



Library Advisory Board Meeting Monday, April 15, 2024 Via Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83819780963?pwd=OFkraXEyamdRL2tEbFNXcDJZOWswZz09>

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

AGENDA

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Approval of Minutes – March 18, 2024**
3. **Public Comment- (limit to 15 minutes)**
4. **Library Reports**
 - a. Staff Report- Tammy Blount, Teen Librarian
 - b. Report of the Director- John Euliano
 - c. Review of Financial Report- Deana
 - d. Statistical and Other Reports- John
 - e. Report of District Consultant-Jessica Church
5. **Board and Committee Reports**
 - a. Report of County Council Liaison- Councilman Horton
 - b. Report of Friends of the Library- Kathleen Horan
 - c. Report of Erie Regional Library Foundation- Patrick Miller
6. **Unfinished Business-**
 - a. None
7. **New Business**
 - a. None
8. **Adjournment**
9. **Appendix**
 - a. Announcements
 - b. News Articles

'Our future lies in the lake,' renowned scientist Mason backs Gannon's Blasco lease

Blasco Library - Chamber endorses Gannon project

'Immoral deal' why Gannon's Blasco lease is an economic, political and religious failure

County council rescinds Gannon lease at library

Erie County Executive Davis vetoes repeal of Gannon lease at Blasco Library

The Friends of the Erie County Library want your books. Here's how to easily donate them.

Follow the solar eclipse timeline of events. Don't forget the glasses.

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Connections-

Blasco Adult Programming-

Small Business Symposium- the Library sponsored a full day Business Symposium in partnership with the Erie County Redevelopment Authority on Saturday, March 23. This symposium included nine programs (some mandatory) including Beehive services, business accounting, small business law, Branding and logos, and grants for creative businesses. Over 40 business owners in attendance.

Idea Lab Tour- Librarians gave a tour of the Idea Lab to members of the Erie Arts & Culture on March 15.

Hagen Fellowship Interview- A cohort of individuals in the current Hagen Fellowship Group interviewed Adult Services Manager, Andrew Miller. This cohort is part of the Jefferson Educational Society but run by Erie Insurance. They are trying to research the entrepreneurial ecosystem currently available in Erie. Andrew explained the role of the Idea Lab and its beginner focus on Idea Lab equipment, with patron education being the priority. Idea Lab is often misrepresented as a business accelerator.

Digital Literacy and Workforce Grant – Adult Services is working to partner with Gannon University to fund a portion of library computer classes through their grant. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Idea Lab Staff tour PSU Behrend Meehl Innovation Commons- Staff had the opportunity to tour the PSU Beehive. They have cutting edge equipment and it is valuable for our team to interact with that space. The main takeaway was a good discussion regarding future decisions on our 3D printer services. 3D Printing is one of the “big three” services in the Idea Lab.

Monthly Statistic Recap-

Information Desk Questions **1819**

Idea Lab Questions 96, Total Idea Lab Check ins-67

46 Programs, **395** Attendees, **8** Tech Help Questions

Programming Highlights-

Arduino Coding- March 6, Local maker instruction on how to program an Arduino Uno and Scratch. Registration just under full captivity.

Beginner Soldering: Blink Light- March 14, Local maker teaches basic of joining two metal surfaces together with a filler. Registration at max with wait list.

Glowforge- Veneer Inlays – March 26, learn the basics of creating wood inlays using thin veneer sheets. Registration maxed with wait list.

Spring Skywarn- On March 28, Meteorologist, Tom Atkins hosted a Spring Skywarn training session. It was a comprehensive presentation developed by the National Weather Service covering spring and summer storms in our area, and how they develop, form, and threaten lives and property. As always, this program had great attendance!

A Celestial Treat: Total Solar Eclipse- In partnership with VisitErie, Dr. Darren Williams of Penn State and Jim Gavio of the Yahn Planetarium discussed the science of the eclipse, what to expect during the eclipse and reviewed alternative devices for viewing. Event occurred March 14 in H.O. Hirt Auditorium.

NASA Presents, the Moon and the Water and You- Program April 6 in H.O. Hirt Auditorium.

Blasco Youth Services-

Homeschool Program- In collaboration with the Maritime Museum and Lake Erie Lights organizations, the Blasco Library hosted 181 homeschoolers for a program called “Finding Our Way.” The success of this program has led participating organizations to plan for quarterly collaborative programs for this audience and the future inclusion of additional organizational partners.

Young Writer’s Contest Judges - Three ECPL children’s librarians supported education partner WQLN/PBS/NPR as judges for their Young Writers Contest. In addition to helping choose WQLN’s winners, three written works were identified as “Librarians’ Choice” winners and will be incorporated into ECPL Summer programming.

