



E·C·G·R·A
ERIE COUNTY GAMING REVENUE AUTHORITY

**EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR'S
REPORT
FOR
SEPTEMBER
2024**



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of the Auditor General
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0018
Facebook: Pennsylvania Auditor General
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TIMOTHY L. DEFOOR
AUDITOR GENERAL

August 22, 2024

Mr. Ronald Cleaver
Chair
Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
5340 Fryling Road, Suite 201
Erie, PA 16510

Mr. Perry Wood
Executive Director
Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority
5340 Fryling Road, Suite 201
Erie, PA 16510

Dear Chair Cleaver and Mr. Wood:

As you know, the Department of the Auditor General (Department) is in the process of conducting a performance audit of the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority as discussed in the attached engagement letter dated July 17, 2024.

This letter is to advise you that the Department will be adding a further objective to the current engagement. The audit period will be April 1, 2021, through March 31, 2024, with updates, where applicable, through the end of the audit procedures, for the following audit objective:

- Determine whether the ECGRA received gaming revenue in accordance with the Economic Development Financing (EDF) Law; the Pennsylvania Race Horse Development and Gaming Act (Gaming Act); the 2008 Ordinance; and the 2010 Settlement Agreement.

The Department is not changing the original audit period for its original audit objectives. If you have any questions or concerns about this performance audit, please contact Scott D. King, CPA, Director, Bureau of Performance Audits, at 717-787-2150 or SKing@paauditor.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy L. DeFoor".

Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General

Attachment

Mr. Ronald Cleaver
Mr. Perry Wood
August 22, 2024
Page 2

cc: The Honorable Josh Shapiro, Governor
The Honorable Uri Monson, Secretary of the Budget
The Honorable Scott Martin, Majority Appropriations Chairman, Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Vincent Hughes, Minority Appropriations Chairman, Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Jordan Harris, Majority Appropriations Chairman, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Seth Grove, Minority Appropriations Chairman, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Kim Ward, President Pro-Tempore, Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Joanna McClinton, Speaker of the House, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Matt Bradford, Majority Leader, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Bryan Cutler, Minority Leader, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Joe Pittman, Majority Leader, Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Jay Costa, Minority Leader, Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Patrick Harkins, Gaming Oversight Majority Chair, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Russ Diamond, Gaming Oversight Minority Chair, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Chris Gebhard, Community, Economic & Recreational Development Majority Chair, Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Anthony H. Williams, Community, Economic & Recreational Development Minority Chair, Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Dan Laughlin, Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Scott Hutchinson, Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Robert Merski, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Jacob Banta, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Brad Roae, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Ryan Bizzarro, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Brenton Davis, Erie County Executive
Mr. William Canfield, Director, Bureau of Audits, Office of Comptroller Operations
Ms. Janet B. Ciccocioppo, CPA, Deputy Auditor General for Audits, Department of the Auditor General
Mr. Gordon R. Denlinger, CPA, Deputy Auditor General for Audits, Department of the Auditor General
Mr. Scott D. King, CPA, Director, Bureau of Performance Audits, Department of the Auditor General



ECGRA Communications Services Report

Aug 2024

Meeting with Executive Director

Ongoing Social Media Management

Ongoing Consulting

Aug Comms

IMPLEMENTED

- August social media posts
- 2 new graphics created in August
- Strategic Marketing Planning meeting for fall with Executive Director

IN PROGRESS | 2024 Grant Releases and Graphics

- 2023–2024 Annual Report graphics
- Community Assets – Arts, Culture, Heritage
 - Media advisory and pitching
 - Press Event
 - Press release and distribution
 - Grant recipient graphics
- Mission Main Street – grant awards
 - Media advisory and pitching
 - Press Event
 - Press release and distribution
 - Grant recipient graphics
- Holiday Graphics

IN PLANNING

- Fall grants and event planning/scheduling (Anchor building in progress)





Strategic Planning Committee Meeting

Friday, September 6, 2024
11:00am – 1:00pm
5240 Knowledge Parkway
Erie, PA 16510

AGENDA

1. Anchor Building review
 - 10 Applications

6 recommended

2. Update on First Ascent (Gannon University)

Memo Delivered

3. PLGIT Update

Resolution Reviewed

4. Good of the Order

REMINDER: Monday, September 9th at 9am, we are meeting up with members of Infinite Erie to tour the projects of the Eastside Renaissance group. We meet at **1108 Parade Street** to start.

