



Library Advisory Board Meeting Thursday, December 21, 2023 Via Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8056949401?pwd=cXRyUFJxTkJodzUvcGNVeWt2TGyOQT09>

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 – November 16, 2023**
3. **Board Remarks - (limit to 12 minutes)**
4. **Public Comment- (limit to 15 minutes)**
5. **Library Reports**
 - a. Report of the Director- John Euliano
 - 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- Kathleen Horan
 - c. Report of Erie Regional Library Foundation- Patrick Miller
7. **Unfinished Business-**
 - a. Bylaw review – approval of bylaws
 - b. Display Policy Draft discussion
 - c. In- person Meetings months for 2024
8. **New Business**
 - a. Board Training Work Session
9. **Adjournment**
10. **Appendix**
 - a. Announcements
 - b. News Articles

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Minutes – November 16, 2023
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5. Library Reports

a. Report of the Director- John Euliano

Connections-

Blue Whale Project- The whale tale made its debut at the Iroquois Branch at the end of October. It stayed at Iroquois through most of November and hosted multiple programs stemming from what whales eat, how they sound and how big they truly are! The tale then made its way over to the Edinboro Branch the first week of December for a couple weeks of programming including a Preschool Story Time. . The Millcreek Branch will be the next stop in January. This program is provided by a grant received from the National Science Foundation and the STAR Library Network.

Gallery Night- the Blasco Library participated in Gallery Night on Friday, December 15. Roughly 100 people attended Gallery Night at Blasco Library to do cookie decorating, mandala/rangoli creating, adopt a winter animal, and learn about the library's art offerings through a scavenger hunt. Art was submitted from six different schools and displayed in the children's gallery through the weekend. Circulation services were open during the event so we could sign up new patrons for library cards and even check-out materials. The Friends opened their bookstore and were thrilled to welcome holiday shoppers.

Collections-

The library added a total of 17,334 new items to the collection in 2023.

Capacity-

Personnel Update – There have been some recent management changes within the Library. Karen Pierce has resigned as the Executive Director of the Library. The search for a replacement candidate will occur in the near future. Shane Donaldson resigned as the Youth Services Manager. Jessica Stefano has accepted the position. She previously managed the Iroquois Branch.

Budget Vetoes – County Executive vetoed the County Council approved 2024 Budget. The veto included the elimination of library positions. Council had a special meeting this past Monday. Of the eight positions officially proposed to council, all but three were overridden. Two vacant positions were eliminated along with one occupied part time clerk. Fortunately, we were able to offer the occupied position a vacant part time floating clerk position.

