

**ERIE COUNTY DIVERSE ERIE COMMISSION**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, October 5, 2022  
1128 State Street, Suite 300, Erie, PA 16501  
at 8:30 a.m.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87895817060?pwd=b1d1c3owMkRZc09tQ2E1cC84K1pxZz09>

Meeting ID: 878 9581 7060  
Passcode: 643160

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

1. **Call to Order/Roll Call** 8:33AM
  - (a) Matt Harris not present
  - (b) Brandy Cortes not present

2. **Approval of Agenda**

Motion was made by Gwendolyn White to amend the October 5, 2022, agenda to add a vote for the by-laws previously distributed to commissioners and to reassign #7 of the agenda to an Executive Session.

Motion was made by Gwendolyn White and seconded by Dr. Sara Carter, to approve the amendments to the agenda. All commissioners present voted in favor.

3. **Hearing of the Public** None
4. **Approval of the Minutes of Previous Meetings**

Motion to approve the minutes of the September 21, 2022, meeting as presented made by Dr. Adrienne Dixon and seconded by Gwendolyn White, all commissioners present voted in favor.

5. **Presentations** None
6. **Report of Chief Administrative Officer – Gary Lee**

**Operational Matters:**

**(I) Personnel**

Touchpoint meetings with 3iNetworking are ongoing. The meetings with 3i Networking are typically held every Wednesday from 2:00PM to 3:00PM. There is a meeting

scheduled for October 7, 2022, at 4:00PM to discuss grant review process.

There has been a suggested meeting with Doherty and Associates discuss the financial services of the firm moving forward.

## **(II) Budget**

Currently, the budget is in good financial shape and is operating within the financial parameters.

On, Monday, October 10, 2022, at 9:00AM, there will be a finance committee meeting at headquarters to discuss the details of the current budget, which will provide better information to present at the meeting with County Council on Tuesday, October 11th from 4:45 at 5:05PM.

## **(III) Media and Presentations**

No Update

## **(IV) Grants Development**

**(a)** On Friday, October 7, 2022, the grants committee Chairperson Tiffany LaVette along with Mr. Gary Lee, and 3i Networking will be meeting at 4:00PM-5:00PM with County Council to discuss with them the grant review process in detail and the conflict-of-interest issue.

**(b)** The new Diverse Erie Small Business Fund is off to a good start. The small business loans will range from \$25,000 to \$250,000 to business owners in the BIPOC communities. Tiffany LaVette and the team at 3i Networking will represent Diverse Erie as part of the Small Business Fund Review Committee. There are a total of seven members on the review committee, which includes one representative from each of the contributing organizations. The committee will use the already established infrastructure of Erie County Redevelopment Authority's (ECRDA) Enterprise Development Fund, to view, review applications and provide recommendations, approvals as well as any required reporting.

**(c)** Mr. Lee and Attorney Tim Wachter will be meeting with the grants committee to prioritize a simplified application process and finalize the dollar amounts for the mini grants. So that information for the Mini Grants will be available as soon as possible for for-profit BIPOC and minority businesses in Erie County.

## **(V) Website Development and Branding**

**(a)** Chairman Blanks and Mr. Lee continue to meet with Kate Philips and her team at Parker Philips as they continue to get valuable information out there, via social media, and adding updates to our website. The process is going very well.

**(b)** As always, Mr. Lee encourages commissioners to invite friends, family, elected officials, and colleagues, to visit our website, and come to our public meetings and share.

Mr. Lee attended the National Black MBA Association 44th Annual Conference and Expo in Atlanta, Georgia last week. There were more than 10,000 attendees, two hundred corporations representing Black leaders from around the country. While there Mr. Lee attended key workshops including...

*“Three Critical Factors Needed to Grow Your Leadership Influence” lead by **Frederick Russell, MS, ACC** Principal, True North Leadership Group*

*“Leading with Integrity in Times of Uncertainty,”  
with Invocator: **Pastor Christopher A. Wimberly, Sr.** Pastor, Hunter Hill First Baptist Church  
Interviewer: **Nikki Tinsley Harland** Paradies Lagardere, LLC  
Speaker: **The Honorable Andre Dickens** Mayor, City of Atlanta*

*“Critical Race Theory: Attacks & Impact on Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion”  
Moderated by: **Carole Copeland Thomas**, President and CEO, C. Thomas & Associates  
and the Speaker for that session was:  
**Benjamin Carlton** Co-Founder, BMe Community*

Mr. Lee spoke very highly about the concepts he learned while at the conference. Mr. Lee has highlighted his experience in a report and will distribute it at the next commission board meeting. He expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to attend.

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

**7. Executive Session**-Closed to the public

**8. Reports of Commission Officers**

**(a) Gerald Blanks – Chair**

- i. Update of the previous night’s county council meeting. Mr. Blanks expressed his appreciation for the very eloquent speeches given to County Council members by Mr. Gary Lee and Ms. Tiffany LaVette, in supporting the message that he spoke about regarding County Council’s decision regarding the ARP budget funding.

- ii. Discussed potentially change Diverse Erie Commission Board meetings to accommodate Brandy Cortes' work schedule.

**(b) Tiffany LaVette – Vice Chair**

- i. Would like to an update on the Small Business loan Fund Review Committee meeting schedule.

**(c) Matt Harris – Secretary**

- i. Not Report-Not present

**(d) Sarah Carter, M.D. – Treasurer**

- i. Upcoming meeting to discuss the details 2023 budget

**9. Reports of Committee Chairpersons**

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

- i. The Finance Committee met earlier this week, to continue the conversation about making sure that the details of our team's documentation for reporting are true and accurate.
- ii. One change to the budget was that since a portfolio manager was not hired, the funds were moved from personnel into the professional services so that they will be accounted for.

**(b) Personnel Committee – Matt Harris**

- i. No Report-Not present

**(c) Executive Committee – Gerald Blanks**

- i. Mr. Blanks spoke with Brian Polito of the Erie Public Schools, who offered a letter support for the Diverse Erie.
- ii. Mr. Blanks mentioned the schedule for Diverse Erie Commission Board meeting, as it pertains to the newest member. He asked commissioners about their willingness and ability to attend meetings at different, better times when all commission board members could attend.

**(d) Grants Committee – Tiffany LaVette**

Ms. LaVette updated the commission in relation to the Small Business Loan Fund Review Committee's decisions to award to loan to local minority businesses:

Pineapple Eddie's got an award in the amount \$147,7000, to renovate the current location on the west side of the city.

Lake Erie Woodworks was awarded \$25,000 to purchase inventory for their business after they were forced to close during the pandemic.

10. **Unfinished Business**  
Commissioners to vote on By-Laws
11. **New Business**  
Creation of the Doodle poll
12. **Adjournment** 9:35 AM

