



Library Advisory Board Meeting Thursday, October 19, 2023 Via Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8056949401?pwd=cXRyUFJxTkJodzUvcGNVeWt2TGy0QT09>

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

AGENDA

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Approval of Minutes – October 19, 2023**
3. **Preliminary Statement-**
4. **Public Comment- (limit to 15 minutes)**
5. **Library Reports**
 - a. Report of the Director-
 - b. Review of Financial Report- Deana
 - c. Statistical and Other Reports- John
 - d. Report of District Consultant
6. **Board and Committee Reports**
 - a. Report of County Council Liaison
 - b. Report of Friends of the Library
 - c. Report of Erie Regional Library Foundation-
7. **Unfinished Business-**
 - a. Bylaw review – approval of bylaws
 - b. 2024 Board Meeting dates and times
8. **New Business**
 - a. Vote for Officers
9. **Adjournment**
10. **Appendix**
 - a. Announcements

b. News Articles

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Minutes – October 19, 2023
3. Preliminary Statement-
4. Public Comment- (limit to 15 minutes)
5. Library Reports

a. Report of the Director-

Connections-

PA Forward - The Erie County Public Library is a PA Forward Gold Star Library. PA Forward® is a literacy initiative of the Pennsylvania Library Association that highlights a ‘libraries’ role in moving Pennsylvania forward. The five literacies in which libraries “brand” their programming and communications are Basic Literacy, Information Literacy, Civic and Social literacy, Health Literacy and Financial Literacy. Keeping the library in line and focused on these literacies will not only continue our “gold star” status but will pave the way for a consistent and equitable display policy. <https://paforward.org/>

Small Business Symposium – The Library partnered with the Erie County Redevelopment Authority and the NWPA Beehive Network to present the Creative Small Business Symposium on Saturday, October 21st. We had room for 30 participants and 29 attended. Thirteen classes were offered and attendees were able to choose from 12 different classes on running a business in the creative sector and all attendees were required to take a grant class. Lunch was sponsored by Northwest Savings Bank. Representatives from the Regional Chamber and the Erie Community Foundation were present to see how popular the event was. Community partners Ben Franklin Technology and Bridgeway Capital recommended the program to some of their customers. The program was a great success and the library is planning another one with the broader scope of general small businesses tentatively scheduled for March 23, 2024.

Erie Makes – Erie Makes is a weeklong event for maker enthusiasts of all interests from robotics to art to 3D printing. Celebrate creativity, curiosity and hands-on learning! This is a family-friendly, free event for curious minds. List of local organizations participating include Inner City Neighborhood Arthouse, ECAT, Claytopia, Grounded Print Shop, CAM Studios, Erie Art Museum, Whitethon Games, Studio Blu and Lake Erie Woodworks. In addition, there are individual presenters along with maker video submissions. It looks to be a huge success!

The poster features a white logo on the left consisting of a hammer, a pencil, and a plug, with the text 'ERIE MAKES' below it. The background is orange with a grid pattern. The main text reads 'NOV. 13TH - NOV. 18TH' in large, bold, black letters. Below this, a paragraph describes the event as a family-friendly, free event for maker enthusiasts. At the bottom, there is a link to the full schedule.

NOV. 13TH - NOV. 18TH

Makers unite for Erie Makes! This event is for maker enthusiasts of all interests from robotics to art to 3D printing. Celebrate creativity, curiosity and hands-on learning! This is a family-friendly, free event for curious minds.

[Click here to see a full schedule!](#)

<https://eriecounty-pa.libguides.com/Erie-Makes/Schedule>

Teentober – TeenTober™ is a nationwide celebration hosted by libraries every October and aims to celebrate teens, promote year-round teen services and the innovative ways teen services helps teens learn new skills, and fuel their passions in and outside the library. The Erie County Public Library had a wonderful turnout! Events spanned from Teen Creation Card making, to 3D printing, Dungeons Dragons, Cricut basics, Chopped Dessert Addition, DIY Mugs and Murder Mystery games.