b. Review of Financial Report- Deana

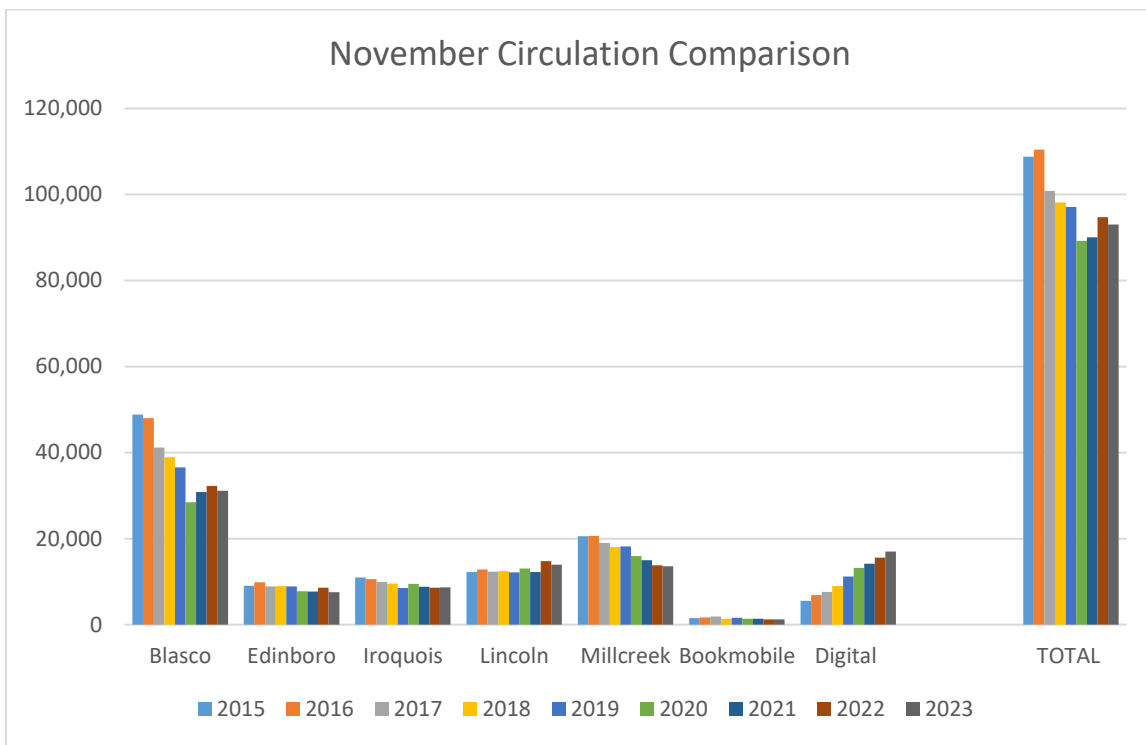
See attached



November 2023 Statistics

Numbers Snapshot

- **402** new cards issued (↑1%), including **65** e-cards
- **16,982** Digital Circulation is (↑8%)
- **30,165** Patron visits (remains steady)



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Blasco	48,847	47,987	41,205	38,911	36,570	28,445	30,843	32,238	31,105
Edinboro	9,024	9,864	8,854	8,941	8,868	7,746	7,692	8,594	7,581
Iroquois	10,996	10,600	9,928	9,520	8,535	9,490	8,774	8,580	8,630
Lincoln	12,255	12,838	12,319	12,425	12,174	13,017	12,202	14,728	13,934
Millcreek	20,596	20,606	19,035	18,019	18,186	15,979	15,002	13,763	13,539
Bookmobile	1,534	1,670	1,901	1,391	1,621	1,345	1,348	1,250	1,238
Digital	5,537	6,889	7,617	8,945	11,164	13,206	14,178	15,592	16,982
TOTAL	108,789	110,454	100,859	98,152	97,118	89,228	90,039	94,745	93,009

d. Report of District Consultant

District Services Report as of December 20, 2023 Updates for ECPL LAB Report Submitted by Jessica Church, District Consultant

Plans for Use of State Aid & County Coordination Aid

The last step for a library to complete in order to receive State Aid includes completing a plan that informs the Office of Commonwealth Libraries (OCL) on how the library intends to use its State Aid to enhance library services. OCL approved all the plans by the member libraries of the Erie & Crawford Library District.

State Aid

Last week, the General Assembly and Governor passed the fiscal language that releases State Aid within the Public Library Subsidy line (State Aid) of their Education budget. This language affects all State Aided libraries in the Commonwealth. The budget passed this summer, but we have been waiting on the 2nd part of the process that allows the distribution to take place.

The delayed distribution only affected District Aid thus far as local libraries and those libraries that facilitate County Coordination Aid typically receive funds in January/February. This morning, the Office of Commonwealth Libraries (OCL) stated that the anticipated timeline is for Districts to receive funds in January and local libraries and County Coordination Aid entities to receive funds in February at the latest. We are thankful that the language passed before the end of the year and prior to the close of the House and Senate sessions.

Interlibrary Loan Delivery

We postponed piloting the interlibrary loan delivery process across the District due to the uncertainty of when District and County Coordination Aid funds would be received. With the recent announcement of an anticipated timeline, we hope to get that project back on track in the New Year.

