



Library Advisory Board Meeting

Thursday, August 17, 2023

In-person @ Millcreek Branch Library

No zoom available

District 1- vacant	District 4- vacant	District 7- Aoh (President)
District 2- vacant	District 5- vacant	At-Large- Murphy (Vice- President)
District 3- Tempestini	District 6- vacant	At-Large- Groves (Secretary)

AGENDA

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Approval of Minutes – July 20, 2023**
3. **Library Reports**
 - a. Staff Reports- None
 - b. Report of the Director
 - c. Review of Financial Report- Deana
 - d. Statistical and Other Reports- Sheryl
 - e. Report of District Consultant
4. **Board and Committee Reports**
 - a. Report of County Council Liaison
 - b. Report of Friends of the Library
 - c. Report of Erie Regional Library Foundation
5. **Unfinished Business-**
 - a. Discussion to move September meeting to another time and/or date.
 - b. Board appointment update
 - c. Display policy update-
6. **New Business**
 - a. 2024 Budget overview.
 - b. Bylaw review to present at October meeting.
7. **Adjournment**
8. **Appendix**
 - a. Announcements
 - b. Public Comments

c. News Articles

1. Call to Order

2. Approval of Minutes – July 20, 2023

3. Library Reports

a. Staff Reports- None

b. Report of the Director

Connections-

Career Online High School – Do to the overwhelming amount of interest from Erie community members, the library has secured three additional scholarship spots from the Friends of the Library. The program runs eighteen months but can be reduced if the student has transfer credits from previous high schools/GED/HiSET. An additional benefit is the ability set individual career paths. Our goal is to add more community partners to help sponsor additional scholarships.

Career Online High School Graduation –The Library is happy to announce that we have our first Erie graduate from the Career Online High School. We are planning to collaborate with other libraries in the surrounding states to provide a graduation ceremony in the HIRT Auditorium this fall. More information to follow.

Keystone Grant Elevator Work – Work on the Blasco Library elevators is still in process. Both elevators will be refurbished after 25+ years of service and will essentially be ‘brand new’. The public elevator is complete and awaiting inspection. While the public elevator is inaccessible, staff are escorting patrons to the staff elevator when needed. This project is supported in part through a grant from the Office of Commonwealth Libraries, Pennsylvania Department of Education, with funds provided from the Keystone Recreation, Park, and Conservation Fund.

Programming Initiatives for Branches- in preparation for the Bayfront project beginning in 2024, the Library plans to send two of its Children’s Librarians to work the majority of their week at the Branches. The purpose of this transition is to gather statistics, build programming based off those statistics and use what we learn on a much larger level both during the Bayfront construction and after.

Blue Whale Project- The whale tale arrived at Blasco on Friday, August 11. Programming kickoff for the project will be October 30 at The Iroquois Branch. The Erie County Public Library was chosen from over 90 applicants to receive the “Blue Whales” opportunity. This project includes a \$1000 honorarium to help cover costs of programming, a life size (25’x10’) blue whale tail floor mat, a pop up banner, virtual field trip videos, activity books to promote understanding for local ecosystems and more.

Capacity-

Armed Guard at Blasco- Beginning September 1, the Blasco Library will have an armed guard onsite throughout all operation hours. The County is contracting Valentis, Inc. for these services. The armed guard will patrol the Library, the Maritime Museum, the Dept. of Planning and Veteran Affairs.

PennDot Central Bayfront Parkway Multimodal Project- Beginning in 2024, PennDot is scheduled to begin the \$104 million dollar safety improvement and congestion reduction project on the Bayfront Parkway. This project will greatly affect access and parking to the Blasco Library. This project extends from Sassafra to Holland Street. The library is beginning to plan how to continue to provide services to Blasco patrons during construction. Utilizing the branch libraries for additional programming services will be a large part of this plan.

c. [Review of Financial Report- Deana](#)

See attached

d. [Statistical and Other Reports- Sheryl](#)

