

ERIE COUNTY DIVERSE ERIE COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 17, 2022
1128 State Street, Suite 300, Erie, PA 16501 at
7:30 a.m.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84297691353?pwd=Y2VpUDIYZZNhVkxweitzQ3RHQIRvQT09>

Meeting ID: 842 9769 1353

Passcode: 113353

Invitees: Gerald Blanks; Sarah Carter, M.D.; Adrienne Dixon, Ph.D.; Matthew Harris, Sr.; Tiffany LaVette; Gwendolyn White; Brandy Cortes; Timothy Wachter; Gary Lee

Attendees: Art Leopold, Marissa Thomas, Tyrone Clark, Selena King, and Christine Rush

1. Call to Order/Roll Call 7:30AM

(a) Dr. Sarah Carter not present

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion was made by Matt Harris and seconded by Gwendolyn White, to approve the October 5, 2022, to the agenda as presented. All commissioners present voted in favor.

3. Hearing of the Public

(a) Art Leopold: Thanked the commission board for the opportunity to speak. Mr. Leopold stated that the commission members took on an audacious effort knowing that it would be difficult, but there has been a need for the last 40-50 years to help move Erie County forward. He commended the commission for the continued effort and asked that the board put all their focus on trying to be successful. Stating that the Erie community needs it to prevail despite the tenor that are against the efforts of the organization.

(b) Selena N. King is a nonprofit fundraising expert, political strategist, and works with the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus Foundation (PLBCF). Which serves as appointees to a nonpartisan advocacy role from all the legislators of color that sit on the House of Representatives as well as the Senate. Ms. King joined the meeting to learn more about Erie County's diversity commission, its achievements, and goals and to pledge support in any way to help Diverse Erie.

4. Approval of the Minutes of Previous Meetings with Corrections

Motion to approve the minutes of the October 5, 2022, meeting with corrections for \$177,750 to Pineapple Eddie's small business loan was made by Tiffany LaVette and seconded by Matt Harris, all commissioners present voted in favor.

5. Presentations None

6. Executive Session Closed to the public

- i. To obtain legal advice and to discuss personnel matters.

Motion was made by Gwendolyn White and seconded by Tiffany LaVette to approve an Executive Session to obtain legal advice and to discuss a personnel matter. All commissioners present voted in favor.

7. Report of Chief Administrative Officer – Gary Lee

Operational Matters:

(I) Personnel

- i. Nothing to report

(II) Budget

- i. Budget, the overall budget remains in good shape and is operating within the financial parameters.
- ii. The finance committee is developing financial guidelines for spending and signature approval authority to ensure that the budget is always balanced.
- iii. October 10, 2022, the Finance Committee reviewed and approved the Diverse Erie budget from January 1, 2022, through June 30, 2024, and the projected 2023 annual budget.
- iv. The October 11, 2022, budget meeting with County Council went very well. Per request from the county accountant, a copy of the current budget for Diverse Erie was submitted to the county clerk after the meeting.

(III) Media and Presentations

- i. On October 12, 2022, Mr. Lee had an interview with WJETV, where he explained the Generational Impact Grant process.

(IV) Grants Development

- i. The Grant Review committee is looking forward to creating a mini grant program. The guidelines and contracts are developed by Attorney Tim Wachter.
- ii. Mr. Lee asked the grant portfolio management team at 3i Networking to prepare and develop the contract wording, policy, and procedure for distribution of funds.

(V) Website Development and Branding

- i. Chairman Blanks and Mr. Lee continues to meet with Parker/Philips on the branding for Diverse Erie moving forward. Mr. Lee asked everyone to have their friends to look at our website.

Motion was made by Tiffany LaVette and seconded by Dr. Adrienne Dixon to approve the report of the Chief Administrative Officer as presented. All commissioners present voted in favor.

7. Reports of Commission Officers

(a) Gerald Blanks – Chair

- i. Chairman Blanks spoke about the Commission Board meeting schedule and reminded the board that Brandy Cortes is not available to attend any meetings on Wednesdays due to her work schedule. He asked for comments and questions concerning the availability of all commission board members.
- ii. Mr. Blanks commented on the County Council meeting, held on October 7, 2022. He stated that the County Executive Brenton Davis proposed that Mr. Blanks and Matt Harris are removed from the commission board for Diverse Erie due to the conflict-of-interest issues.
- iii. Lastly, Mr. Blanks asked the commission board to prepare in the weeks ahead for a commission board that will be minorities that may have no knowledge, understanding, or the experience that the BIPOC community members may need to ensure that there is an organization built to serve them.

(b) Tiffany LaVette – Vice Chair

- i. Ms. LaVette stated that she is interested in creating an independent institution with the same mission and goals as Diverse Erie with no ties to County Council.

(c) Matt Harris – Secretary-No Report

(d) Sarah Carter, M.D. – Treasurer-No Report- Not Present

9. Reports of Committee Chairpersons

(a) Finance Committee – Sarah Carter, M.D.

- i. No Report-Not Present

(b) Personnel Committee – Matt Harris

- (i) No Report

(c) Executive Committee – Gerald Blanks

- (i) No Report

(d) Grants Committee – Tiffany LaVette

(i) Ms. LaVette stated that the grant committee is working on a plan to have conversations with our City Council members so we can try and secure funds from them. Ms. LaVette mentioned that she is interested in creating an independent institution with the same goals and mission as Diverse Erie with no ties to County Council.

10. Unfinished Business

Motion was made by Tiffany LaVette and seconded by Matt Harris to approve the By-Laws for Diverse Erie Commission as presented. All commissioners present voted in favor.

11. New Business

Discussion of Commission Board meeting scheduled for 2023. Every second Tuesday at 8:30 AM, was recommended for consideration.

12. Adjournment 9:46 AM