The District member libraries need this change locally. Currently, the libraries in Erie County utilize a combination of local delivery, a UPS subscription for ECPL only (though some of the independents send theirs to ECPL to ship out), and some use USPS to mail books and materials to other libraries. The libraries in Crawford County utilize UPS subscriptions to mail books to each other as well as to libraries in Erie County and across PA. Libraries outside of the district also use a variety of shipping methods to send books and materials to the libraries in Erie and Crawford Counties.

Following the announcement of the Fiscal Code language, IDS—the UPS subscription service for libraries to ship items at a lesser rate—announced a severe hike in costs. For a frame of reference, pre-COVID subscriptions (paid for by our District) was about \$25,000. While they honored 25% invoicing discounts in 2021 and 2022 because libraries across the State shipped fewer packages, our 2023 invoices were over \$44,000 and IDS's projected invoices for us for 2024 is over \$71,000. They have shared that these hikes are because they dipped heavily into their reserves in 2021 and 2022 and could not foresee the increases on UPS's end. These amounts are not sustainable. While we've been looking into changing the process over the last few months, it will prove to be even more timely to ensure that patrons across both counties can still borrow materials that their home library/location might not own.

6. Board and Committee Reports

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10. Appendix

- a. Announcements

-Next meeting is Monday, January 22, 2023 at noon via zoom

- b. News Articles

Robert H. "Bob" Weisenfluh Jr.

November 22, 2023 | Erie Times-News (PA)

Section: Obituaries

159 Words | Readability: Lexile: 1260, grade level(s): 11-12

[Read News Document](#)

Robert H. "Bob" Weisenfluh Jr., age 69, passed away on Monday, November 20, 2023. Born in Erie on December 28, 1953 a son of the late Robert H. and Eleanor M. (Chamoni) Weisenfluh Sr.

Bob retired as a Librarian from the Erie County Public **Library**. He enjoyed his daily visits to the Glenwood YMCA where he would spend time with the YMCA Crew.

Survivors include a brother, Mark G. Weisenfluh, his wife Chelsey; four nieces, Emma, Clare, Addy and Ella Weisenfluh; and also many cousins.

Friends are invited to call at Brugger Funeral Homes & Crematory, 845 East 38th St. on Sunday 11/26/23 from 2 to 4 p.m. and may attend a funeral mass at Mount Calvary

Church, 2022 East Lake Rd, on Monday 11/27/23 at 10:00 a.m. Entombment will follow in Calvary Cemetery. Condolences to www.bruggerfuneralhomes.com

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to The Friends of Erie County **Library** or Catholic Relief Services.

Caption: Obituaries in Erie, PA | Erie Times-News

Erie Times November 26, 2023

Letters

Continued from Page 2B

Gannon alum urges school to drop Blasco lease

As a Gannon University alumnus, I had an opportunity to attend an online presentation about the NePTWNE Project on Nov. 16th. The research study is both inspiring and essential on so many levels addressing issues related to lake ecology, public health and the economy. Opportunities for students will be endless as they study issues and discover ways to mitigate solutions through engineering and manufacturing. I congratulate the county executive and county council on supporting the study to the tune of \$3 million using federal funding (American Rescue Plan Act funding) and state funding (Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program).

What I continue to be troubled by is the gift of a por-

tion of the Blasco branch of the Erie County Public **Library** to Gannon University at a bargain-basement lease price for 25 years (\$7 per square foot) for Gannon's Great Lakes Research and Education Center, a part of Project NePTWNE. I feel the county executive and county council have not been good stewards of county/public property.

As a lifetime **library** user, I find this offensive. It is not as if there was lots of unused space at Blasco. I had the opportunity to tour the space allocated for the research and education center. The area will displace adult services staff moving several of them to the staff training room and other rooms on the second floor. These are the people who plan and implement programs and services for the public. That begs the question, where will staff training take place? In addition, the computers recently moved to the first floor to create better public access will be moved back to the second floor. In addition, it appears some of the collaboration spaces (meeting rooms) used by the public will be taken away. These are public spaces leased to a private

university.