Best Pet Election- The “Best Pet Election” Civic and Social Literacy program has launched and two “meet the candidate” programs have been delivered to the public in collaboration with local animal welfare organizations; numerous positive comments have been shared by adult and youth patrons.

Blue Whale Project- . ECPL’s host period for the Blue Whale Project (BWP) has come to an end. A total of twelve BWP programs were delivered across all ECPL branches between October 26, 2023 and March 30, 2024 with a total of 267 attendees; countless patrons of all ages interacted with the passive materials associated with the project, with the life-sized whale tail being the most popular item. ECPL’s Jessica Stefano was commended by the National Science Foundation and the STAR Library Network for her willingness to assist the greater national BWP host library community and a modest monetary honorarium was awarded to ECPL in recognition for these efforts.

Youth Services Blasco Programming Statistics:

- **34** programs offered, **880** youth attendees, **433** adult chaperones.
- **5** Teen Programs **56** attendees

Edinboro Branch Programming-

Due to the popularity and uniqueness of the “**Cave Painting**” Program, EDB will be offering it again in May.

Idea Lab Programming-EDB has collaborated with the Idea Lab to offer an acrylic pouring class in April.

Remake Learning Days- In partnership with Remake Learning Days, Edinboro will offer free classes on soap making and bath-bomb making.

Edinboro Programming Statistics: 22 Programs offered in March

- 12 Youth programs with 125 youth attendees, 107 adults
- 10 Adult programs with 70 attendees

Iroquois Branch Programming-

Therapy Dogs-Iroquois Library and the Lincoln Library lost a beloved volunteer. Murray the therapy dog passed away. Murray and his handlers, Doug and Linda Dunbar, were a big part of the library community. Murray volunteered at all locations and served on a regular basis for almost 10 years. Both libraries offer read to an Alliance of Therapy Dog program. We have seen groups as big as 20 patrons attend that event.

Teens and Tweens- Iroquois has a lot of tween & teen foot traffic afterschool from 2:30 until about 4pm. We usually see about 25 students. Manager attention is focused on teens during those hours to ensure that tweens and teens feel welcome at the library. Iroquois Manager, Colleen Donaldson is working to line up active and passive programs during that time.

NAMI- We continue to have NAMI on Wednesday afternoons from 2:30-3:30pm. That has been an excellent partnership. They would like to continue through the end of the school year. They are entertaining serving the community in the fall. Children’s Librarian, Dana Nahas, has offered programs for the teens and tweens after school students once a month since February. Iroquois goal is to offer programs during that time or have some type of activity available. Furniture was also relocated to offer seating so that teens are not all “stacked” into the one corner of the library. It is important that the tween and teen population feel welcome at all library locations and believe that the library is a space for them.

IRQ Programming Statistics:

25 Programs offered in March, 115 youth attendees, 138 adults, 76 Teens

- 9 Youth programs, 115 youth attendees, 91 adults
- 10 Adult programs, 47 adult attendees
- 6 Teen Programs, 76 Teen attendees

Lincoln Community Branch Programming-

We anticipate a rise in circulation and patron visits in the next two months. April has several new programs including gardening and participating in the Earth Day Extravaganza.

Eclipse Programs- We began the month of April with programming surrounding the eclipse. NASA Geologist, Nick Lang presented at Iroquois, Lincoln and Millcreek to instruct how and why this rare cosmic event occurs along with how to safely view it. On Monday, April 8, Lincoln had a Solar Eclipse Party. This was a full day event for all ages. Attendance was around 30 and everyone had a good time.

Penn State Extension Master Gardeners- Lincoln is collaborating with Penn State Extension Master Gardeners to offer two classes on Square Foot Gardening and Composting.

Let's Play Mahjong- Mahjong is back on the schedule for several Saturdays starting in April and running through the end of June.

Lincoln Programming Statistics- 25 programs 544 attendees

- 9 youth Programs 216 youth attendees 146 adults
- 14 Adult and All Ages programs 178 attendees
- 1 Teen program, 4 teens
- 41 patrons via zoom with the Virtual Genealogy class. That is 86 more patrons than in February.

Millcreek Branch Programming-

Idea Lab Programming- MCK collaborated with the Idea Lab to offer a variety of upcoming maker programs ("Fantasy Bookmarks," "Cricut Comic Frames," and "Beach Glass Earrings").

Youth Art Show Project- MCK is in the preliminary stage of planning a youth art show to include displayed artwork and several formal "gallery nights."

MCK's "Seed Swap," occurring on March 14, 15, 16, and 18, resulted in 64 seed packet checkouts, in addition to MCK's regular seed circulation (total 83 items).

Millcreek Programming Statistics: 18 Programs offered in March

- 5 Youth Services with 65 youth attendees, 56 adults
- 13 Adult programs with 80 attendees

Outreach Services-

Outreach Services attended four community events and met ~300 people. Events included Grover Cleveland's Multicultural Night, Hurry Hill Maple Farm's Taste & Tour Weekend (a first for the Bookmobile), JoAnna Connell's Family Resource Fair, and the Maritime Museum's Homeschool Event.