Perry Wood

From: M Tredway <mtredway@infiniteerie.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 11, 2024 10:28 AM
To: M Tredway
Subject: ADVISORY: Infinite Erie to Announce Funding to Expand ECAT's Construction Trades Training Program

External Sender - From: (M Tredway <mtredway@infiniteerie.com>)
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*Press Conf
Held*

*****ADVISORY*** ADVISORY*** ADVISORY*** ADVISORY*** ADVISORY*****

Infinite Erie to Announce Funding to Expand ECAT's Construction Trades Training Program

Nearly \$1 million to include supervised On-The-Job Training (OJT)

CONTACT: Mary Wassell
wassell@parkerstrategygroup.com
814.528.4930 | mobile

ERIE, PA — Infinite Erie and partners, including Erie Insurance, the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA), and the Erie Community Foundation, will be hosting a press conference to celebrate the additional funding to expand the Erie Center for Arts & Technology's (ECAT) Construction Trades Training program. This expansion will address a demonstrated gap in the residential construction ecosystem and remove a barrier to the success of other projects focused on increasing affordable housing opportunities in Erie County.

WHAT: Press conference on the expansion of the Construction Trades Training program at ECAT

WHO: Kim Thomas, Executive Director, Infinite Erie
Karen Bilowith, Chair, Erie Action Team and President & CEO, Erie Community Foundation
Dr. Perry Wood, Executive Director, ECGRA
Christine Goodrich Blashock, Esq., Chief Diversity & Community Development Officer, Erie Insurance
Daria Devlin, Director of Social Impact, Hamot Health Foundation

WHEN: September 12, 2024

TIME: 11:00 a.m.

WHERE: 211 Parade Street (BEST property)
Erie, PA 16507

ABOUT INFINITE ERIE

By coordinating inclusive growth strategies to deliver transformative change, Infinite Erie will implement Erie's Investment Playbook and position Erie to attract & secure more public and private sector funding than like-size regions. Powered by the Erie Action Team, the team consists of public, private, philanthropic, and civic leadership in Erie County, who bring influence, guidance, and resources to empower the work of the Delivery Teams and put plans into action, including: Erie Community Foundation, Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA), Erie Insurance, Jefferson Educational Society, Hamot Health Foundation, Erie Regional Chamber & Growth Partnership, Erie County Redevelopment Authority, City of Erie, Diverse Erie, Erie's Black Wall Street, Urban Erie Community Development Corporation, Greater Erie Economic Development Corporation (GEEDC), and the Office of the Governor of Pennsylvania (ex-officio)

###

U.S. NEWS

Pennsylvania casinos ask court to force state to tax skill games found in stores equally to slots



FILE - People play slot machines at Philadelphia Park Casino and Racetrack, June 25, 2007, in Bensalem, Pa. The owners of twelve Pennsylvania casinos have asked the state's highest court to declare that a tax on slot machine revenue is unconstitutional because the state doesn't impose it broadly on cash-paying electronic game terminals known as skill games that can be found in many bars and stores. (AP Photo/Mel Evans, File)

[Read More](#)



BY **MARC LEVY**

Updated 5:01 PM EDT, July 30, 2024



“There is no basis for requiring licensed entities to pay about half of their slot machine revenue to the Commonwealth while allowing unlicensed entities to pay no tax on such revenue,” they argue in the lawsuit.