Gannon University has plenty of space on campus and is known to buy space when needed for expansion. They are well endowed and continue to ask for financial support. In June when the bayfront space Gannon was negotiating was no longer available, the county executive generously offered space at Blasco with absolutely no opportunities for public comment. On Oct. 17th, concerned citizens overflowed the county council chamber asking the lease with Gannon to be tabled for further investigation. Members of the county council voted the request down.

Sometimes when you are offered a deal that is too good to be true, it's time to say, "No, thank you." Frustrated concerned community members picketed regularly in front of the university. Before knocking down walls, displacing staff and public spaces at the Erie County Public **Library**, I ask Gannon to do the right thing and withdraw from the lease.

Marcy Sargent Bencivenga, Gannon alumni, class of 1971, McKean

'Project Minerva' aims to protect Blasco Library, end Gannon lease

December 10, 2023 | Erie Times-News (PA)

Page: B2 | Section: News

903 Words | Readability: Lexile: 1400, grade level(s): >12

[Read News Document](#)

At the general Erie County Council meeting on Oct. 17th, the council voted on a resolution to approve a lease agreement between the County of Erie and Gannon University for the Gannon Great Lakes Research Center at the Blasco **Library**. The public was caught off guard, as there was no information on how this proposal came about or what the deal's details might entail.

The caucus meeting and following council meeting rolled out like a well-rehearsed play, with all the usual suspects flawlessly performing their supporting roles, in my view.

Karen Pierce, selected as the executive director of the Erie County **Library** by County Executive Brenton Davis, played a lead role. Recall, she was the **library** official who recently directed the Pride Month book display to be relocated. In my opinion, her praise of the administration's new endeavor at the **library** shows little evidence that she considered how the community feels.

Doug Smith, director of administration, praised Pierce as the person responsible for making the **library** what it is today. In fact, Pierce began in her position in mid-June of last year. Many librarians who spoke up in opposition on the evening of Oct. 17th knew the history of Blasco and demonstrated an understanding of **library** services. Fish tanks are not included in the definition of **library**.

The **library** executive director should be the steward for this valued public resource, putting the voices of our community first and advocating for a public comment period and meeting. Pierce complained of misinformation being spread; a community town hall could have put this argument to rest.

There are still other players in this saga. Thought must be given to the part Gannon University plays in what is in my view a story of poor governing.

The county executive offered up this opportunity to the university. Gannon University has a stellar reputation as a community partner, and Project NePTWNE is a valued program. It was the one thought agreed upon by everyone at the October 2023 Erie County Council meeting. Understandably, the university found the offer too good to resist — more space, a beautiful building, the bayfront location, a minimal leasing fee and long-term use.

Will Gannon be willing to stand by and silently ignore the people's voices? It doesn't seem to be their style. When you listen, you benefit, and you grow trust.

What was the rush? The finance chair, west county's Ellen Schauerman, brought the resolution at the last minute to a set agenda at the finance committee meeting just days before the vote. County Council Chairman Brian Shank made remarks in the Erie Times-News about public meetings slowing down the work of the council. His comments were somewhat reminiscent of Doug Smith's comments regarding the Fairview/Girard business park, that going to the public before a vote would result in the proposal being "dead in its tracks."

The seven members of Erie County Council should be relying on constituents for meaningful input. So many people have expertise and experience to offer to county leaders. Councilman Charlie Bayle says he does his research, but do his votes serve his constituents in his district?

The last player in this saga is the local nightly news, putting a positive spin on this story, instead of investigating why the community might have valid concerns about this action. Deeper reporting needs to be provided in a search for the truth. Help is needed to answer the questions the county government will not.