On its regular route, the bookmobile served **275** patrons.

Poetry Anthology with PoetryEriePA- Erie County Public Library celebrates the release of the Erie County Poetry Anthology! This project brings to print the voices of local poets and captures the essence of Erie County's poetry scene as it emerged from the pandemic. Many poets competed for a spot in this volume judged

by award winning poet and artist Ebony Payne-English; join us as we honor those selected! Event will occur Wednesday, April 17 at 6pm in the HIRT Auditorium. Readings from twelve contributing poets of the Anthology. Following the event, authors will sign copies of the Anthology in the Admiral Room.

Projects in process-Arranging summer bookmobile stops & programs to support students and working with resettlement groups to offer library services to New Americans.

Earth Day Extravaganza- Earth day is April 27. There will be multiple programs occurring at all ECPL locations. Activities include: Free tree pickup (registration required) curtesy of the Neighborhood Forest, Seed planting activity at the Bookmobile, Book recycling during the Friends of the Library Spring Book Drive, Q&A with an arborist and Penn State Master Gardeners at Iroquois Branch.

Collections-

Nothing to report

Capacity-

The Lincoln Community room is closed to programs and the public for five business days in May due to Elections. Election Day is a long day with the expectation of a busy parking lot. The library does not have direct interactions with the polling site; however, there is an increase foot traffic through the library.

Personnel Updates-

There are currently three vacant positions posted externally.Both the Librarian and Iroquois Clerk positions come down 4/19 and the Director position will remain up until 4/23.

c. Review of Financial Report- Deana

d. Statistical and Other Reports- John



2023 Library Highlights

423,767 Patron Visits

2,028 Live Programs Offered with Patron Attendance 39,500

42,420 Reference Questions Asked

2022 Comparison

361,747 visits

1217 programs 21,046 attendees

33,361 questions

6,199 New Cards Issued – 38,740 Active Library Cards

5201 issued – 31550 active cards

1,236,320 Library Materials Circulated

1,178,891 items circulated

45,136 Library materials loaned through Interlibrary Loan (ILL)

33296 loaned

31953 Library materials borrowed through ILL

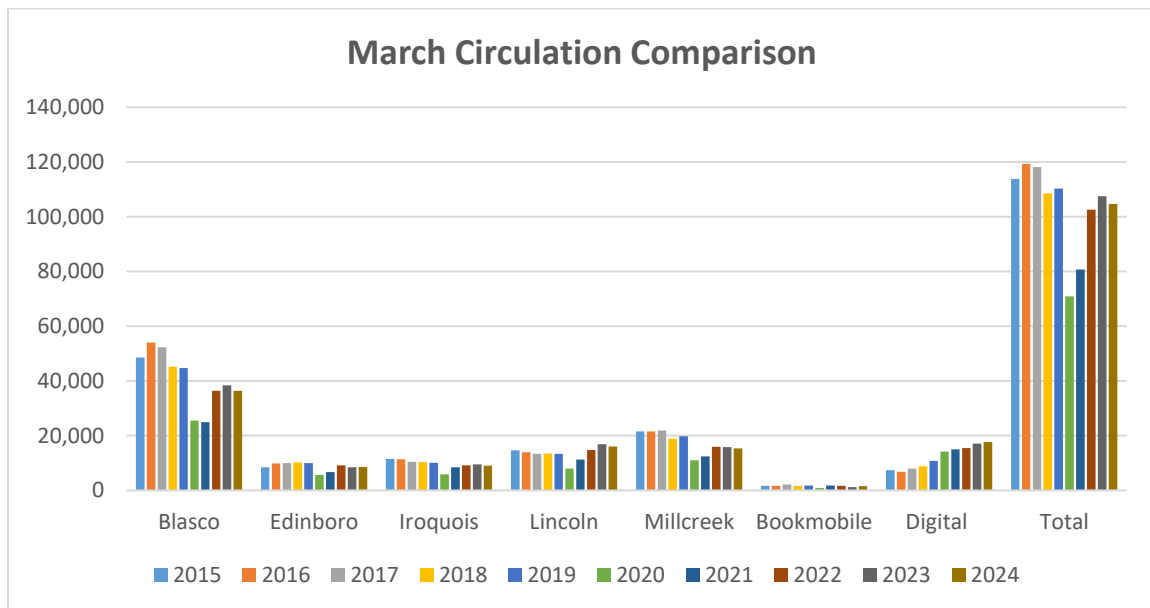
23296 borrowed

March 2024 Statistics

Numbers Snapshot

- **617** new cards issued, including **45** e-cards
- **3,663** WiFi logins, **3439** public PC logins across locations
- **39,425** patron visits, **23,359** at Blasco and **16,066** at branches and Bookmobile.