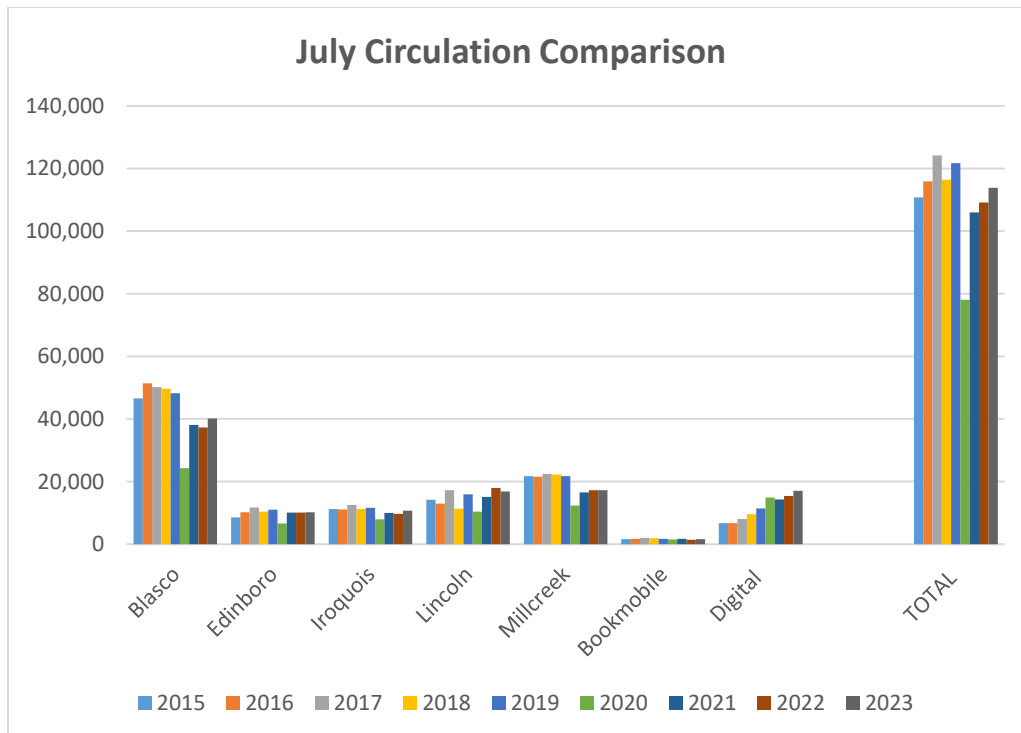


July 2023 Statistics

Numbers Snapshot

- **568** new cards issued (↑1.8%)*, including **52** e-cards (↑10.6%)
- **4,288** WiFi logins (↓15%), **3,437** public PC logins across locations (↑3%)
- **37,181** patron visits (↑11%), **21,590** at Blasco (↑14%) and **15,591** at branches (↑8%)

Circulation



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Blasco	46,639	51,440	50,219	49,660	48,218	24,347	38,118	37,324	40,167
Edinboro	8,587	10,196	11,690	10,442	10,981	6,594	10,060	10,090	10,183

Iroquois	11,246	11,164	12530	11,216	11,659	7,981	9,991	9,646	10,751
Lincoln	14,239	12,982	17268	11,327	15,887	10,373	15,155	17,969	16,879
Millcreek	21,704	21,590	22475	22,268	21,797	12,360	16,550	17,295	17,241
Bookmobile	1,619	1,754	2014	1,976	1,713	1,477	1,738	1,452	1,581
Digital	6,765	6,721	8010	9,562	11,481	14,952	14,340	15,396	17,017
TOTAL	110,799	115,847	124,206	116,451	121,736	78,084	105,952	109,172	113,819

e. Report of District Consultant

District Services Report as of 8/15/2023

Submitted by Jessica Church, District Consultant

District Advisory Council Meeting & Nonprofit Presentation

The next District Advisory Council (DAC) meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, October 17 at 1 p.m. at McCord Memorial Library in North East. (Currently finalizing with their library director) After reviewing the schedule for the Pennsylvania Library Association’s annual conference which will be held in the first week of October, there were quite a few related topics, like sales tax, , small games of chance, right-to-know, policies, etc. I’ll review my content with what’s presented at those meetings by other library and topic professionals in the state.

We’ll hold the DAC business meeting, then move into a presentation about running a nonprofit business and things to file, check, and keep in mind (beyond library standards).

State Budget

The District usually gets funds around August for the fiscal year. With the delay in the budget comes a delay in distribution (though there is not yet an anticipated delay for libraries and systems that receive checks at the beginning of the calendar year—it should be cleared up by then, hopefully). We’re moving some projects, like the large print refresh, to later this year, once we find out where Districts stand with receiving funds.

4. Board and Committee Reports

- a. Report of County Council Liaison
- b. Report of Friends of the Library
- c. Report of Erie Regional Library Foundation

5. Unfinished Business-

- a. Discussion to move September meeting to another time and/or date.
- b. Board appointment update

All recommendations have been submitted to Administration for consideration.

- c. Display policy update-

<https://www.welcomingamerica.org>

6. New Business

- a. 2024 Budget overview.
- b. Bylaw review to present at October meeting.

7. Adjournment

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BEST BETS

Entertainment and more around Erie not to miss Aug. 10-17

Erie Times-News
USA TODAY Network

Explore **Erie Bluffs** at sunset this Thursday, 7:30 to 9 p.m., while viewing bats in the night sky. Enjoy an evening campfire learning about the bats of Pennsylvania and hike Erie Bluffs while as attendees search for bats in flight.