It should be comforting to those who remain unconvinced that Blasco **Library** is the ideal location for "Neptune" that there are influential, persistent community leaders in their corner. The history of establishing Erie County's Blasco Library on the bayfront should be recounted and remembered. Michele Ridge, the 41st first lady of Pennsylvania, joined the

Erie County **library** system as a branch manager and became executive director in 1979. Her leadership generated the construction of the Erie County Blasco **Library** on Erie's waterfront.

This is a big community decision. Perhaps major proposals should have waited until after the Nov. 7th election when newly voted members would be seated. County Councilman Tom Spagel, representing the 3rd District, after all, is just temporarily holding his seat. Perhaps decisions involving a community asset used by almost every citizen should be vetted by the citizens before a vote is taken. Together, stakeholders could present all the facts and then determine the next steps.

There is a movement underway to preserve and protect this county asset. It is called Project Minerva. Minerva is the goddess of wisdom and her statue stands in Blasco **Library**. You can find this group on Facebook and join one of the many efforts being created to end the lease relationship between Erie County and Gannon University. Sign the online petition. The university guides students to reason toward what is morally right and just. This should apply outside the classroom in business dealings, as well.

Lorraine "Lori" Dolan, of Fairview, has served in community leadership roles, including her tenure as president of the League of Women Voters of Erie and her work with Fair Districts PA. She is a wife and mother, and has received the Erie County Bar Association's Liberty Bell award for strengthening freedom under law. She was the Democratic nominee in the race for Erie County Council, District 7.

Your Turn

Lorraine Dolan

Guets Columnist

Caption:

The interior of Blasco Memorial **Library**, as of Oct. 4. Gannon University is looking to develop a water research center in the office space behind the rear classrooms.

A.J. RAO/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

Public demands engagement - Court ruling may add transparency to county council

December 10, 2023 | Erie Times-News (PA)

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

890 Words | Readability: Lexile: 1520, grade level(s): >12

[Read News Document](#)

Ever since Erie County Council passed a resolution in October to let Gannon University lease more than 3,000-square feet of space inside Blasco Library, a slew of residents have been up in arms.

Among their complaints: The way in which council seemingly fast-tracked the lease to a vote without engaging the public.

Not only was the resolution introduced at a finance committee meeting held just three business days prior to the vote but the resolution was not listed on the committee meeting's published agenda. Indeed, it was added to the agenda during the committee meeting itself.

The result left residents scrambling to learn about the lease with little time to spare. Since the measure was a resolution and not an ordinance, it didn't require a first and second reading, only a single majority vote.

And with council not entertaining public comments during committee meetings, residents had only one day — the day of the vote — to voice their objections to what they consider a consequential 25-year lease agreement, one that places a private university's research and education center inside the county's main public library.

For opponents, questions were abound: How could this happen with such little notice? Did council abide by the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act?

Legal interpretations vary.

But a recent court ruling could provide some clarity and change how council approaches similar votes in the future.

Court ruling to limit last-minute agenda items

The state Sunshine Act requires agendas to be published at least 24 hours in advance of a meeting.

For any late items that come to a body's attention within that 24-hour period, the Sunshine Act allows members to add those to the agenda so long as there is a majority vote to do so.

A new court ruling, however, has clarified the kind of items that can be added.

The Nov. 8 ruling from the state Commonwealth Court indicates that items can only be added within 24 hours of a meeting if they address a real or potential emergency; or if they're of minor importance and do not involve the expenditure of funds, or entering into contracts or agreements.

Melissa Melewsky, media law counsel for the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association, said some agencies across the state had preferred the earlier, looser interpretation of the law, but public access advocates did not, which is why the court stepped in and issued a ruling to clarify it.

"Now, only emergencies, very minor and non-financial, non-contractual issues can be added by a majority vote during a meeting," she told the Erie Times-News.

How will this affect County Council?

Legal interpretations of the ruling — and how it could impact council procedures — vary.