Collections-

Overdrive Checkouts – Overdrive is the platform we use for our e-books and electronic audiobooks. The library hit the 1,000,000 checkout from Overdrive this past week! The library has used Overdrive since 2009 and we currently average 373 checkouts per day.

Capacity-

Personnel Update – Assistant Director, Sheryl Thomas has informed the library that she will not be returning to her position after her maternity leave. She has decided to stay home with her children. The position will post soon.

Elevator Update – The staff elevator at Blasco is almost complete. It awaits final inspection.

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

See attached

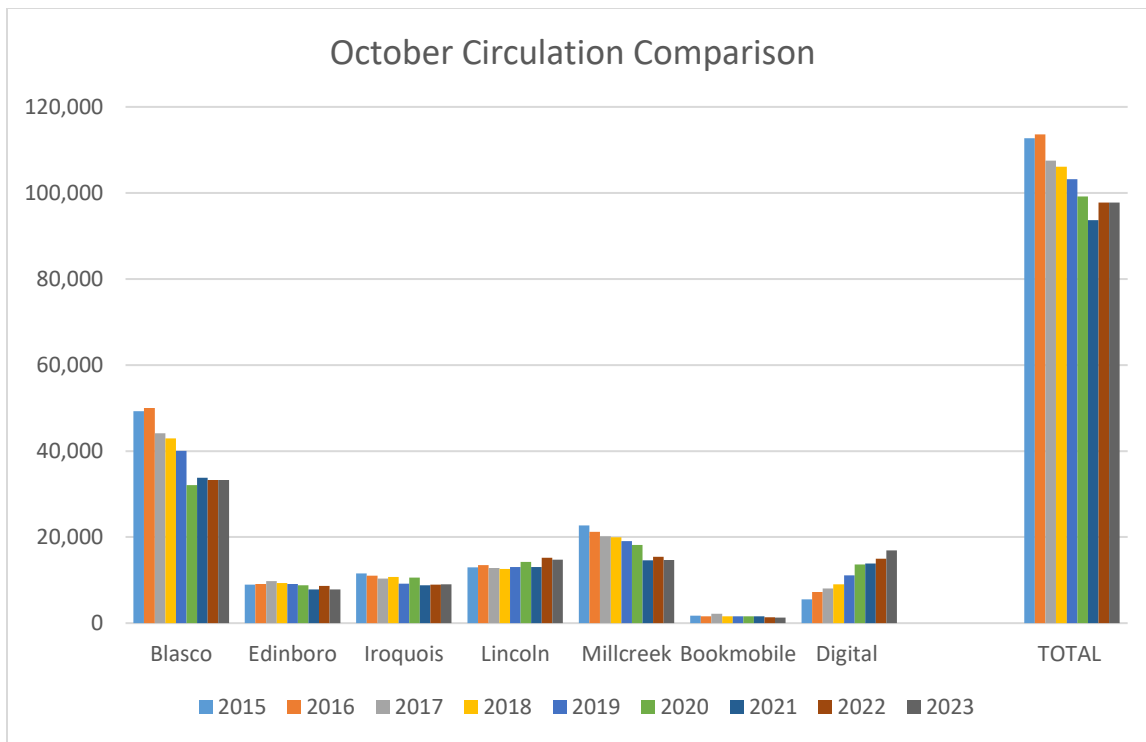
c. [Statistical and Other Reports- John](#)



October 2023 Statistics

Numbers Snapshot

- **465** new cards issued (↑8%), including **57** e-cards
- **16.926** Digital Circulation is (↑11%)
- **35, 559** Patron visits (↑6%)



