

Blue Ribbon Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: February 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 Mike Parker. Roll was taken. Mr. Parker welcomed all attendees. A brief overview of the agenda was provided.

Approval of Minutes

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

Short Summary of the Purpose of the Commission

Co-Chairman Mike Parker stated the purpose of the meeting today is to set the structure of the different topics to be discussed at the upcoming meetings. He explained that he drafted a list of suggested items to stimulate discussion during the specific topic meetings. This document is a “living document” and sub-committee member Kevin Cannon will be updating the document as new information, questions and topics are brought forward by the Commission or audience during each meeting. Mr. Parker noted that today’s meeting, and moving forward, the Commission will review the topics and give input first and once all topics have been discussed, the audience will be asked for their input.

Mr. Parker noted the first topic on the list is:

Insurance – meeting taking place on Tuesday, February 25, 2025.

Review

- What entities are self-insured?
- Percent increase in cost of hospitalization last year, last 5 years per entity
- What demographic considerations must be considered to prevent unintended consequences of a county-wide consortium of insureds, such as an increase in rates for an individual entity?
- What is the potential size of the “pool” of personnel and entities that could be included in consortium?

- Activities planned or in progress to improve efficiency in overall spend for insurance product
- Levels of Coverage needed and available
- How will costs be shared by entity
- What it takes to form our own insurance company (removing the consortium element and purchasing directly)

Mr. Tom Forster (Blue Ribbon Commission) noted that the potential size of the entities included in the consortium needs to be considered because the average increase in health insurance is 40% for small entities. If the County is included in a consortium, it could exceed 1,500 members. He noted that the hospital has 2,900 employees on their own and they are not in captive right now.

Mr. Jeff Krabill (Blue Ribbon Commission) is concerned that the level of coverage could be different depending on which Township, City or Village participates. He stated that an idea may be to create a base package that everyone can participate. Mr. Forster stated he believes what will be discussed on February 25th will be more about risk as opposed to premium and benefits. He believes that each entity would be able to create their own benefit structure, but have an economy of scale on the risk side of the insurance. **Mr. Zach Rospert (Milan Township Fiscal Officer)** noted that something to remember is that not all Townships offer insurance to their employees and having an economy of scale for insurance could be an added expense to some smaller Townships and they may not be interested.

Fire/EMS – Meeting taking place on Tuesday, March 4, 2025

Review

- Discuss budget – revenue and carry overs per spreadsheet
- Types and numbers of equipment individually and collectively
- Maintenance of vehicles, how much and by who per dep't
- Maintenance schedule for vehicles
- Maintenance/replacement schedule for response equipment (turnout gear, hoses, etc)
- Number of full-time personnel vs volunteers/department
- Opportunities to share personnel and/or equipment costs
- Depreciation schedule
- Eminent replacements, estimated costs, per department.
- Facility maintenance schedule – roofs, windows, doors, furniture, lockers etc
- Facility improvements
- Any interest in fleet maintenance concept
- Review any budget performance indicators
- Activities planned or in progress to improve efficiency
- EMS planning for southern service area
- Training opportunities and levels of training for various depts.

Mr. Rospert proposed the possibility of combining EMS services, especially with North Central EMS struggling. **Mr. Dennis Schreiner (Groton Township Trustee)** noted that Groton Township has had delayed responses from North Central EMS. Mr. Rospert noted that the Village of Milan has a contract for these services, but believes it still saves the Village funds by contracting out these services versus owning.

Mr. Tim Coleman (Perkins Township Trustee) suggested the idea of discussing levels of training for the various fire departments in Erie County.

Police – Meeting taking place Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Review

- Number of officers per department, full and part-time.
- Opportunities to share personnel and responsibilities
- Maintenance of equipment, how much and by who per department
- Maintenance schedule
- Eminent replacements, estimated costs, per department.
- Facility maintenance schedule – roofs, windows, doors, furniture, lockers etc.
- Facility improvements
- Jail services satisfactory? Budget manageable? Who contributes to the budget, and how much?
- Centralized dispatch is the model for cost savings via centralization of processes and personnel, are there other opportunities like this?
- Can smaller villages sustain their own department? Review costs, hiring ability, turnover of personnel, retirements.
- Activities planned or in progress to improve efficiency
- Mutual Training opportunities such as EHOVE and Sandusky Police Academy

Mr. Krabill addressed the need of police departments in Erie County to be consistent with the levels of training and this will be important to review. Mr. Parker noted that the Sheriff has called a meeting on Thursday, March 6th with the Villages of Milan, Berlin Heights, Kelley's Island and Perkins Township to brainstorm on how the entities can improve efficiency and possibly work together.

