of revenue, expenses, and changes shows the Authority's operating results for the year. She said operating revenues increased by about $797,000 which is positive. She said expenses also increased, especially in the personnel benefits, contractual services, and depreciation. Ms. Prokopchak said because the expense for us outpaced the revenue growth, the operating income moved from about a positive $1.5 million in 2024 to a small operating loss of about $508,000 in 2025. She said after non-operating activity and capital contributions, the Authority ended the year with a decrease in net position of about $1.2 million.

Ms. Croft said I do have our contact information here for Ms. Laurel Prokopchak and I, as well as Michelle Bryan, who is the partner on the audit. Ms. Croft said Ms. Bryan was unable to be here today, but any of us are happy to take any questions you might have about the information provided in the audit report.

Ms. White asked the Board if they had any questions or comments. Mr. Deitrick said Maher Duessell had recommendations. He said one was for the bank reconciliations to be updated monthly which has been happening. He said the disbursement policy needs updated and user access to the accounting system needs reviewed and updated as well. Mr. Deitrick said we need to put an AI policy in place as well so staff members know what they can and cannot access and share with AI. Mr. Deitrick said the Audit Committee recommends AI training for employees and management. He said management has already started this process by compiling a few different policies to create a policy for the Authority. Mr. Deitrick said all these recommendations are already being addressed.

Mr. Deitrick said the Audit Committee also felt there could have been some effect from the construction that could have potentially affected some of the revenue. He said the debt-to-income ratio has steadily been improving since 2021. Mr. Deitrick said the Audit Committee diligently reviewed the presentation by Maher Duessell and we recommend that the full board approve the 2025 Audit Report.

The Audit Committee motioned to accept the 2025 Audit Report as presented. Mr. Riley seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Mr. Gerber presented the April 30, 2026, Financial Report to the board. He said overall several of our venues were in line with budget. He said we did have a couple misses, both in the arena and the theatre, however, we saw a gain at the convention center. Mr. Gerber said the misses in the arena and the theatre drove a bottom-line miss of about $113,000 across all the facilities.

Mr. Gerber said the arena was under budget $71,000. He said we anticipated an event that was a one-time event last year and wasn't carried forward into this year. Mr. Gerber said when you take that into account, which was $116,000, we would have been above budget for the month by $45,000 if it wasn't for that item. He said overall, the expenses were up $7,000 but that was related to a box office adjustment. Mr. Gerber said there was prepaid box office expenses that we had to recognize to account for some of those merchant fees. He said the arena had missed the bottom-line budget by $79,000. He said but again, taking the fact of the previous month, they performed quite well. He said the bull riding event was very lucrative for them, and it offset one Otters playoff game that we had in the budget that did not take place.

Mr. Gerber said the theatre missed revenue budget by $98,000. He said a couple factors went into that miss. He said we had a couple holds on the schedule that we anticipated that did not happen, and the shows that we did bring did not perform as well as expected. He said attendance, and our concessions were below budget. Mr. Gerber said we also did have to make an adjustment for the prepaid expenses for the merchant fees, like we did for the arena. He said overall, the theatre missed their budget by $85,000 for the month.

Mr. Gerber said the ballpark opened in April. He said they exceeded revenue by $5,000 while expenses exceeded the budget by $8,000 due to repairs and maintenance that were over budget by $11,000. Mr. Gerber said that was due to getting the lines ready for watering the fields and our utility costs are much higher right now, even though we put in LED lights. He said I don't think you're going to see the savings right away. He said overall they missed budget by $3,000.

Mr. Gerber said the convention center had a very good month. He said they were $29,000 above budgeted revenue, and that was mainly due to facility booth equipment revenue, even though their ticket concession sales were down. He said their expenses were $24,000 below budget, showing an overall positive outcome of $52,000. He said the main factor for their expenses is their wages and fringe benefits continue to be below budget in that area.

Mr. Gerber said Liberty Park had no activity yet and expenses were in line with the budget.

Mr. Gerber said the Erie Zoo is in line with budget with the two payments we made to them.

Mr. Gerber said year-to-date total revenues across the Authority's venues were under budget at $477,000. He said total expenses were also under budget $147,000 leaving us at a bottom-line miss of $330,000.