Appearing at Kellar's: Friday and Saturday, 7:30 p.m., Kellar's: A Modern Magic & Comedy Club, 1402 State St. James "L.J." Walker of "Dy-no-mite!" fame. Tickets are \$30. 814-461-0911, kellarismagic.com.

Erie Society for Genealogical Research Family History Fair at the Watson Curtze Mansion. Free. 356 W. Sixth St., Friday, 9 a.m. to noon. Speak with Erie Society for Genealogical Research experts, 11 township historical societies, visit the resource centers at Hagen History Center, Erie County Public [Library](#), Erie County, Pennsylvania Courthouse, historical societies in Crawford and Warren counties in PA; Chautauqua, County in NY; and Ashtabula, in Ohio. Lineage Societies from Daughters of the American Revolution and

many more genealogy resources along with local authors of genealogy and area history will be available.

Ghost Stories Around the Campfire, Saturday, 8:30 to 10 p.m., 34 Main St. West, Girard. Bring a lawn chair or blanket to sit by a campfire while enjoying spooky legends and ghost tales from Girard and the surrounding area. Storytelling begins at 8:30 p.m. in Girard's Wells Park near the Civil War monument. Cost is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, and \$3 for children 6-12. Not recommended for children under 6. Reservations required by calling or texting 814-490-5078 to reserve a spot.

In All Seriousness, Erie's popular dinner theater organization, will be presenting **Maui Mayhem** at the Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St., on Saturday. It's Luau Night at the Medvale Country Club, and the sixth (and possibly final) event of the club's year-long "Survivor Medvale" contest. There are just four contestants left and they will battle for the right to survive crazy events, Hawaiian-style. Guests help "Lei" down the

See **BEST BETS**, Page 75



Axe Women of Maine will perform at North East Heritage Days this Saturday and Sunday. PROVIDED BY ENJOY NORTH EAST

Erie Times-News

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 2023 | GOERIE.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Board calls out lack of dialogue after relocation of Pride display

A.J. Rao
Erie Times-News
USA TODAY NETWORK

When a Pride Month book display at Blasco Memorial Library featuring LGBTQ+ children's books was relocated in June, the all-volunteer Library Advisory Board attempted to find out why.

It wasn't easy.

Interim Board President Quyen Aoh said the board reached out to Erie County Public Library Executive Director Karen Pierce several times by email and



Pierce

phone. They'd hoped to convene a special board meeting to address the relocation, which had sparked fast backlash from LGBTQ+ groups as well as some state and local elected officials.

But Aoh said the board only received notification from the library that special board meetings could only be called by Pierce's "direct superior," a claim that Aoh refuted.

"The (advisory board) bylaws specif-

ically state that we can call additional meetings if three or more of us request it, which is what we did," Aoh said at the board's July meeting on Thursday.

Board member Adam Groves said the bylaws also allow board presidents to call a special meeting at their discretion, and that the board president at the time, William Conway, attempted to do so to no avail.

"I think what was disheartening for many of us is that we tried to have

See PRIDE, Page 2A



Members of the public enter Blasco Memorial Library on June 26 to participate in a staged "Bring Pride Back" read-in inside the children's library.

A.J. RAO/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

Pride

Continued from Page 1A

dialogue and that dialogue was shut down," Aoh said.

Assistant **Library** Director Sheryl Thomas, who spoke on behalf of the **Library** Thursday, said **Library** staff had been unable to meet with the board for a special meeting because of time constraints.

Board members responded by noting they are specifically appointed — seven by Erie County Council and two by the county executive — to provide guidance and accountability to the **Library** director, especially when a **Library** policy or decision affects so many in the community.

"I was disappointed that we weren't asked to be more involved, and that as an advisory board we weren't asked for advice," said board member Kara Murphy.

Rennie calls out 'muzzling' of county employees

Dialogue overall has been sparse on the matter.

More than a month after the relocation occurred, the only public comment from the county has been a June 20 statement from Erie County Public Information Officer Chris Carroll.

In the statement, Carroll said Pierce's decision to relocate the "Read With Pride" display came after a "significant number of people" expressed concerns about its location at the entrance of Blasco's children's **Library**.