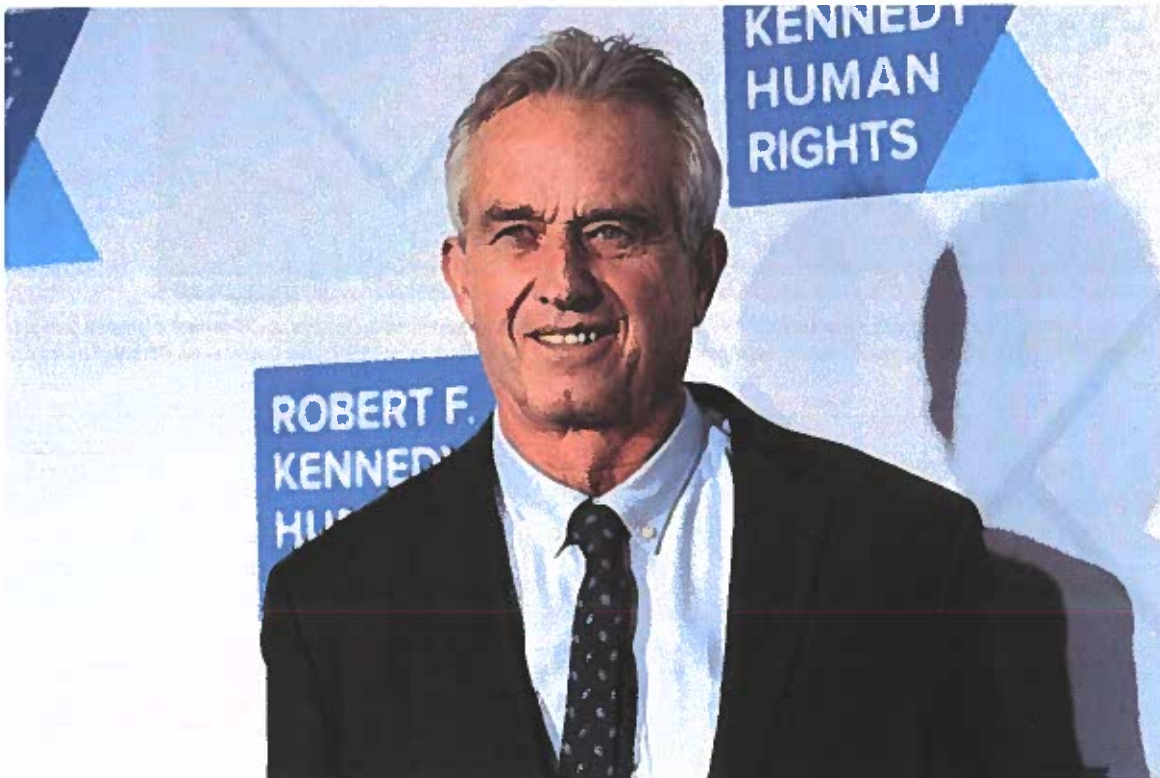
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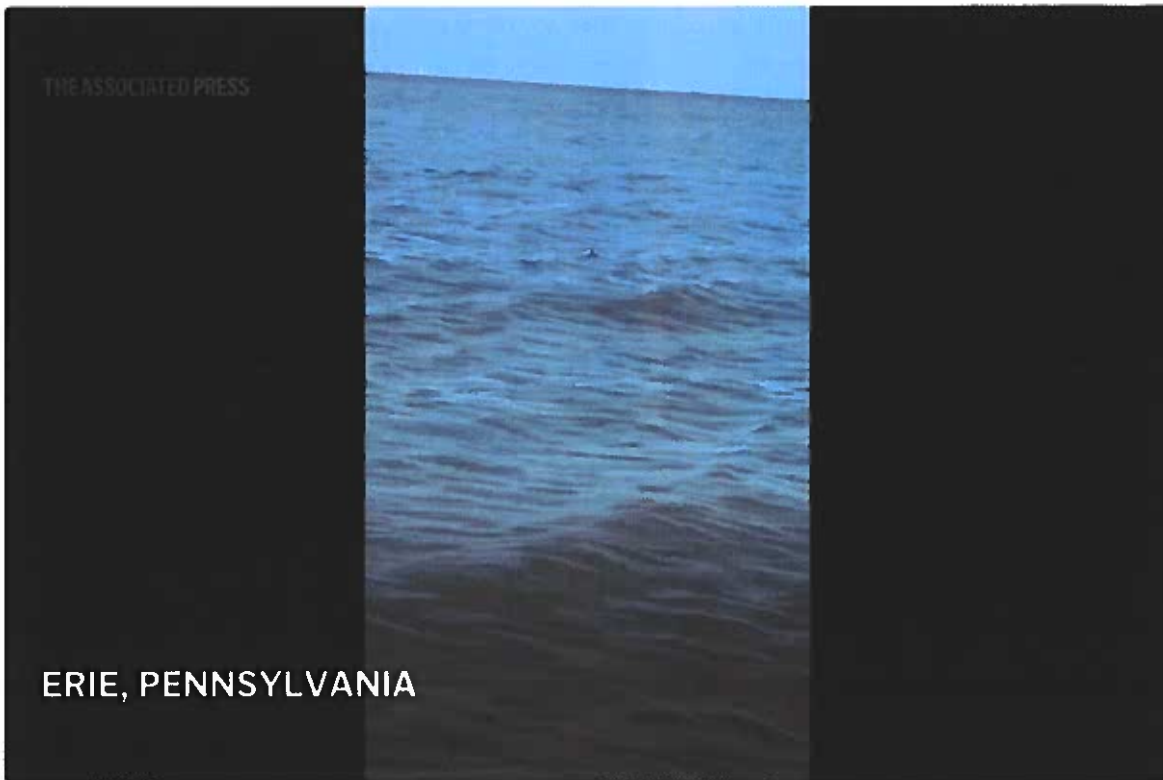
The lawsuit asks the court to force the state to apply the same tax rate to skill games or to bar it from collecting taxes on slot machines.

The casinos’ owners include dozens of principals, as well as major casino companies such as Caesars Entertainment Inc. and Penn Entertainment Inc.

RELATED COVERAGE



Legal challenge seeks to prevent RFK Jr. from appearing on Pennsylvania’s presidential ballot



Sighting of alligator swimming off shore of Lake Erie prompts Pennsylvania search



Harris-Walz vs. Trump-Vance: It's now an expanded battle for both the Sun Belt and Rust Belt

The state Department of Revenue declined comment on the lawsuit. The Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board said it had just learned of lawsuit and was evaluating it.