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

MANAGEMENT REPORT:

Mr. Pine said in some anecdotal conversations I've had with some board members; there seems to be an appetite to have a better look at upcoming events that we have in all our venues. He said with all the events that we have going on I think it's difficult to keep track of everything. Mr. Pine said you'll notice in your board packet that there is a list of upcoming events at all our venues. He said those are ticketed events for the next two months. He said our marketing team put that together and I really like the way it's designed. Mr. Pine said I think it's easy to see all the events that are happening, but also particularly which venue the event is taking place. Mr. Pine said if you have feedback, we could certainly modify how we present this schedule, but if you like it the way it is, we're going to go ahead and include that in the board packet. He said we'll have a rolling two-month outlook at all the upcoming ticketed events that are happening in our venues.

Mr. Pine said the Market House Project approval was held yesterday for the Conditional Waterfront Agreement. He said that was denied with a 4-2 vote. Mr. Pine said when we're finished with our general board agenda, we'll go into executive session, to discuss all the options that we have in terms of our next steps.

Mr. Pine said in our management agreement with the Erie Zoo, we are requiring them to provide us with a quarterly update. He said I had a productive meeting with Ms. Roo Kojancie, the Zoo Director, a couple weeks ago. He said you will see that results for the first quarter for the Erie Zoo were positive. Mr. Pine said in addition to what you read in that report, keep in mind, we've committed $500,000 a year to assist them financially from an operational standpoint. He said they've received $300,000 of that already. Mr. Pine said some of that money was given during the first quarter, and that's critical for them, because that's when they have the least amount of activity at the zoo in the wintertime. Mr. Pine said additionally, the support that we were able to provide allowed them to provide merit increases for their critical staff. He said they were able to do their normal merit increases, and then they upped that by another 2.5% because of the financial support that we're giving them. Mr. Pine said one of the main points that was made, particularly as it relates to accreditation with the AZA, is that they could not fund certain salaries at the appropriate level to attract and retain the talent that they need in those positions. Mr. Pine said so those are a couple of good things that happened in the first quarter. He said in addition from a financial standpoint, they're performing much better than budget. Mr. Pine said I had Ms. Kojancie list those out as percentages in her quarterly report which is included in your board packet. Mr. Pine said our next steps, which is a critical next step, we're having conversations about our entire campus plan and working with a third party to help us draft exactly what the future footprint of the zoo should look like and then the next step that we need to take in terms of working with the zoo and creating a path towards accreditation. Mr. Pine said we're having conversations with a consulting company that has given us a proposal. He said the proposal is a high dollar amount, so I think what we need to do more research, both on this company and how is the project will be funded. Mr. Pine said I think there's opportunities to perhaps look at community partners, especially seeing as we're not only looking at addressing the needs of the zoo, we're looking at addressing the needs of that entire 96 acres. He said we'll have more conversations because ultimately the decision on who the consultant will be for this project rests with this board. He said it does not rest with the Erie Zoo board. Mr. Pine said we certainly want their input, but this board is the board that makes that ultimate decision.

Mr. Pine said I have worked with our consultant that helped us back with our board retreat that we had a month or so ago. He said we've come up with five priorities that were a result of the conversations that we had at that meeting. He said we boiled everything down to a very high level, five priorities for the organization over the next five years. He said those five priorities are going to drive many of the tactics and strategies that we implement over the next few years. Mr. Pine said what I've done was had that boiled down into a document. Mr. Pine said there is some sensitive potential real estate information included, so when we go into executive session, I'll present that document as well for everybody to review.

Mr. Pine said then lastly is the current projects update. He said I will defer that update to the Construction Committee.

Mr. Snyder said we have started our Capital Landscaping Project. He said you'll notice a lot of the bollards have been pulled, and there's cones everywhere, so we're powder coating and replacing those bollards, and then we'll do our benches.

Mr. Snyder said we worked with McCreary Roofing and next week they are going to start on our roof replacement due to the wind damage. He said that activity should start next week. Mr. Glass said how many benches do we have. Mr. Snyder said a couple-dozen.

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

OLD BUSINESS:

Mr. Glass, Construction Committee Chairperson, said the Courtyard Refresh Project is done, with the exception of final punch items in the guestrooms.

Mr. Glass said they made their first concrete pour on Monday for the Parking Ramp Project. He said right now it schedules out maybe every 9 to 10 days, where they'll make another pour right through the summer. Mr. Glass said I think the last pour is late September and then all the steel work and the elevators will be installed. He said it's pushing December 2nd by the time we're complete,

Mr. Glass said we will discuss the Bayfront Market House in Executive Session.

Mr. Zaphiris said is the parking garage going to be down 100% until December or will we be able to get part of it back before then. Mr. Glass said there's going to be an area in another month where we could take employees, but I don't think you're going to send the general public.