Circulation



March Circulation Statistics										
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Blasco	48,541	54,106	52,297	45,211	44,710	25,478	24,972	36,412	38,438	36,346
Edinboro	8,431	9,801	9,977	10,203	9,932	5,592	6,749	9,123	8,430	8,559
Iroquois	11,451	11,354	10,496	10,296	10,042	5,860	8,503	9,139	9,537	9,094
Lincoln	14,702	13,986	13,419	13,480	13,384	7,997	11,276	14,754	16,815	16,108
Millcreek	21,577	21,578	21,905	18,878	19,743	11,068	12,461	15,985	15,824	15,365
Bookmobile	1,688	1,673	2,083	1,638	1,782	799	1,739	1,677	1,258	1,564
Digital	7,452	6,763	8,001	8,817	10,744	14,138	14,995	15,478	17,135	17,683
Total	113,842	119,261	118,178	108,523	110,337	70,932	80,695	102,568	107,437	104,719

e. [Report of District Consultant-Jessica Church](#)

District Services Report as of April 11, 2024

Updates for ECPL LAB Report

Submitted by Jessica Church, District Consultant

Annual Reports

District Consultants across the state are completing their final reviews of annual report data before submitting them for review by Office of Commonwealth Libraries and Institute of Museum and Library Services.

District Negotiated Agreement for FY2024-2025

Representatives from District member libraries will meet later this year to finalize the agreement and the budget for the next fiscal year. District services and District aid covers resources and services such as:

- District Consultant – salary, training, professional memberships, travel/mileage, etc.
- Interlibrary loan delivery (3 days in Erie, 2 days in Crawford) including a full-time driver, delivery vehicle, and supplies
- E-resources such as Craftsy, Kovels, LawDepot, and UniversalClass
- The continued evolution of interlibrary loan shipping with exploring and shifting toward a hub shipping model to centralize and bulk shipping of materials
- Some hotspots for each library to circulate
- Professional, institutional memberships for member libraries
- Professional development opportunities for member libraries
- And more!

District Aid is the State aid received by Erie County Public Library to facilitate coordinated library service among all of the member libraries within Erie and Crawford Counties.

County Coordination Aid

Mid-April, we'll be onboarding the new part-time driver, submitting the forms for bids for a new interlibrary loan delivery vehicle, and evaluating the routes for Erie County.

County Coordination Aid is the State aid received by Erie County Public Library to facilitate coordinated library service among all of the public libraries in Erie County. As a county library and the district center, ECPL is the designated library to administer these efforts.

5. Board and Committee Reports

- a. Report of County Council Liaison- Councilman Horton
- b. Report of Friends of the Library- Kathleen Horan
- c. Report of Erie Regional Library Foundation- Patrick Miller

6. Unfinished Business-

- a. None

7. New Business

- a. None

8. Adjournment

9. Appendix

- a. Announcements

-Next meeting is Monday, May 20, 2024 at 9:00am in person at Blasco Admiral Room or via zoom

- b. News Articles

Erie Times News, March 17, 2024

Residents should thank Gannon for leasing public library space

I frequent Erie County's public libraries. I enjoy going to various locations. When I visit the Blasco Library on the bayfront, it first strikes me as an odd location for a library. I remember the day when it was centrally located in the city, which was a more accessible location.

Today, when I walk into that massive structure on our bayfront, I am always surprised by the vastness, the emptiness, the open floor space. Parking has never been a problem, nor have I experienced crowds. If parking did become an issue, perhaps the former Pe-nelec smokestack, which is not owned by Erie County, could be removed and replaced with more parking, benches, and trees.

I relish the idea of young, motivated, curious, good students being in that enormous building, doing great things that will benefit Erie, and potentially im-

going to various locations. When I visit the Blasco **Library** on the bayfront, it first strikes me as an odd location for a **library**. I remember the day when it was centrally located in the city, which was a more accessible location.

Today, when I walk into that massive structure on our bayfront, I am always surprised by the vastness, the emptiness, the open floor space. Parking has never been a problem, nor have I experienced crowds. If parking did become an issue, perhaps the former Peleelec smokestack, which is not owned by Erie County, could be removed and replaced with more parking, benches, and trees.

I relish the idea of young, motivated, curious, good students being in that enormous building, doing great things that will benefit Erie, and potentially improving our Great Lake. I do not understand why others take such issue with students doing research in a **library**, and Gannon actually paying the county rent for that space. Up until now, there has been no other source of revenue for that space, and I think there is plenty of room to go around. If the problem is that it is not enough money, isn't some money better than nothing? Are you considering the benefits to Erie that will be obtained from that research? Priceless.