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Blasco	49,256	50,009	44,126	42,922	40,075	32,059	33,829	33,289	33,239
Edinboro	8,986	9,108	9,783	9,300	9,133	8,821	7,848	8,622	7,833
Iroquois	11,529	11,032	10,397	10,707	9,142	10,611	8,829	8,922	9,039
Lincoln	12,961	13,474	12,802	12,624	13,025	14,243	13,074	15,199	14,730
Millcreek	22,719	21,193	20,189	19,949	19,063	18,187	14,622	15,427	14,700
Bookmobile	1,740	1,568	2,152	1,578	1,616	1,591	1,591	1,330	1,271
Digital	5,539	7,259	8,024	9,016	11,112	13,643	13,866	14,994	16,926
TOTAL	112,730	113,643	107,473	106,096	103,166	99,155	93,659	97,783	97,738

d. Report of District Consultant

District Services Report as of November 13, 2023
 Updates for ECPL LAB Report
 Submitted by Jessica Church, District Consultant

Leadership Turnover

This year, the District has experienced a handful of changes with new directors at member libraries. McCord Memorial Library—North East—welcomed Sam Moore in the spring. Waterford Public Library recently welcomed Alison Wurst. And this month, Lauren Lowery (formerly of Stone Memorial Library--Conneautville) moved to Saegertown Library, Dare Gillette will take over at Stone Memorial, and Cochranon Area Public library will be in the process of hiring a new director.

District Advisory Council Meeting

The District Advisory Council meeting took place Tuesday, October 17 at McCord Memorial Library. Topics on the agenda included member libraries' needs assessments with ReThinking Libraries, delivery, rotating collections, election of officers, and changes to committee structure. Following the meeting, there was a presentation on laws,

best practices, and other information for nonprofit libraries to be aware of (beyond library laws). (All District member libraries, with the exception of Erie County Public Library, are standalone 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations.)

Plans for Use of State Aid & County Coordination Aid

Libraries continue to work on their Plan for Use of State Aid form for the **Office of Commonwealth Libraries** as well as County Coordination Aid forms for county consortiums. **Much of Erie’s County Coordination Aid, in conjunction with the independent libraries in Erie County, is used to cover IT staff positions; the integrated library system (ILS) – Polaris; internet bills for member libraries thanks to E-Rate discounts; some new technology for all of the libraries; and other cooperative projects. 2024 plans will likely include the implementation of a supplemental interlibrary loan delivery vehicle and part-time driver to accommodate changes at the District level and the expansion of interlibrary loan delivery into Crawford County following sizeable increases in IDS shipping/postage costs.**

6. Board and Committee Reports

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

7. Unfinished Business-

- a. Bylaw review – approval of bylaws
- b. 2024 Board Meeting dates and times

All meetings will be held on the third Monday of the month at noon via zoom unless noted in **red**. In-person meetings will be held at beginning or end of workday as decided.

January- Monday, January 22, 2024 due to MLK holiday.

February-Monday, February 26, 2024 due to President’s Day

March- Monday, March 18, 2024

April- Monday, April 15, 2024

May- Monday, May 20, 2024

June- Monday, June 17, 2024

July- Monday, July 15, 2024

August- Monday, August 19, 2024

September- Monday, September 16, 2024

October- Monday, October 21, 2024

November- Monday, November 18, 2024

December- Monday, December 16, 2024

8. New Business

- a. Vote for Officers

9. Adjournment

10. Appendix

- a. Announcements

-Next meeting is Thursday, December 21, 2023 at noon via zoom

Water research center approved - Gannon University to build inside Blasco Memorial Library

October 19, 2023 | Erie Times-News (PA)

Author/Byline: A.J. Rao; Erie Times-News | Page: A1 | Section: News

Read News Document

Erie County Council on Tuesday passed a resolution that will allow Gannon University to build a water research and education center inside Blasco Memorial Library.

The resolution, which passed in a 5-2 vote, approved a 25-year lease agreement between the county and Gannon. The agreement greenlights the development of a 3,000-square-foot water research and education center — to include a fishery and aquaponics lab, wet lab areas, a butterfly conservatory and a science classroom — on the eastern wing of the library's first floor.

Gannon will pay \$22,956 annually — or \$7 per square foot per year — to lease the space and is prohibited from breaking the lease within the first 10 years. Gannon will also pay for the center's utilities.