NEW BUSINESS:

Ms. Gwen White, Executive Committee Chairperson, said we have developed an Erie County Convention Center Authority Zoo Board Nominating Policy. She said we have a recommendation from the Executive Committee to bring this policy to the full board. She said we had shared earlier that we would be putting this process together. Ms. White said our board will be nominating three members to sit on the Erie Zoo Board.

The Executive Committee motioned to approve the ECCCA Zoo Board Nominating Policy as presented to the Board. Mr. Schmitt seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Gwen White, Executive Committee Chairperson said we have three candidates to put before the board to be the three board members sitting on the Erie Zoo board. She said we had asked at a previous meeting for nominations or names that you wanted to submit. Ms. White said those three candidates are John Zack, Jeff Kidder, and Tim Riley.

The Executive Committee motioned to approve John Zack, Jeff Kidder and Tim Riley as the ECCCA appointees to the Erie Zoo Board. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. The motion was approved 10-0-1 with Mr. Tim Riley abstaining.

Mr. Pine said I am presenting Resolution 2026-007 to the Board regarding an Erie County Convention Center Authority Certificate of Deposit, 000031300274683 (the CD), which the Authority currently owns at PNC Bank in the amount of $6,880.61. Mr. Pine said it is a three-month CD that automatically re-ups every three months. He said to be able to close out the CD, we need the Erie County Convention Center Authority Board's approval. Mr. Pine said I need that approval in the minutes to be able to get that closed out. Mr. Pine said we are requesting with this resolution the approval to close out the CD with PNC Bank.

Mr. Riley motioned to adopt Resolution 2026-007, as presented to the Board. Mr. Hilbert seconded the motion. The motion was adopted unanimously.

Mr. Pine said I am presenting Resolution 2026-008 to the Board regarding the date of our monthly board meetings. He said going back to the priorities that were established in our retreat, one of those priorities, among other things, was related to better communication related to finances, and specifically with our Finance Committee. Mr. Pine said in conversations with staff we discussed some of the first steps that we can take to execute that well. He said you typically get your board packet on Wednesdays prior to the monthly board meeting. Mr. Pine said you have often less than 24 hours to be able to review not only the financials of the last month, but the entire packet, which typically has a lot of other information. Mr. Pine said I approached the Executive Committee and recommended the idea of moving our board meeting to the fourth week of the month. He said that would allow Mr. Gerber and his team to get the financials out at least by the Monday of that fourth week, giving the board 4 or so more days to be able to review. Mr. Pine said it also provides me with time to schedule a standing Finance Committee meeting.,. He said we haven't historically done that on a regular cadence. Mr. Pine said the Finance Committee meeting does all sorts of business for the Authority but particularly reviewing in some detail some of the finances for all venues. Mr. Gerber will still give the report at the board meeting. Mr. Pine said my request would be that we would change the standing date of our board meeting from the third Thursday of the month to the fourth Thursday of the month. He said that of course will be an issue in November and December, because of Thanksgiving and Christmas. Mr. Pine said it would essentially be for the first 10 months; we would hold the meeting in the fourth week, and then we would hold the meeting in the third week in the last two months due to the holidays. He said I have talked with Mr. Gerber, and we would be able to execute that.

Mr. Deitrick motioned to adopt Resolution 2026-008, as presented to the Board. Mr. Hilbert seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Mr. Walczak said prior to this meeting I had a call with our underwriter regarding the bond refunding, and we pretty much penciled out the game plan for how that's going to be accomplished. He said we looked at three different scenarios and have settled on one that'll be finalized tomorrow. Mr. Walczak said we want to go to the Erie County Council and have the approval of their guarantee of that bond issued at their next meeting. He said to accomplish that, we need to be on the Erie County Finance Committee schedule on June 18th. Mr. Walczak said what we will need for the June 18th meeting is a resolution, which we will adopt, which will be a bond resolution authorizing the borrowing of bonds up to a certain amount within a certain range of interest rates. He said we won't have a final rate, because you don't have that until the bonds are priced after you go through the whole process of marketing them. He said there will be a cap on the interest rate. Mr. Walczak said the cap is typically where you don't have any more savings as a result of doing the refinancing. He said hopefully if interest rates hold there'll be substantial savings as a result of the refunding. Mr. Walczak said to do this, we're going to have to have a special meeting of the board to approve the bond resolution. He said that will have to happen before June 18th. Mr. Walczak said we don't have a date scheduled yet. He said we will work with this administration to come up with a good date where we can have as many people as possible available. A brief discussion followed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Mr. Glass motioned to go into Executive Session

Mr. Glass motioned to end the Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT:

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

The meeting adjourned at 4:38 PM.