Bring on the ambitious college students. A **library** is the perfect location for people young and old, who are learning, researching, and improving our environment in the process. Along with that, the **library** receives more money that it would have if Gannon does not lease the space.

We need more people using the facility, and how wonderful that some of those people will now be the college students.

I end this with the question: Why is this even an issue? With so many problems around the world, how is this a problem? We as a community should be thanking Gannon for everything it has done for Erie, the downtown, and the great people who have come out of that university with an excellent education. Can you imagine an Erie without Gannon? The project they are willing to undertake here, in Erie, benefits us all. And as a bonus, they will also be giving the **library** payment for that space. Stop complaining, and start being thankful.

Debbie Lehotsky, Summit Township

Erie County Public Library adopts display policy that strives for inclusion, staves off censorship

March 20, 2024 | Erie Times-News: Web Edition Articles (PA)

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

The Erie County Public Library has adopted a new policy to ensure its displays are resistant to censorship.

The policy, which was developed by library officials and approved by the Erie County Library Advisory Board in February, states that library staff will strive to curate displays that represent a "wide array of people, cultures, ideas and experiences."

The policy codifies a pathway for people to challenge materials but stipulates that displays will not exclude "topics, books, media, or other resources solely on the basis that they may be considered controversial."

The policy comes nearly a year after the library relocated a Pride Month display that featured LGBTQ+ children's books from the entrance of Blasco Library's children area.

County Public Information Officer Chris Carroll said the library moved the display because a "significant number of people" had expressed concerns about having a Pride Month display in the children's area.

The decision led to widespread criticism from LGBTQ+ groups as well as state and local elected officials who viewed the relocation as censorship.

John Euliano, who became acting director of the Erie County Public Library in December, said the library didn't have an internal display policy at the time.

Putting one in place, he said, will help to "prevent future controversies by clearly articulating the criteria that the library staff consider when developing and creating a display."

New policy aligns with Erie County Council anti-censorship guidelines

Part of that criteria is diversity, equity and inclusion, and intellectual freedom.

The new policy states that library staff will strive to reflect the "needs of our community and our national landscape as closely as possible," and that the inclusion of an item in a display does not imply the library's endorsement of the content or views expressed by the item.

The policy also refers to and aligns with Erie County Council's resolution to prohibit the censorship of reading materials. The resolution, which was approved in September, stated that County Council viewed the relocation of the Pride Month book display as censorship.

The resolution directed the library to follow all applicable local, state and federal laws and refer to the Erie County employee manual pertaining to non-discriminatory practices in public accommodations.

The new policy also aligns with the American Library Association's Freedom to Read Statement and Library Bill of Rights, the latter of which states that libraries should "challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment."

Library Advisory Board member Adam Groves praised the policy's adherence to these guidelines, calling the policy a "best practices example" of an internal display policy that could be shared with other libraries in the state.

The policy further stated that library staff will strive to create displays with at least one of the following goals:

- * To increase awareness about library collections, programs, resources and services;
- * to consider community needs and interests;
- * to honor historical or cultural matters;
- * to bridge a connection between the Erie County Public Library and the community or between the community and another organization via a co-sponsored library display; and
- * to promote literacy and life-long learning

New policy outlines request for reconsideration

While the library has had a process to review challenges to items in its collection, there hasn't been a process for challenges to its displays, according to Euliano.

The new display policy changes that with a similar process.

Anyone who wishes to object to the contents of a display can complete and sign a request for reconsideration form on the Erie County Public Library website or can request assistance in person from a library staff member.

The form will be forwarded to the library assistant director and reviewed by library staff who comprise a request for reconsideration committee.

The display in question will be reviewed within 10 business days. When a decision has been made regarding the retention or removal of part or all of the display, a letter will be sent to the requestor with an explanation of the decision.

The display will remain in place during the reconsideration process or until the staff deems it time to rotate in a new topic.

Once a request for reconsideration has been reviewed and the committee has decided on its retention or removal, that decision will stand for 90 days regardless of subsequent requests for reconsideration of the same display.

Jessica Stefano, the library's youth services manager, said the 90-day rule was included because organized groups could decide to send multiple challenges to the same display and require library staff to use up professional time by treating each single request as its own need for review.

Will a Pride Month display return to the children's section?

Euliano on Monday said the library has not made plans yet for Pride Month displays in June.

"We'll be starting discussions very soon," he said.

The library's decision to relocate the Pride Month display in 2023 led to multiple protests and the resignations of three members of the Library Advisory Board.

Librarians also protested, opting to take down all displays in the children's library rather than single out the Read With Pride display in question.

Organizations like the NWPAA Pride Alliance blasted the relocation, calling it an "outright attempt to censor queer content."