On the one hand, Melewsky said the ruling applies to any meeting under the Sunshine Act, including finance and personnel committee meetings. As such, she said, the way in which council added the Gannon lease resolution to a committee meeting agenda in October would not be acceptable today.

"A lease agreement is a contract; as such, it cannot be added during a meeting unless it is an emergency," she said.

On the other hand, Council Solicitor Tom Talarico said the ruling doesn't apply to committee meetings because

committees — unlike regular council meetings — don't involve any official actions.

Talarico said the court ruling specifically dealt with a case in which an agency added an item to an agenda and then voted on that item at the same meeting.

By contrast, he said, council added the Gannon lease resolution to a committee meeting agenda and then properly included the resolution on the published agenda of the next regular meeting.

"The rule in the (court case) is limited to those meetings at which council takes official action on an amended item without providing notice to the public," he said. "Items on the committee agenda may be stricken, removed, changed and even added without offending the provisions of the Sunshine Act or the (ruling)."

Melewsky pushed back, insisting the Sunshine Act applies to any deliberation by an agency quorum.

"The finance committee, as a committee that renders advice on matters of agency business, is an agency itself as defined by the law," she said. "The fact that the committee takes no official action is not relevant because the law reaches committees that take official action or render advice on matters of agency business."

County Council has other options to increase transparency

Talarico said there are other steps that council could take to "slow down" deliberations and give the public more time to learn about a measure before a vote.

He said there are procedural ways that council could amend the Erie County Administrative Code and potentially require two readings for both ordinances and resolutions, or ensure that any measure that deals with a contract in excess of \$25,000 must be an ordinance.

Melewsky added that committee meetings should meet the same standards as regular meetings: Meeting minutes have to be kept, agendas have to be produced, recording must be permitted and public comment must be allowed, she said.

Council currently does not permit public comments during committee meetings, nor does it publish minutes from committee meetings. The meetings can be viewed live via Zoom but recordings of the meetings are not posted online.

"Agencies can implement reasonable rules and regulations to govern the conduct of public meetings for their committees, but they cannot fall below the minimum requirements of the Sunshine Act," Melewsky said.

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

Liz Allen: What price can we put on our public library's Erie values and heritage?

I fell in love with public libraries at an early age. My passion has never flagged.

Libraries have shaped me as a reader, reporter and newspaper columnist.

That's why the current furor over Erie County Council's decision to lease space to Gannon University at Blasco **Library** and Erie County Executive Brenton Davis' determination to cut 12 **library** jobs has me worried about the future of the Erie public **library** system.

I'm fortunate that my parents introduced me to the immense joys and practical benefits of having a **library** card at an early age.

In first grade, my mom took me to the **library** at Perry Square to get my **library** card and I checked out "Gulliver's Travels." I was too young to appreciate the bite of Jonathan Swift's satire but I liked the illustrations.

By fourth grade, I had discovered that in addition to storybooks, including Newbery Medal winners, the **library** had a reference section with city directories.

I'm guessing that my dad introduced me to the utility of city directories, based on what I wrote in the front page of his new "Saint Joseph Sunday Missal," a Christmas gift from my mom in 1960. If he ever lost that prayer book, I wrote, the finder should "look up Daddy's name in the city directy." (Yes, I misspelled "directory," but I was only 9.)

That same year, I also became a diehard baseball fan after I bet a kid down the street a dime that the Pittsburgh Pirates would beat the New York Yankees in the World Series.

Still, it wasn't until 1966 that I grasped that baseball is a cerebral game. I attribute this insight to the downtown **library**, which is where I borrowed "The Glory of Their Times. The Story of the Early Days Baseball Told by the Men Who Played It," by Lawrence S. Ritter.

I suspect that golfers also consider their sport a brainy game and I was touched when my friends John and Judy Guerriero donated a golf novel, "The Rub of the Green," to the Erie County Public **Library** in my late husband's name after Pat died in 1994.

But I don't fret about our **library**'s future for personal reasons. I have the resources to buy books, download them to my Kindle, stream movies and use Wi-Fi on my phone and laptop.

