

# Blue Ribbon Commission Meeting Minutes

**Date:** February 4, 2025

**Time:** 5:00 p.m.

**Location:** Huron Public Library, 333 Williams Street, Huron

## Welcoming Remarks – Co-Chairman Jeff Krabill

The meeting was called to order by **Co-Chairman Jeff Krabill**, with all committee members and attendees introduced. The purpose of the meeting was to continue discussions on how local governments in Erie County can collaborate more effectively. The focus is on exploring ways to reduce costs, improve services, and increase efficiency across local governments while lowering the tax burden on Erie County residents. Mr. Krabill emphasized the importance of hearing from the public for input and suggestions on ways to reduce expenditures and return funds to the public. These ideas, generated into a report, will be presented to the local governments purely for suggestion.

## Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting were distributed via email prior to the session. A motion to approve the minutes was made by **Mr. Forster** and seconded by **Ms. Crescimano**. The motion passed unanimously without any objections.

## Short Summary of the Purpose of the Commission

The commission's goal is to identify areas where local governments in Erie County can work together more effectively, reduce duplication of services, and enhance operational efficiency. By collaborating, the aim is to lower the costs of public services and share resources where possible. Co-Chairman Mike Parker shared the ideas that have been presented at previous meetings, including: countywide bussing, promoting foster parents, county-wide Fire and EMS Districts, common bulk purchasing, countywide IT service, Inmate Work Program and procurement, county-wide solid waste, brine treatment, county-wide fleet vehicle maintenance, and one-stop show for zoning permits.

Mr. Krabill mentioned that a series of public meetings regarding property taxes was initiated by Serving Our Seniors Executive Direct Sue Daugherty. Mr. Krabill thanked Ms. Daugherty for being willing to step forward and initiate conversation. Mr. Krabill also thanked the Erie County Commissioners for having the wisdom to put this initiative forward. Mr. Krabill opened up the meeting for public comment.

## Public Comment

**Mrs. Carla Rospert, Milan Village Council Member**, shared her concerns about the high cost of health insurance for smaller entities with limited staff. She explained how these townships are facing insurance rate hikes of up to 50%, which significantly impacts their budgets. Mrs. Rospert

suggested that the commission consider a countywide health insurance plan to pool participants across Erie County's municipalities, thereby reducing premiums and providing better coverage options for smaller entities. **Mr. Tom Forster (Blue Ribbon Commission)** responded by affirming that the commission has already started investigating this option. He emphasized the importance of reviewing options for a larger insurance pool to mitigate rate increases for smaller entities. He also suggested that the commission gather more data from other counties where similar programs have been successful. He noted that the larger the pool of entities, the wider range of options can be given for insurance. He reminded the audience that it is the Commissions job to provide suggestions on paper and will be the Erie County Commissioners job after that to give the direction. Mr. Krabill noted that on February 25, 2025 at 11:00 a.m., the Commission will be discussing only insurance with an insurance specialist. He is hopeful good conversation and ideas will come from that meeting to pass along.

**Mrs. Rospert** turned to the topic of solid waste collection, raising the possibility of implementing a countywide trash collection service. She mentioned that the Village of Milan sent out a survey about garbage pickup in the village and was met with negative feedback. She explained that many private companies are providing waste management services in the same areas, which leads to inefficiency and additional costs due to multiple companies servicing the same neighborhoods. Mrs. Rospert speculated if consolidating the trash hauling services to one provider at the county level would help reduce costs for residents. Mr. Parker expressed concern, citing prior experiences with companies like BFI that significantly increased rates when they were the sole provider in a region. Mr. Krabill added that eliminating competition could lead to less favorable pricing for residents. Mr. Moon suggested that Mrs. Rospert contact Mayor Ward of the Village of Berlin Heights. He noted that Berlin Heights is 90% one trash hauler and this company provides recycling and garbage. The commission agreed to investigate further and weigh the pros and cons of countywide consolidation.

**Tim Coleman, Perkins Township Trustee Chairman**, discussed several fiscal practices that have helped Perkins Township save money. Mr. Coleman highlighted the use of state purchasing agreements, which allowed Perkins Township to secure better pricing for equipment and services. He noted the Township utilizes, Sourcewell, a consortium for purchasing, which has also helped keep costs down when making Township purchases. Additionally, he noted that Perkins Township has reduced its healthcare costs significantly, from \$1 million to \$500,000 over the course of a few years, through careful negotiations and using consortium-based health insurance plans. He further emphasized how the township's success in securing grant funding has allowed it to stretch taxpayer dollars further. **Mr. Mike Parker (Blue Ribbon Commission)** acknowledged the significant savings and expressed interest in replicating similar strategies in other townships. He mentioned that exploring cooperative purchasing on a countywide scale could further reduce operational costs and is on the Commissions agenda to further investigate.