Voting in favor of the resolution were Republican council members Brian Shank, Ellen Schauerman and Charlie Bayle and Democrats Jim Winarski and Tom Spagel.

Voting against were Democrats Andre Horton and Terry Scutella.

Horton made a motion to table the resolution, but it was voted down in the same 5-2 manner.

Council's inability to table the measure was met with boos from a standing-room-only crowd that objected to the center's potential effect on library services and parking, and the county's lack of public engagement on the project.

The bulk of the audience departed the meeting before council took a final vote on the resolution. One departing attendee could be heard shouting at council, "You missed the whole point."

"I think the people have been left out of this decision," said Jim Van Dyne, a Lawrence Park resident. "Gannon is a big private organization and we're giving them space at a bargain-basement price in a public facility that was designed to do other things."

County Director of Administration Doug Smith, who spoke on behalf of Erie County Executive Brenton Davis, argued the center will be a "library enhancement" and that the public should be open to changes that could benefit the long-term economic prospects of the county.

"So often in this community, we find people are afraid of things changing," Smith said. "They must change. We are losing population. We are losing businesses. The only answer to that is change, trying to bring in something new."

Citizens object to lack of transparency, impact on services, parking

For more than an hour, several members of the more than 50 people who attended Tuesday's meeting objected to housing the center in the library — not to the center itself — during the public comment period.

Objections included the possibility that the center could impede library services, which, in turn, could hinder the library's ability to fulfill its role as a state-designated district library center and thus lose state funding.

Other objections included the lack of parking available at the library, a problem expected to get worse as the Bayfront Parkway construction project gets underway.

Kitty Harrington, a Millcreek Township resident and a children's librarian for 37 years, argued that library services transition over time and that the library might require that 3,000 square feet over the next 25 years.

"We need that space to adjust to what the library needs to be in the future," she said.

Some attendees brought up the lack of transparency surrounding the resolution. While members of County Council were made aware of the proposed site in the library several weeks ago, the general public was largely kept in the dark.

The resolution was not listed on the public agenda of council's finance committee meeting this past Thursday. Schauerman, who heads the committee, introduced the resolution as a last-minute addition to the agenda. Finance committee meetings don't include public comment periods.

Since the measure was a resolution, it didn't require a first and second reading. Tuesday's meeting was the only opportunity for the public to comment on the project.

Citizens said they still had many unanswered questions, including how the lease amount and length were reached and whether other locations were considered.

"This is a big deal," said Brian Graff, an Erie resident. "If Blasco loses 3,000 square feet, then that's space gone, unavailable to the library for potentially 25 years. This is exactly the type of issue where there needs to be a public hearing since the library touches so many constituents all across the county in so many ways."

County officials decry 'misinformation,' say library services will be unaffected

Erie County Public Library Executive Director Karen Pierce said there is "misinformation" swirling in the public, insisting "not a single program" would be eliminated in the library as a result of the new center.

She said the library has "zero chance" of losing state funding and that parking constraints will only be temporary as the nearby construction project winds down.

She added that she moved two children's librarians from Blasco Library to branch locations to ensure all the branches had a degreeed librarian on site, not as a way to free up parking for the proposed center, as some citizens suggested Tuesday.

Rebutting Harrington's point about the library needing more space in the future, Smith argued that "physical space" will likely be less important to the library in the years ahead as resources become more digitized.

He also addressed another question: How did Gannon get such a good deal on the lease amount?

"The easy reason is that they are our partners," Smith told the crowd. "We're not looking to make a buck off them on a yearly basis. We are here to help them grow a program that your children and your grandchildren

may well get involved in and that would draw research from around the Great Lakes and from across the Great Lakes, from Canada and from Europe."

Sarah Ewing, provost and vice president for student experience at Gannon, said having the center at the library presents a "wonderful opportunity" to provide greater access to the community and the ability to partner with librarians and arrange programming.

Center was originally set for Port Authority building

The Great Lakes Research & Education Center is part of Gannon's \$24 million water quality initiative known as Project NePTWNE, pronounced "Neptune," after the Roman god of freshwater and the seas.