Purchasing – Meeting taking place on Tuesday, March 18, 2025

Review

- Review of bulk purchasing for:
 - Office Supplies
 - Tools
 - Maintenance

- Contracting for:
 - Salt
 - Fuel
 - Asphalt
 - Stone
 - School busses *(to also be reviewed in Education working session as well)*

Mr. Parker noted that Vermilion Township Administrator Keith Sexton could help immensely on this topic. He has spoken with Mr. Sexton and believes he has valuable ideas to share regarding this topic. **Ms. Lisa Crescimano (Blue Ribbon Commission)** stated she certainly will reach out to Mr. Sexton. Mr. Coleman noted that Perkins Township utilizes state purchasing for many of their contracts, which has saved the Township money. Several of the Commission members agreed that state purchasing is a very useful tool for entities to save money and they know most entities utilize this approach to making purchases.

IT- Meeting will take place March 25, 2025

Review

- What all software platforms and services are being used right now by the separate entities
- Forum for good practices and ideas
 - Ex. Perkins determines cost saving measure that is quickly published and are able to share info on operating experience
- Countywide directory for field experts/specialists
- Perform evaluation of IT compatibility and efficiency
- HIPAA and Security planning
- Cloud based computing vs. ongoing server maintenance by locals
 - How does new data center impact servers/cloud
- IT Training
- Software licensing (requirements vs options) and how to ensure we share these
- Software Alignment
- Software Engineer

Mr. Matt Old (Erie County Commissioner) inquired whether it would be financially beneficial to hire someone who could develop software to be used by the entities instead of contracting with a company.

Infrastructure (water, sewer and water and sewer plant operations) – Meeting taking place on Tuesday, April 1, 2025

Review

- Vermilion, Sandusky, Huron operate water and sewer plants. Are the cities satisfied that they are maximizing production capacity? Like baseload electric power plants, operation at near or full capacity can reduce costs per units measured of production.
- Metrics tracked for current production costs at each plant.
- Condition of water plants acceptable?
- Major maintenance, Capital improvements or extra capacity needed in the near future (less than 5 years)? Long term - > 5 years?
- Would centralized dispatching of water from the plants conceivably reduce costs? Leads into next question;
- What about centralized maintenance planning and capital improvement coordination like a rural water district, but just for plants?
- Is routine maintenance primarily in-house or contract?
- Are plant operators & maintenance personnel effectively utilized or used in other capacities during “down” time? Or could there be a “traveling” maintenance crew within the county?
- Costs per units measured /customer for Erie County, Sandusky, Huron, Vermilion
- All other performance indicators tracked by water departments’ management
- Activities planned or in progress to improve efficiency
- Financial incentives for regionalization at state level
- Impact of water and sewer on development
- What have other governments done to remove themselves from the public utility (e.x. regional districts)
- How do EPA mandates change or delay actions as regional entities work to collaborate locally

Mr. Krabill stated that the City of Sandusky water plant is not producing near capacity.

Mr. Krabill believes conversation is important and is what is best for the citizens of Erie County. He mentioned that he is encouraged that the conversation can start with his fellow Blue Ribbon Commission members to discuss efficiency, which could then lead to opportunities for the City and other entities to explore.

Mr. Caleb Stidham (Erie County Treasurer) noted the Ohio EPA encourages regionalization. He stated that regionalizing water and sewer would positively benefit potential future development for Erie County. **Mr. Steve Shoffner (Erie County Commissioner)** stated this Commission was created to find government efficiencies, and believes that regional water could happen. He cautioned, though, that at some point, efficiency may become more effective by not being in the business of water. Mr. Krabill agreed that this option should be further discussed.

Mr. Old added, that, with the extensive EPA mandates the state is implementing, it may be wise for entities to come together as one large community to ask for an extension on the deadlines.

Mr. Parker decided to end today's discussion and further discuss the structure of the topics for the upcoming meetings next Thursday, February 27, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. on the 3rd floor of the Office Building Chambers, 247 Columbus Avenue, Sandusky. The topics left to discuss include: infrastructure – roads (County Engineer, Highway Department and Townships), public transportation, education, and entity administrative staffing – Human Resources and employee benefits.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Moon and seconded by Mr. Tucker.

Next Meeting: Scheduled for Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at the Office Building, 247 Columbus Avenue, Sandusky at 11:00 a.m. with a virtual call from Mr. Tris Felix, Managing Director of Cornerstone Risk Solutions.