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

'Our future lies in the lake,' renowned scientist Mason backs Gannon's Blasco lease

'Immoral deal' why Gannon's Blasco lease is an economic, political and religious failure

March 22, 2024 | Erie Times-News: Web Edition Articles (PA)

Author/Byline: Linda Romey, OSB | Section: Opinion

While many issues constantly vie for attention, there is one in Erie today where we can make a real difference by taking a public stand for what is right. That is the issue of public space at Blasco Memorial **Library** being rented to a private, religious institution, Gannon University, for a rate far below market value.

There are many angles to this issue, you can read them in the archives of this newspaper and online therefore I won't repeat them here.

I believe that at its core, this is a moral issue which is why I must speak out. Many of us have signed our names to the petition to halt this deal, to rescind the lease so that Gannon University can move its Project NePTWNE to another site, one that is not taking public space for private use.

I see this as a moral issue on several levels:

1. It is one more example of transferring wealth from public resources, sometimes the only resources available to those on the lower end of our economic spectrum, into the hands of private entities who already hold more than their fair share of wealth.

2. It amplifies the disintegration of democratic structures that rely on transparency and collective creativity to represent the common good as well as private enterprise.

3. By all appearances it is not reflective of Catholic social teaching or the Gospels, which should be the base from which Catholic institutions like Gannon University should operate.

The economic, political, and religious structures in our county have failed all of us in this situation. We desperately need moral leadership if we are to encourage citizens to question decisions that create further inequality and reject practices that fracture society rather than create paths to liberation and wholeness for all of us.

It takes courage to speak up for what is right, to seek creative solutions, to own up to a poor decision and make a change. We have become, to borrow the title of a book that would behoove the leadership of every college and university to read, "Excellent Sheep." The book's author is William Deresiewicz and the subtitle is "The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life."

It also takes humility to recognize that no one of us has the answer for all of us. Courage and humility demand that we ask why every situation is what it is. The challenge is heightened because we tend to surround ourselves with people who look like us and think like us and agree with us. We follow news feeds with algorithms that give us one viewpoint — ours. How then do we ever learn to think more deeply, to question more broadly, and to learn from others with different viewpoints? Public spaces like libraries are intended to serve just that purpose.

A lease can be broken. An architect can adapt to a change in location. But the failure of sticking with an immoral deal will, in the long run, do more damage to the character of those who uphold it than to those who suffer from it. There is still time to teach something far greater to our county and especially to our youth in the response to this issue.

If we do not model what is right at the local level, we will never be able to model what is right in larger, national, or worldwide issues. What we teach our children by our actions speaks much louder than what we say in our words. If we cannot admit that we mistakenly supported a poor decision, if we cannot say it is better to change course rather than stand by it, why should they listen to us or believe that growth depends on change and that it is possible to right a wrong?

Aspects of many issues facing us as a world community today are present in this one issue of giving public space to a private institution. How will citizens learn to question what it means to act with moral conscience when it comes to wealth and power around any issue if we let this one slide? What good is our Catholic education if it doesn't ask big questions and encourage critical thinking rather than blind acceptance? Where will we find moral leadership in the future? And Christian courage? And humility?

Linda Romey is the coordinator of communications and development for the Benedictine Sisters of Erie. These comments are her personal reflections.

County council rescinds Gannon lease at library

March 28, 2024 | Erie Times-News (PA)

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

Five months after Erie County Council permitted Gannon University to lease a portion of the county's main public **library**, a new council majority has opted to change course.

County Council on Tuesday voted 4-3 to rescind the lease agreement between the county and Gannon and prevent the university from building and operating a water research and education center inside the Blasco Memorial **Library**.

The vote was welcomed by a standing-room-only crowd of **library** defenders, who, for months, have criticized the lease agreement for allowing a private, religiously affiliated university to deprive space from a vital public asset.

Celebrations, however, were muted.

The ordinance is expected to be vetoed by Erie County Executive Brenton Davis within the next 10 days. And a fifth vote on council to override that veto remains elusive.

Republican council members Ellen Schauerman and Charlie Bayle, along with Democrat Jim Winarski, all of whom voted against the ordinance, gave no indication of changing their position.

Winarski told the Erie Times-News after the vote he believes the center will be an asset to the community and that many residents agree.

"This past weekend, I went out to numerous, numerous venues, from the Ice Out party to fish dinners to the Home and Garden show, and I just asked people randomly and — believe it or not — 90% of them have no problem with Gannon being in the **library**," Winarski said.

"I honestly believe it will be an asset for many years to come and I can't wait until it all comes to fruition and then I can say I'm glad I did what I did."

Gannon, protesters agree on center's benefits — not its location

The research and education center is part of Gannon's multi-phased \$24 million water quality initiative called Project NePTWNE — pronounced Neptune — or Nano & Polymer Technology for Water and Neural-networks in Erie.