Many others don't have that luxury, including those who are poor, the immigrants who come to Blasco to practice their English and **library** patrons in the city and rural areas who rely on the Bookmobile to borrow new DVDs, best sellers, children's audiobooks, Wi-Fi

hot spots and puzzles, according to erielibrary.org/calendar.

Bookmobile stops in December include senior housing complexes, the Pennsylvania Soldiers' & Sailors' Home, Grover Cleveland School, Summit Heights Mobile Home Park, the Wattsburg Volunteer Fire Department and the Federated Church of East Springfield, to name a few.

You may wonder how squeezing out space at Blasco for Gannon's new Great Lakes Center for Research & Education could possibly affect patrons who use the branches, the Bookmobile or the six independent libraries in Erie County.

Gannon representatives and the five county council members who approved the 25-year lease have asserted that Gannon's facility won't hurt public access. But because the vote was rushed, without any public listening sessions, other than the night when council voted, many questions linger about how far-ranging Gannon's footprint will be at Blasco and what the ripple effect might be in Davis' plan for job cuts is approved.

I saw a number of red flags at the Oct. 17 meeting where county council OK'd the Gannon lease. Councilman Tom Spagel, District 3, said he had toured the **library** with his colleagues to view Gannon's plan but otherwise, he hadn't been to the **library** since his children were little, he said. "There's plenty of space," he insisted.

One tour doesn't make you an expert on how the **library** is used.

More worrisome is what Doug Smith, Erie County's director of administration, said about the future vision for the **library**. "Physical space will be less important than electronic data," Smith predicted.

Smith glossed over the fact that public libraries, including Erie's, offer many more services to patrons than hard-cover books. From my two terms on the Erie **Library** Advisory Board, I know that e-books aren't cheap; licenses from publishers expire and must be renewed. Does Smith have a projected budget in mind for those costs, especially when Davis, his boss, wants to slash **library** jobs to save money?

But I object to the Gannon lease not just because it allows a private institution to encroach on public space. Rather, letting this lease go forward sends a message that elected politicians don't care that our public **library** tells a story itself about our Erie values and heritage.

Charles Pierce, a writer for Esquire and a friend from j-school, enlightened me in that regard when he commented on a photo I posted on Facebook from a quote engraved at the Charlotte Mecklenburg **Library** in North Carolina, which I visited on vacation. "Without libraries, what do we have? We have no past and no future," reads the quote from Ray Bradbury, author of "Fahrenheit 451."

The local **library** is "my first stop whenever I go on the road for a story," Charlie wrote. "I

haunt the local history sections for details that will help me kick open interviews. Once, I spent an entire afternoon in the **library** in Warroad, Minnesota, reading about the town's legendary hockey history in front of a roaring fire in a huge stone fireplace. It was snowing just enough outside to create a zone of peace so thick I could wrap myself in it."

More: Brenton Davis wants to eliminate Human Relations Commission, **library** staff. Is it legal?

In July 2001, I wrote a column about an Erie man who visited his wife at a nursing home to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary. She had dementia and I wanted to know more about that, so I read Charlie's book, "Hard to Forget: An Alzheimer's Story," about his father's dementia, his mother's inability to cope with it, his fear about inheriting the disease and scientific advances to prevent or beat the disease.

Naturally, I borrowed the book from the Erie County **Library**.

Liz Allen, a retired Erie Times-News Sunday columnist, is a freelance writer whose work includes writing for Emmaus Ministries.

Erie County Council overrides key budget vetoes, reductions. Here's a quick look

December 19, 2023 | Erie Times-News: Web Edition Articles (PA)

Author/Byline: A.J. Rao, Erie Times-News | Section: News

430 Words | Readability: Lexile: 1240, grade level(s): 11-12

[Read News Document](#)

Erie County Council on Monday voted to override a slew of key budget vetoes and reductions sought by Erie County Executive Brenton Davis.

