

Blue Ribbon Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: March 18, 2025

Time: 10:00 a.m.

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

Welcoming Remarks – Co-Chairman Mike Parker

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chairman **Jeff Krabill**. Roll was taken, confirming the presence of commission members and audience members. Mr. Moon is excused.

Mr. Krabill welcomed all participants and provided an overview of the agenda, emphasizing the significance of today's discussion on brainstorming opportunities where funds can be saved through combined purchasing. **Ms. Lisa Crescimano and Mr. Tom Forster** are the Facilitators.

Approval of Minutes

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

Purpose of the Meeting

Ms. Lisa Crescimano (Blue Ribbon Commission) provided a detailed update regarding cooperative purchasing options available to local government and educational entities. She reported on her recent discussion with Mr. Keith Sexton from Vermilion Township, where they explored various cooperative purchasing programs. Ms. Crescimano emphasized that the State of Ohio Cooperative Purchasing Program appears to be the most logical choice. However, she noted that many public entities may not be familiar with the procedures for utilizing this resource. She mentioned that the State of Ohio offers instructional training videos on their official website, designed to walk users through the purchasing process step-by-step.

Additionally, Ms. Crescimano shared correspondence from Mr. Timothy Coffman, Treasurer/CFO of EHOVE Career Center, who was unable to attend the meeting. In his email, Mr. Coffman outlined the cooperative purchasing organizations that EHOVE actively participates in, which include:

- Ohio Schools Council
- HPS (Hospital Purchasing Services)
- Northern Ohio Educational Computer Association (NOECA)
- Huron-Erie School Employees Insurance Association

- Bay Area Gas Consortium
- Sourcewell
- State of Ohio Cooperative Purchasing Program

Personnel in Attendance

- Denise Bellamy, Erie County Engineer's Office
- Emily Galloway, Erie County Finance Department
- Keith Sexton, Vermilion Township
- Yvonne Anderson, Sandusky City Schools
- Zachary Rospert, Milan Township

Review

- **The County's political subdivisions existing procurement, purchasing and contracting policies.**
 - How are current purchasing decisions made?
 - Largely utilize Co-Ops and State bid resources for purchasing
 - Utilize local vendors who are willing to beat state pricing
 - Some existing coordination in salt purchasing, energy, but others handled at different levels
 - Can we streamline and improve the County's political subdivisions procurement, purchasing, and contracting functions and outcomes
 - Do the current practices result in increased costs and delays?
 - Consensus is no increased costs or delays. Usually order in advance to prevent delays
- **Review of contracts with the State of Ohio Co-Op, for example, who utilizes the State of Ohio Co-Op? State contracts available are:**
 - Agricultural Chemicals, Seeds and Equipment
 - County Engineer – Sourcewell
 - Good relationship with local vendors, which will provide a better rate than state purchasing price
 - Ammunition, Firearms, Less-Lethal Munitions, Related Law Enforcement Supplies and Vehicles
 - Law enforcement vehicles covered through co-op
 - Perkins Township – Shops around for best pricing, not typically bid out
 - Bulk purchasing for ammunition could be an option
 - Computer Hardware, Software and IT Services
 - Perkins Township – Ordered through Dell with Co-Op pricing (\$400 cheaper than competitor for better computer)
 - Computers are purchased on Amazon
 - Dell Ohio is a co-op dealer that can be utilized for bulk purchasing

- Copiers: Lease, Own, Pay per Copy
 - Erie County Engineer, Regional Planning and Finance Department – Own copiers and only pay per copy
 - Other County offices primarily lease and is at Department discretion
 - Sandusky City Schools - bid process for approximately 100 computers through Xerox

Mr. Tom Forster (Blue Ribbon Commission) introduced the concept of establishing a centralized Purchasing Agent to serve multiple government entities and school districts. The purpose of this role would be to streamline purchasing efforts and secure the lowest available pricing through collective procurement strategies.

Mr. Zach Rospert (Fiscal Officer, Milan Township) expressed uncertainty regarding the benefit for such a position in Milan Township, noting that the township places administrative supply orders infrequently and may not see significant value in a centralized model.

Ms. Yvonne Anderson (Treasurer, Sandusky City Schools) added that while day-to-day supplies may not necessitate shared services, larger-scale project purchases could benefit from centralized procurement oversight.