Gannon, which received \$1.5 million in American Rescue Plan funds from the county to build the center, intends to locate it on the eastern wing of the **library**'s first floor.

The center will comprise of an interactive exhibit, a NOAA Science on a Sphere exhibit and a research lab, all of which will be accessible to the public at no cost, according to Sarah Ewing, provost and vice president for student experience at Gannon.

"Situated within a critical environmental justice area, the center aims to provide equitable access to educational resources regarding water quality and research that affects all of our daily lives," she told council.

Residents on Tuesday said they weren't against the center and its potential value to the community but simply its location in the **library**.

They questioned the potential effects of a water research laboratory in a **library** environment and the lack of a proper impact study on the project.

They also criticized the county administration and council for making a "sweetheart deal" with Gannon, for fast-tracking, with little public engagement, a 25-year lease of roughly 3,280 square feet of space on waterfront property at \$7 a square foot.

"You're practically giving away our **library** for yet another vague promise of Erie revival," Millcreek Township resident Nancy Shea told council Tuesday. "We've heard this before. We've been down this path many times."

Council Chairman Terry Scutella, who, along with fellow Democrats Andre Horton, Chris Drexel and Rock Copeland, voted to rescind the lease, said he's a supporter of Project NePTWNE but disagrees with the center's location.

"I just don't believe that it should be in the **library**," he said. "There are other places on the bayfront that they could pick or choose. But when you get an offer you can't refuse, you know where you go with that."

What's next?

Gannon spokesman Doug Oathout said Tuesday's vote "wasn't a surprise" but added "we have an executed lease and we're working toward the future."

"It's understandable how people feel, but in the long run I think this is going to be something we all come to appreciate," he said.

The university has selected Indovina Associates Architects of Pittsburgh as the agency that will design the center. Public hearings involving the design are expected to be announced shortly.

Oathout said he still anticipates the center to be completed by the end of 2024.

While Davis has repeatedly dismissed protesters against the lease as an insignificant number of residents — a "very small, small group of folks," as he put it during a December news conference — the chorus of voices Tuesday and the petitions circulating suggest otherwise.

North East resident Anna McCartney, a founding member of "Keep Our **Library** Public," a protest group that has rallied against the lease since November, said more than 6,300 people have already signed petitions in support of their cause.

She broke down the numbers by council districts Tuesday and stressed how they represented a broad swathe of the public, from business owners, nonprofit leaders, philanthropists, clergy members, artists and even Gannon staff, students and families.

"We're not going to give up, that's for sure," she told the Erie Times-News. "We're going to investigate other avenues ... we want to make sure that no stone is left unturned."

"We've started door-to-door. We need to get more people. There are lots of different kind of people, not just four old ladies, and so we're going to keep at it until hopefully we can get one of those three (council members) to change their mind."

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

Erie County Executive Davis vetoes repeal of Gannon lease at Blasco Library

March 27, 2024 | Erie Times-News: Web Edition Articles (PA)

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

Less than 24 hours after Erie County Council voted to stop Gannon University from leasing space inside the county's main public **library**, Erie County Executive Brenton Davis used his veto power to protect the lease.

The veto, which was sent to council Wednesday, rejects an ordinance that council passed Tuesday to rescind the lease and prevent Gannon from building a water research and education center inside Blasco Memorial **Library**.

Davis, who spearhead the lease with Gannon officials, touted the center as an effective

means to address water quality, economic development, and quality of life in Erie County.

"This initiative embodies our commitment to innovation and sustainability, and I am confident that it will bring significant benefits to our community for years to come," Davis said in a news release that accompanied his veto letter to council.

Davis stated his veto was driven not only by his support for the center but by legal considerations, insisting council's attempt to repeal the lease was "not only ill advised, but illegal."

"Council has no power under the (Home Rule) Charter to engage in contracting matters on behalf of the county, as the charter grants this power exclusively to the executive branch," he stated in his veto letter.

Davis stressed that even if the ordinance had passed, it would have had no effect on the legally binding lease agreement between the county and Gannon.

He further noted that when council passed a resolution in October to approve the lease, council effectively "ratified" the lease.

"Once Gannon's duly authorized representative and I executed the lease, it became legally binding," Davis stated. "Council is not a party to the lease and has no legal or contractual authority to rescind the lease."

He added, "(The) ordinance exceeds council's powers and violates the separation of powers set forth in the charter. Rescinding the lease without Gannon's consent would be a breach of contract and would expose the county to legal risk."

Council Solicitor Tom Talarico pushed back on Davis' letter.

Speaking with the Erie Times-News, Talarico said the Home Rule Charter gives council the right to repeal ordinances or resolutions previously adopted. He said it doesn't matter whether an ordinance is repealing another ordinance or a resolution, and called the matter a "distinction without a difference."