**Mr. Eric Dodrill, County Engineer**, introduced himself and discussed opportunities for equipment sharing between townships and the county. He explained how he is present to listen and be part of the reconnection of Townships and the County. He is hoping to assist with developing ways to merge and cooperate with all the entities to find ways to save money. Mr. Parker noted that the Engineers' staff have been helpful with smaller Townships by sharing employees during larger projects. He believes this is also an important piece of the puzzle.

**Mr. Zach Rospert, Milan Township Fiscal Officer**, stated the Township is in need of purchasing a new road mower. Mr. Rospert mentioned the county's existing equipment-sharing program and suggested expanding it to allow neighboring townships to share resources like road maintenance vehicles, which would cut down on unnecessary purchases and reduce operational costs. Mr. Dodrill stated that he is willing to expand the use of Engineer equipment to the Townships and Villages. He noted there is a vector truck that the Townships and Villages use.

**Ms. Joni DuFresne, Erie County Resident**, raised concerns about the impact of short-term rentals (Airbnbs) on local property taxes. She explained how having rentals (Airbnbs) in her neighborhood has caused property values to rise, which in turn increases her taxes. Ms. DuFresne asked if the commission could look into ways to increase the reduction of the rollover for residents that are owner occupied. Mr. Coleman noted that this issue is largely a state-level concern. He mentioned that Ohio lawmakers are already discussing potential legislation on short-term rentals, but he thought it was a good idea to have the commission get involved. Mr. Krabill agreed that after the commission submits the report to Erie County, they could continue on the mission of contacting Senator Theresa Gavarone or State Representative D.J. Swearingen to take actions on our behalf.

**Ms. Pam Brunetti, Erie County Republic Women's Committee of Erie County**, mentioned that she cannot hear the tornado sirens where she lives. She inquired whether that was a township or county issue. Mr. Krabill stated all sirens in Erie County are overseen by the EMA Agency and can bring it to their attention. **Mr. Chris Gasteier, Erie County Resident**, offered a weather application for her cell phone that gives notification of tornados. **Mr. Steve Shoffner (Erie County Commissioner)** noted that the sirens are not to be heard inside, but to warn residents who are outside. Several additional applications were suggested for use in case of inclement weather.

**Ms. Kathryn Carter, Perkins Township Resident**, attended last weeks' meeting and noted that she learned many things. She also has concern about the impact of short-term rentals (Airbnbs) in Perkins Township. She lives in country and is concerned that it will become a mixed neighborhood or commercial area. She asked if a commercial strip would be built in a neighborhood, would that indicate the neighborhood would no longer be residential. Mr. Coleman noted that it depends on what Perkins Township zoning law states.

**Mr. Sam Artino, Huron City Council Member**, noted that his concerns are listed in the upcoming meetings regarding the topics of insurance, equipment and procurement. Mr. Artino noted that local partnerships are important and he is willing to assist in any way that will save taxpayers money.

**Mr. Jason Dulaney, Perkins School Board member**, reemphasized comments made at last meeting regarding duplication of equipment and communication. Mr. Dulaney proposed the creation of a unified communication platform to track equipment, vendors, and services across Erie County. He recently spoke with the City of Fremont, and they are moving all City departments to one communications platform that addresses assets. Mr. Dulaney, however, is involved in platform that will provide vendor management, asset management, team member management, insight management and work order management.

Mr. Dulaney suggested that such a platform would help municipalities better coordinate their resources and avoid unnecessary duplication. Mr. Parker noted he is familiar with a system like this, as Davis Besse used a system similar when he was employed there.

Mrs. Rospert asked which entity would hold the liability insurance if equipment is shared. Mr. Krabill noted that typically whoever has title to equipment holds the insurance. Mr. Krabill noted that this issue is definitely something to think about carefully.

Discussion took place on which Commission member would be tasked with finding a speaker for the upcoming meetings where specific topic of discussion will take place.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned after no further comments were made. A motion to adjourn was made by **Mr. Tucker**, seconded by **Mr. Parker**, and passed without opposition.