

Blue Ribbon Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: April 22, 2025

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: Erie County Office Building Chambers, 247 Columbus Avenue, Sandusky

Welcoming Remarks – Co-Chairman Jeff Krabill

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chairman **Jeff Krabill**. Roll Call was taken, with Mr. Kelly Moon being excused. An attendance sheet was signed by audience members present.

Approval of Minutes from April 15, 2025 – Topic of Discussion: Education

A motion to approve the minutes that were distributed electronically was made by Mr. Forster and seconded by Ms. Crescimano. The motion carried unanimously.

Purpose of the Meeting

Mr. Jeff Krabill (Blue Ribbon Commission) The topic of discussion today is to provide insights into determining how entities can work together to reduce costs and be more efficient with Entity Administrative Staffing. the Facilitators for the day include Ms. Karen Balconi Ghezzi, Ms. Lisa Crescimano and Mr. Tom Tucker.

Ms. Karen Balconi Ghezzi (Blue Ribbon Commission) explained that there is an impression that the largest redundancy in entity administrative staff is among the four common pleas courts. It is important to identify if the courts can function operationally with the possibility of sharing staff.

Review

- Determine administrative costs of court system
 - Determine what can be shared
 - Judge staffing all have individual staff, and is there a possibility for any overlap
 - 4 Common Pleas Courts in Erie County - each Court includes: one Judge, one Bailiff, one magistrate, and support staff
 - Also includes Sheriff's Office staffing
 - Juvenile Court - clerk of their own court, with approx. 40 employees each (CCF and Detention) for a total of approximately 80 employees
 - CCF is grant funded through Ohio Dept of Youth Services \$3 Million budget

- Approx. 30 beds on CCF, 36 bed on detention, with bed rentals with surrounding counties including Lorain and Cuyahoga Counties
 - 2024 average daily population was 15
 - IV-D contract (\$105,000) but receives no direct funding from JFS
- Juvenile Court Bailiff does not share duties with other courts
 - Bailiff stays busy across three court rooms
- Juvenile Court staffing levels have remained consistent in previous years
 - Staffing turnover and applications have been slow to come in
 - Applications are through Erie County HR
 - Interpreters on contract and can be expensive
 - Option for full time employment vs. contracting?
 - Must be Supreme Court Certified, nearest one is in Avon
- Other factors to change financial picture?
 - Judges have redundancies in certain processes
 - Jury Duty notices - could benefit from being centralized and share in the cost
 - Staff collaboration – each judge has own staff
 - Shared personnel - but can be a challenge with specialized knowledge bases
 - When personnel leave do not replace and other staff absorb job duties

Mr. Hank Solowiej (Erie County Administrator) is compiling a historical budget information pre-2005, before the fourth judge came in existence. The fourth Judge was a mandate by the State, with the goal of adding no additional funds. Analysis shows, budgets have increased, while dockets have gotten smaller. Hank stated pre 2005, the budget for three judges was \$3.7 million and today it is \$5.4 million each. The state provides minimal funds (\$125,000) to help fund the fourth judge.

- OhiomeansJobs
 - Preventing fraud is a savings to tax payers
 - State and federal changes and challenges could be instituted to help reduce fraud through card stealing/skimming and impact tax savings statewide
 - Conversation with local lawmakers could help emphasize fraud strategies that impact statewide taxes
- What entities have:
 - Planning departments, how many planners, and budget?
 - Perkins Township – one part-time Planner
 - HR managers, how many, budget
 - Perkins Township – one full-time Manager
- Any opportunities to share the above or any other administrative resources?

- ECEDC, Shores and Islands, GSP receive local entity funding, so what resources do they use that can be best shared amongst everyone
 - Erie County Chamber previously offered Health Plans, but unknown if GSP offers it, still similar to how Greater Cleveland Partnership offers the “COSE” program
 - GSP absorbing entities, i.e. Chamber of Commerce and Erie County Economic Development
 - Share staff services with other entities
 - Prevent duplication of services
 - Need to be a member of a chamber to be a member of COSE Program to receive discounted programs.
 - Is GSP a member of COSE?
- Possible addition to county website for links to various entity building zoning, sewer, water driveway permitting process – one stop shop.
 - May not save costs but would reduce burden of finding the who, what, where for residents.
- Is there a way to better cooperate from an HR standpoint?
 - Small businesses have a challenge getting HR support
- Activities planned or in progress to improve efficiency

Meeting Summary

Mr. Parker provided a summary of key points from today's meeting:

- Interested in historic budgets and caseload for the court system
- Push legislative awareness of SSI and unemployment fraud as fraud impacts statewide tax costs

Adjournment

Mr. Krabill discussed scheduling work sessions throughout the month of May until the Commission can provide the Committee all recommendations for the “white paper.” Everyone agreed, work sessions will be held on Tuesday, May 6, 13, 20, and 27 before the regularly scheduled Blue Ribbon meetings, or until the recommendations are complete.

Next Regular Blue Ribbon Meeting: Scheduled for 11:00 A.M., Tuesday, April 29, 2025 at Office Building Chambers, 247 Columbus Avenue, 3rd Floor Chambers

Topic Discussion: Infrastructure; roads/street maintenance

Facilitators: Mr. Moon and Mr. Parker

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Crescimano and seconded by Ms. Balconi Ghezzi. The motion carried unanimously.