

ERIE COUNTY DIVERSE ERIE COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 8, 2022
Saint Benedict Education Center
330 East 10th Street, Erie, PA 16503
at 8:30 a.m.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85914481430?pwd=N0J5Q2dyV0FidHhaczdqNHArSU1Sdz09>

Meeting ID: 859 1448 1430
Passcode: 976253

Invitees: Tiffany LaVette; Dr. Sarah Carter, M.D.; Gwendolyn White; Brandy Cortes; Timothy Wachter; Gary Lee

Attendees: Art Leopold, Matt Harris, Gerald L. Blanks and Marcus Atkinson

1. Call to Order/Roll Call All present
2. Approval of the Agenda

Motion was made by Gwendolyn White and seconded by Dr. Sarah Carter, to approve the November 8, 2022, to the agenda as presented. All commissioners present voted in favor.

3. Hearing of the Public

Art Leopold stated that it has been a long, sad American reality that women and people of color must work harder to be accepted across our country and in the world. He added that the Black community in Erie is asking no favors of our counties' elected officials seeks to hold them accountable to the moral code of proper conduct and credibility and grade in fair and equitable treatment to its Black citizens. He encouraged the commissioners to just persist, persevere, and prosper. He asked the commission board members to please continue to do the positive work it is doing to establish long term economic sustainability because our community depends on all our commitments to finally remove the powerful boot of oppression from our necks.

Marcus Atkinson expressed concerns regarding how the commission board has handled the accusations of wrongdoing by the County Executive and some county council members in the last few weeks. Mr. Atkinson pointed out to the commissioners how elected officials in Erie County helped to create the Diverse Erie Commission board

and therefore is in control of a system that will change the rules when it suits them. He explained how some elected officials historically will conveniently hide behind the rules when it hurts people in marginalized positions. Mr. Atkinson asked the board members not to allow themselves to be bullied into changing course because one person decides that he would like to have his way.

Gerald Blanks greeted commissioners and reminded them that, in recent weeks there were accusations from some elected county officials of self-dealing that removed him, Matt Harris, and Dr. Adrienne Dixon from the Diverse Erie Commission board. He added that there was a fair and legal process followed that should not have been questioned but urged the commission board members to “do the right thing.” Not be bullied or convenience not to award the funds for the Generational Impact Grant Initiative to the selected applicants.

Matt Harris' statement continued to encourage the commissioners to “do the right thing” regarding what the grant committee recommended and voted on, awarding the selected groups Generational Impact grant. He reiterated that the statements made by the county executive should have no effect on the funds being released to the selected recipients. Reminding the commissioners that they are in control of the initiative and any decisions made regarding the release of the funds.

4. Approval of the Minutes of Previous Meetings

A motion was made by Dr. Sarah Carter and seconded by Brandy Cortes to approve the October 17, 2022, to the agenda as presented. All commissioners present voted in favor.

5. Approval of the October 27, 2022, Special Meeting Minutes

Motion was made by Gwendolyn White and seconded by Brandy Cortes to approve the October 27, 2022, to the Special meeting Minutes as presented. All commissioners present voted in favor.

6. Presentations None

7. Report of Chief Administrative Officer – Gary Lee

Operational Matters:

(I) Personnel

- i. Nothing to Report

(II) Budget

- i. The budget currently the overall budget is in good financial shape. We are operating within our financial parameters of the
- ii. Commission has submitted all the required information by County Council to the solicitor. Into the office of the County Executive on Monday, October 31st.
- iii. The Commission will be using ECCA payroll funds to process our payroll services going forward.

- iv. Also, the Commission is obtaining proposals for accounting services. Please feel free to submit. Accounting firms for consideration before Friday, November 11th.

(III) Media and Presentation.

- i. There were several TV interviews regarding the generational impact grant process and the conflict of interest on issues in the position remains the same. Private board by the Commission, we did not change our position that we followed all. State ethics are long and so on. That message has never changed.

(IV) Grants Development

- i. The grant review team is finalizing the details on the mini grant initiative, which will be between \$5000 and \$25,000 for small businesses. Details and guidelines for this program have been developed and reviewed by the grants review committee.
- ii. The team at 3i Networking has developed policies and procedures for the distribution of funds from the Generational Impact Grant initiative.
- iii. Attorney Wachter has completed the contracts for the awardees of the Generational Impact grant, the contracts are ready for signatures and finally distribution.
- iv. Mr. Lee, Mrs. LaVette, and Attorney Wachter are continuing to work on the home ownership and educational programs with key stakeholders in the county for phase two of the major initiatives. The Grant committee is working on a strategy to leverage funds not only locally but nationally and will provide the commission with updates at a future meeting.

(V) Website Development and Branding

- i. The acting chairperson LaVette and Mr. Lee continue to meet with Kate Philips and her team regarding the strategic plan and branding process such as website and social media development.
- ii. Mr. Lee asked the commissioners to please encourage their associates, colleges, family, and friends to visit our website and to join our social media platforms for current information.

A motion was made by Dr. Sarah Carter and seconded by Brandy Cortes to approve the Report of the Chief Administrative Officer as presented. All commissioners present voted in favor.

8. Executive Session-closed to the public

9. Reports of Commission Officers

- (a) Tiffany LaVette – Vice Chair
- (b) Sarah Carter, M.D. – Treasurer

10. Reports of Committee Chairpersons

- (a) Finance Committee – Sarah Carter, M.D.
- (b) Grants Committee – Tiffany LaVette

11. Unfinished Business

The motion was made by Gwendolyn White and seconded by Dr. Sarah Carter to move Ms. Tiffany LaVette into Chairperson position and leave the Vice Chair position open. All commissioners present voted in favor.

The motion to table the appointment of a chairperson until there are more members added to the commission board, was made by Brandy Cortes, failed for lack of a second.

12. New Business

Motion to Reaffirm the Generational Impact Grant process and awards and to direct the awarding of the contracts was made by Gwendolyn White and seconded by Dr. Sarah Carter.

13. Adjournment

Motion was made by Gwendolyn White and seconded by Sarah Carter to adjourn the November 8, 2022, meeting at 9:40AM. All commissioners present voted in favor.