The Commission then reviewed how various entities currently handle the procurement of essential goods and services. Below is a summary of insights shared:

- **Fuels: Gasoline/Ethanol Blend, Unleaded Regular, Fuel Oils, Heating, and Diesel**
 - *Perkins Township*: Utilizes fleet pricing through Speedway.
 - *Erie County Engineer's Office*: Buys in bulk through a consortium, securing rates approximately \$0.01 lower than state contract pricing.
 - *Erie County*: Maintains an on-site fuel tank at the vehicle maintenance garage for Sheriff vehicles and four county pool vehicles (three cars, one van). Procurement is handled under the same contract as the Engineer's Office. Only departments outside of the General Fund are charged back.
 - *Sandusky City Schools*: Recently installed on-site gas tanks (BP).
 - *Perkins Schools*: Use the Fuel Man card to purchase fuel at BP stations.
 - *Sandusky Transit System*: Has its own fuel tank and also utilizes the Fuel Man card at BP.
- **Fleet Maintenance: Underbody Wash**
 - Oxford Township uses a local provider for underbody sealing and Edison Schools uses a local service provider for underbody washing to protect vehicles from road salt. No issues have been reported with these methods.
- **Office Furniture and Flooring**
 - Sandusky City Schools procure furniture through cooperative purchasing agreements.

- **Propane Gas: Bulk and Cylinder**
 - No current bulk purchasing activity was reported.
- **Salt: Table, Water Softening, Ice Removal, and Calcium Chloride**
 - Erie County Engineer's Office coordinates a collective bid for 20 entities, often securing better rates than ODOT's contract.
 - The list of participating entities continues to grow, with discussions about including school districts.
 - The impact of brine on salt usage is still to be determined.
 - Perkins Township receives brine from Margaretta Township via an H2Ohio grant.
 - Long-term savings on salt are anticipated.
- **Vehicles: SUVs, Sedans, Specialty Vehicles, Trucks**
 - Local dealerships often provide more competitive pricing than state contracts.
 - Erie County operates three pool vehicles, while Job and Family Services (JFS) maintains its own fleet.
 - Most departments follow an established vehicle replacement plan.
- **Any reasons not to be using Co-Ops?**
 - Planning ahead for future large purchases
 - The Commission explored further questions to guide future efforts:
- **What co-ops are being used outside of the State of Ohio's program?**
 - Current Co-Op Utilization
- *EHOVE Career Center* (per Mr. Timothy Coffman):
 - Ohio Schools Council
 - HPS
 - Northern Ohio Educational Computer Association (NOECA)
 - Huron-Erie School Employees Insurance Association
 - Bay Area Gas Consortium
 - Sourcewell
 - State of Ohio Cooperative Purchasing
- *Juvenile Court/Detention Center* (Ms. Julie Fiddler):
 - HPS
- *Sandusky City Schools* (Ms. Yvonne Anderson):
 - Purchased furniture for the Rotary Center through the Ohio Co-Op. While the cost savings were limited, avoiding a bid process was beneficial and cumulative savings are expected over time.
- *Milan Township* (Mr. Zach Rospert):
 - Purchased a backhoe through Sourcewell, saving approximately \$15,000.
- *Ohio Township Association (OTA)*:
 - Has partnered with Amazon to offer discounted pricing.
- *Erie County Engineer's Office*:
 - Uses Amazon for certain parts purchases, which can be more cost-effective than local suppliers.

- **How do we increase communication about procurements and the procurement process?**
 - Use the Engineer's salt bidding model as a framework for other bulk purchasing efforts.
 - Explore the possibility of implementing shared software solutions to support cooperative purchasing.
 - Consider the development of a county-wide aggregation plan for gas and electric purchasing.
 - It was noted that some schools already participate in an energy consortium that includes Huron and Ottawa Counties; however, larger schools such as Sandusky are excluded due to their building square footage.
 - Creation of a *listserv* dedicated to procurement professionals and fiscal officers to facilitate communication and resource sharing.

Upcoming Action Items

Mr. Krabill emphasized the importance of ensuring school districts remain actively involved in these discussions. He requested that the Sub-Committee send out a reminder email to school districts to encourage participation in upcoming meetings.

In preparation for the next meeting, the Sub-Committee was also tasked with sending a request to both government entities and school districts asking them to provide details about the software programs they currently use, and to specify whether those programs are licensed or purchased.

Adjournment

Next Meeting: Scheduled for Tuesday, March 25, 2025 at the Office Building,
247 Columbus Avenue, Sandusky at 11:00 a.m.
Topic Discussion: Information Technology
Facilitators: Ms. Balconi Ghezzi and Mr. Trucker

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Crescimano and seconded by Mr. Forster. The motion carried unanimously.