"I would suggest that the administration distinguish between council's authority to repeal a previous ordinance or resolution and the effect that that repeal may have on a previously approved contract," Talarico said. "If there's fallout or consequences in the form of damages, then (council has) taken that into account. Council respects Gannon University and its contributions to the county of Erie. But it is not about to place Gannon's interest in Blasco **Library** above the interest of the public, the people, at large."

Council now has 30 days to override Davis's veto with a supermajority of at least five members.

The ordinance had passed Tuesday in a 4-3 vote. Republican council members Ellen Schauerman and Charlie Bayle, along with Democrat Jim Winarski, all of whom voted against Tuesday's ordinance, gave no indication of changing their position.

Lease opponents, for months, have criticized the lease agreement for allowing a private, religiously affiliated university to deprive space from a vital public asset.

They've also criticized the county administration and council for making a "sweetheart deal" with Gannon, for fast-tracking, with little public engagement, a 25-year lease of roughly 3,280 square feet of space on waterfront property at \$7 a square foot.

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The Friends of the Erie County Library want your books. Here's how to easily donate them.

March 30, 2024 | Erie Times-News: Web Edition Articles (PA)

Author/Byline: Erie Times-News | Section: Entertainment

The Friends of the Erie County **Library** has just the solution for those books that no longer have a place or a space in your home.

The Friends will conduct the first of two drive-up book donations this year on April 27 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Blasco **Library**, 160 E. Front St.

The second collection is scheduled to take place Sept. 28 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Blasco **Library**.

The Friends put on a number of book sales annually to raise funds that support the Erie County Public **Library** system. The book drives help supply stock for the sales.

Related: Erie's 2023 Great American Book Sale raised record revenue. When will it happen in 2024?

What donations are accepted?

Preferred items include

- * new fiction, and especially suspense and mystery;
- * children's books;
- * local history;
- * books on CD;
- * DVDs; and

* Jigsaw puzzles. Puzzle donations must be taped shut and include a label indicating puzzle is complete or if piece whether the puzzle is complete or missing pieces. Puzzles with more than three missing pieces will not be accepted.

What items are not accepted?

Please do not donate

* encyclopedias;

* "Reader's Digest condensed books;

* textbooks;

* magazines and pamphlets;

* technical books, such as law, medicine, computers and health, that were published five or more years ago;

* multiple copies of the same title;

* yellowed paperbacks;

* books that are damaged, whether ripped, mildewed, underlined or emitting an odor, for instance; and

* VHS or cassette tapes.

'This all speaks to me:' Erie comic book collectors, fans show love for fantastic medium

Other ways to donate

The book drives aren't the only way to donate.

One bag or box or books may be taken to the Bayfront Bookshelf, the bookstore in the Blasco **Library** lobby. If the store is closed, donations can be taken to the Blasco **Library** circulation desk.

Erie County **Library** branches are usually able to accept a bag or small box of donations when open. Please call ahead to confirm the branch's ability to accept donations.

**Follow the solar eclipse timeline of events.
Don't forget the glasses.**

April 4, 2024 | Erie Times-News (PA)

Author/Byline: Nicholas Sorensen; Erie Times-News | Page: S3 | Section: Features

271 Words | Readability: Lexile: 1000, grade level(s): 6 7 8

Read News Document

The total solar eclipse is almost upon us. On Monday, Erie will be in the path of totality. So, get those glasses ready and make sure your schedule is set.

Here is an approximate timeline for the eclipse in Erie

2:02 p.m.: Beginning phase or first contact; observe only with glasses or solar filter.

3:16 p.m.: Totality begins; safe to observe without glasses or solar filter.

3:20 p.m.: Totality ends and partial phase returns; observe with glasses or filter.

4:30 p.m.: Last contact and end of partial phase.

Don't forget your eclipse glasses

For those looking to purchase the eclipse glasses, eclipse.aas.org has a list of retailers that will ensure an authentic pair. Erie-area retailers on the list include Home Depot, Lowes and Walmart.

Be assured that when you purchase eclipse glasses that you are purchasing them with the ISO 12312-2 filter to avoid damage to your eyes.

Many eclipse events will also be providing eclipse glasses free for the first set amount of visitors.

All Erie County Public **Library** locations began distributing eclipse glasses March 18. Visitors can receive one pair for free per each **library** card. Glasses will not be reserved in advance.

Behrend's Yahn Planetarium has purchased 50,000 pairs of protective eclipse glasses that were scheduled to be given to all school children in Erie, Crawford and Warren counties before the eclipse.

Also, the Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive, has eclipse glasses for sale for \$2 in its gift shop called Presque Isle Gallery & Gifts.

Contact Nicholas Sorensen at nsorensen@gannett.com.

Caption:

This shows a stage of a total solar eclipse which occurred in 2017. A total solar eclipse will be visible in Erie on April 8, 2024.

PROVIDED BY NASA