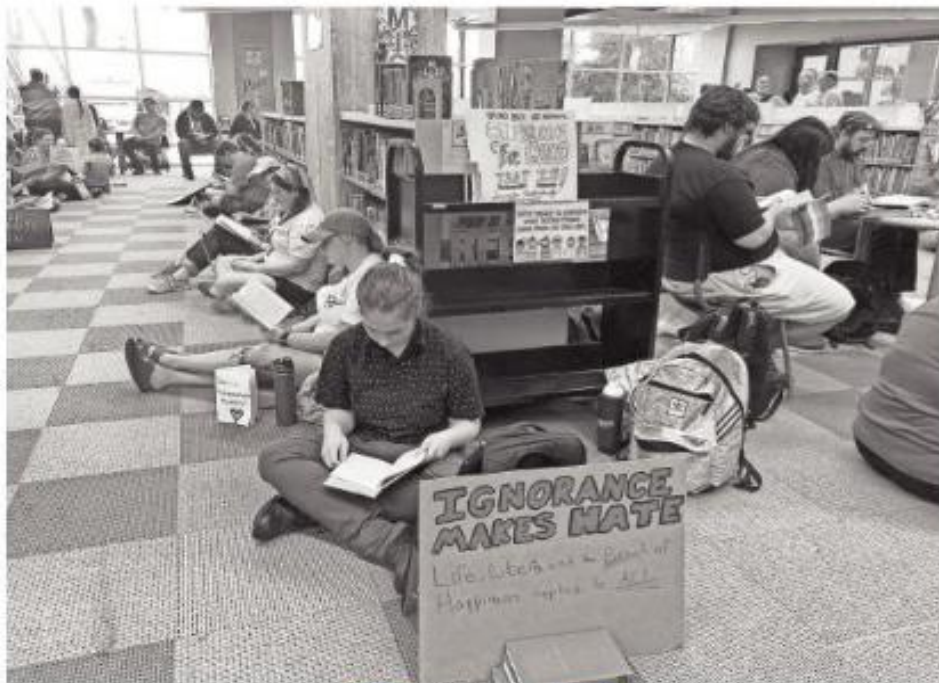
Carroll said it was the policy of the Erie County Executive Brenton Davis administration that "we respect everyone who is celebrating but are also sensitive to those who don't wish to celebrate."

Shortly after **Library** staff were directed to move the display on June 19, a sign attributed to "Erie County Public **Library** Children's Librarians" was seen at the children's **Library**. It stated the executive director told them to take down or move the display to a less visible location because of a complaint.

The Erie Times-News attempted to talk to librarians in person but all inquiries were referred to the Davis administration. The Times-News also repeatedly tried to contact Pierce between June 20-23, calling her phone, leaving a handwritten note with her staff and sending her an email.

Carroll told the Times-News that media inquiries to county employees must be made to his office.

County employees, in turn, informed the Times-News that they cannot speak to reporters and must direct all inquiries



Dozens of readers packed into the Children's **Library** of Blasco Memorial **Library** on June 26 as part of a read-in to celebrate LGBTQ+ freedoms. A.J. RAO/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

to the Davis administration. Carroll declined to comment on what kind of personnel action, if any, is taken if employees do not abide by the policy.

Mary Rennie, who announced her resignation from Erie County Council Monday, addressed the lack of communication from county employees during her final council meeting July 11. Rennie is a former **Library** executive director.

"As a former county employee, I think it's atrocious the muzzling of the county employees across the system, **Library** and elsewhere," she said. "People need to feel free to express opinions about things."

She added, "They shouldn't have to feel afraid to lose their jobs simply because they speak to someone, especially myself. I'm horribly offended that I have different people who work in the county who tell me they're not allowed to speak to me. What year are we living in?"

Library Advisory Board president, vice president resign

The decision to relocate the display

was condemned not just by organizations like the Greater Erie Alliance For Equality and the NW Pride Alliance — the latter called the decision an "outright attempt to censor queer content" — but the **Library** Advisory Board itself.

The board confirmed Thursday that three of its members resigned in response: Bonnie Barthelmes, as well as Conway, the president, and Vice President Martha Knuth. The nine-member board now has five vacancies.

Thomas said it was not the library's intent to marginalize anyone and that Pride Month displays were set up in other parts of the **Library**. She also said the display was simply moved to accommodate another "summer reading program" display and that no books were removed from circulation.

Aoh, citing the American **Library** Association, said even the relocation of books can be a form of censorship.

She called the decision a "form of a micro-aggression" against a marginalized community and cautioned the **Library** to be aware of the unintentional impact of its display policy.

Library could not confirm number of public complaints

Thomas said she could not quantify how many people complained about the Pride Month display, and said the **Library** doesn't record phone call or in-person complaints, only written ones.

The board requested that Thomas provide the number of written complaints about the display. The board also requested that Thomas find out if any previous displays, particularly ones dealing with diversity, had been relocated or removed in the past.

Aoh encouraged **Library** officials and staff to seek advice from the board.

"Dialogue is extremely important to help build trust between the board and the executive director and **Library** staff," she said. "I will say personally that this incident has eroded some of my trust in the executive director. It could have very easily been remedied by simple communication."

A.J. Rao can be reached at arao@gennett.com. Follow him on Twitter @ETN-Rao.