Here's a quick look.

Funding kept for Human Relations Commission, Pleasant Ridge Manor, **library**

Council voted 7-0 to override the elimination of the Erie County Human Resources Commission.

Council voted 6-1 to override a nearly \$500,000 cut from the \$999,996 general fund transfer to Pleasant Ridge Manor.

Of the eight public **library** positions that Davis sought to eliminate, council voted to keep six positions and eliminate two recently vacated positions — a part-time **library** clerk and social media coordinator, both at Blasco Memorial **Library**.

Council strikes four vetoes from agenda

Council voted to strike four of six Davis vetoes from the agenda, following the advice of Council Solicitor Tom Talarico, who questioned the legality of adding funds back into the budget.

The four struck vetoes sought to:

- * Reverse a decrease of \$1.2 million in adoption subsidies for the Erie County Office of Children and Youth. This is 100% funded through state and federal sources.
- * Reverse a decrease of \$22,500 in advertising for the 2020 Community Development Block Grant administration. The funding is received and currently being expensed;
- * Restore an Erie County Human Resources generalist position; and restore an IT specialist position. Both positions had been eliminated by council because, according to Talarico, Davis illegally added them to the 2023 budget despite having no council approval. Council has filed a lawsuit against Davis over the matter.

Other votes

Council voted to override a reduction of \$31,000 from \$270,000 for professional fees to Erie County Council.

Council voted to sustain the following vetoes and reductions:

- * An elimination of the use of \$1.6 million in American Rescue Plan funds to support outside counsel for indigent clients. The funding will come from the general fund;
- * A reversal of \$22,674 in union increases for the Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development. The increase was already budgeted, making the increase duplicative;
- * A reduction of \$18,000 from \$40,200 to support paid interns at the **library**;
- * The elimination of a part-time clerk at the Millcreek **Library** branch;
- * A reduction of \$20,000 from \$70,000 for maintenance and repair in the Operations Department;
- * The elimination of a vacant realty records clerk position in the Recorder of Deeds Office;
- * The elimination of a vacant clerk typist/receptionist position in Adult Probation;
- * The elimination of a vacant administrative clerk position in Domestic Relations; and
- * A reduction of \$60,000 from the Register of Wills and \$133,000 from the Prothonotary.

This is a developing story. Return to GoErie.com for updates.

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

Bishop Persico to Gannon lease protesters: Talk to Erie County officials

December 18, 2023 | Erie Times-News: Web Edition Articles (PA)

Author/Byline: A.J. Rao, Erie Times-News | Section: News

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Erie Catholic Bishop Lawrence Persico is sending a message to protesters who've been rallying against Gannon University leasing space inside Blasco Library: Talk to Erie County government.

In a statement to the Erie Times-News on Monday, Persico, who serves as chairperson of the Gannon University Board of Trustees, said the university had negotiated with the county "in good faith" when it came to leasing more than 3,000-square feet of space inside the library for its upcoming Great Lakes Research and Education Center.

Moreover, he said, Erie County Council approved the lease agreement.

"The handful of people who are not happy with the lease agreement have now moved their protests to the (St. Peter) cathedral, encountering parishioners who are there to attend Sunday Mass," Persico wrote in his statement. "If the protesters do not believe the lease agreement was done according to procedure, their concerns need to be addressed with the Erie County executive and Erie County Council."

Residents have taken to the streets ever since County Council approved the lease agreement in late October.

Rallying together as a group called "Keep Our Library Public," the residents argue the lease is an example of a private entity not only infringing on public space but impeding library services for years to come.

The group has protested at the library, the university and in front of St. Peter's Cathedral, where they hold signs and pass out fliers to incoming parishioners.

Persico stated that Gannon University President Walter Iwanenko has met with several of those opposed and will continue to do so.

"Gannon's Board of Trustees views Project NePTWNE as an important community asset and supports the decision to locate the research center in the library," he added.

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