NePTWNE stands for Nano & Polymer Technology for Water and Neural Networks.

Originally, the university planned to build the center at the Union Fish Co. building at 116 W. Front St. at Wolverine Marina. That was the plan sold to members of County Council in March when they approved \$1.5 million in American Rescue Plan funds to develop the center.

But plans changed after the Port Authority insisted the university would only get a 30-day notice if asked to vacate the building, according to Gannon spokesman Doug Oathout.

"For us, we had to pause and say, 'If we're going to invest a lot of money into this space, is it smart to do that knowing that at any given time, you could be handed a 30-day notice to vacate the property?'" Oathout told the Erie Times-News.

Oathout said the county approached the university about using the library. The library allows for more than 3,000 square feet as opposed to the Union Fish Company Building's 1,800 square feet.

The center will be located in an area of the library that now holds offices and some reference materials, which will be moved to the second floor, according to the administration's rationale statement to council.

The center will also share classroom space and the Idea Lab located in the library, as well as the building's garage bay to transport materials and equipment and to store a golf cart or other small utility vehicle.

A.J. Rao can be reached at arao@gannett.com. Follow him on X @ETNRao.

Letters to the editor -
November 12, 2023 | Erie Times-News (PA)
Page: B2 | Section: News

Blasco Library the wrong site for Gannon's Lake Erie research

Now don't get me wrong, I'm all for higher education and the idea that Gannon University wants a research center to study water is great, but not in my Erie County Public Library. Number one, why wasn't this decision about Gannon and Blasco Library put to a public hearing? It could have been held right at the library. Is this another trick by the Erie County Executive Brenton Davis to pull the wool over the eyes of the voters in Erie County? He tried it with the Fairview/Girard business park and lost. Maybe he needs to lose again.

Why can't Gannon use the Tom Ridge Environmental Center? And why is Gannon only being charged \$22,956 a year to use the facilities? You can barely rent an apartment in Erie for that. Speak up, Erie, this is not a good thing for the people of Erie County and our library.

Sent: Sunday, November 5, 2023 12:28 PM

Subject: Proposed Gannon University Lease of Erie County Public Library Space

Dear Annie Rosenthal, Mary Ann Tempestini, Mari Howells, Mohamed Almorsy, Dr. Quyen Aoh, Kara Murphy, and Adam Groves—

I have sent a version of this letter to Ms. Karen Pierce.

I am writing to object to the proposed lease of a portion of the Erie County Public Library main branch to Gannon University.

Both the “how” and the “what” of this proposed lease are plain wrong. Gannon University is a private, sectarian institution. The Erie County Public Library is a public trust, not a strip mall seeking tenants. It does not matter how worthy Gannon’s proposed project is. Library Board approval of this or any private entity’s leasing of library space betrays a shocking lack of understanding of, and respect for the very institution you exist to care for.

It comes as no surprise that the cynical, self-congratulatory, condescending justifications the County Executive, County Administrator, and County Council Chairperson have offered for this rushed and misbegotten “initiative” crumble when subjected to even a moment’s thought. Among other laughable, insulting, and beside-the-point commentary, Erie County citizens have been told that the County has lost population; that change is inevitable; that libraries must keep up with the times; that last-minute items routinely get added to County Council agendas; that no library programming will be lost; that the Davis administration isn’t looking to make a profit from Gannon; that Gannon University is “the expert” in “water research”; that Gannon University is excited about the project; that County Council wouldn’t get anything done if public hearings were held on every proposal; that the County Council Chairperson has had “no pushback” from his constituents. Again, all this and more irrelevant cynicism comes as no surprise, but what *is* surprising--and deeply disappointing--is the Library Board’s acquiescence to auctioning off a piece of the public trust whose health and integrity it should be committed to maintain.

I implore you to reverse course, to exercise integrity and discernment, to stand collectively and individually for keeping the Erie County Public Library what it must be to live up to its name: Public.

Sincerely,

John Repp
Erie, Pennsylvania