Pennsylvania brings in more tax revenue from casinos than any other state, according to American Gaming Association figures.

The fate of the lawsuit, filed by the owners of 12 of the state's 17 licensed and operating casinos, is likely tied to the outcome of a [separate lawsuit](#) that the state Supreme Court is considering.

That case — between the state attorney general's office and Pace-O-Matic Inc., a maker of skill games — could decide whether the skill games that have become commonplace in nonprofit clubs, convenience stores, bars and elsewhere are unlicensed gambling machines and, as a result, must be shut down.

A lower court found that the Pace-O-Matic games are based on a player's ability and not solely on chance, like slot machines and other traditional gambling games that are regulated by the state.

For years, the state has maintained that the devices are unlicensed gambling machines that are operating illegally and subject to seizure by police. Machine makers, distributors and retailers contend that they are legal, if unregulated, games that are not subject to state gambling control laws.

Lawmakers have long discussed regulating and taxing the devices, but any agreement has been elusive.

It's unclear exactly how many **skill game terminals** there are in Pennsylvania, but the American Gaming Association estimates **there are at least 67,000**, which would be **more than any other state**.

Casinos operate roughly 25,000 regulated slot machines on which gamblers wagered almost \$32 billion last year and lost just over \$2.4 billion. The state and casinos effectively split that amount.

Follow Marc Levy at www.twitter.com/timelywriter.



MARC LEVY

Levy covers politics and state government in Pennsylvania for The Associated Press. He is based in Harrisburg.



ADVERTISEMENT

Tammi Michali

From: Perry Wood
Sent: Wednesday, September 18, 2024 11:01 AM
To: Tammi Michali
Subject: FW: Skill Games

Please include this email in my ex dir report.

From: Kozak, David <dkozak@pasen.gov>
Sent: Monday, September 16, 2024 3:13 PM
To: Perry Wood <pwood@ecgra.org>
Cc: Nagle, Katherine <knagle@pasen.gov>
Subject: Skill Games

External Sender - From: ("Kozak, David" <dkozak@pasen.gov>)
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Hi Perry,

I hope you've had a good week. I apologize for the delay, but after my week in Erie I was travelling all last week but didn't forget about you.

As far as an update, I went through the Legislation a little more as well as spoke with Senator Yaw's office to get some details.

So first, I was a little mistaken when I characterized the bill and how it fits into current gaming laws. [Senate Bill 706](#) is a standalone bill, meaning that it does not amend current gaming laws in Title 4, which is what the 2004 Race Horse Development and Gamic Act did. Because Senate Bill 706 is not amending Title 4, it is not bond to the unique distribution formulas for the casino revenue. That's not to say that, as conversations continue, that could change or we could see some of those unique formulas come into play; however, as the bill currently stands, those are not included.

That's not necessarily a bad thing. As I mentioned in our meeting, the bill is just a starting point, and any final product will likely be heavily negotiated among several interested parties. So, it is plausible that it ends up in Title 4 when everything is said and done. Again, I have not spoken to anyone who believes this legislation, or any other type of Skill Game legislation, is a priority for the fall prior to the end of Session.

So, as I understand it, Erie County, within the limits of Title 4, created their own board. If that is the case and the county did in fact decide to set up the board themselves, then the county and the board could make the decision on how to share the profits.

In speaking with Senator Yaw's office, based on the research that they have seen, they do not think the inclusion of skill games will diminish casino revenues. Casinos are currently making record profits while skill games, while found to be legal by the court, are still operating unregulated. Our hope with this legislation would be to see these games taxed to ensure the state and the counties and municipalities where these games are located see their fair share. As the bill currently stands, skill game revenue and casino revenue are separate pots of money and will be distributed separately.

I hope this helps. Please feel free to call or email any time with any questions.

-David

DAVID J. KOZAK

Chief of Staff | *Office of Senator Dan Laughlin*

351 Main Capitol

717-787-8927 (office)

814-762-4555 (mobile)

dkozak@pasen.gov



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Test Drive Our New Site! We have some improvements in the works that we're excited for you to experience. [Click here](#) to try our new, faster, mobile friendly beta site. We will be maintaining our current version of the site thru the end of 2024, so you can switch back as our improvements continue.

Pennsylvania State Senate

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/Legis/CSM/showMemoPublic.cfm?chamber=S&SPick=20230&cosponId=40445>

09/04/2024 09:42 AM

[Home](#) / Senate Co-Sponsorship Memoranda

Senate Co-Sponsorship Memoranda

Met w/ Dave Kazak

Senate of Pennsylvania Session of 2023 - 2024 Regular Session

MEMORANDUM

Posted: April 10, 2023 12:18 PM
From: [Senator Gene Yaw](#)
To: All Senate members
Subject: Skill Video Gaming Act

In the near future, I will be introducing legislation that will regulate and establish an additional tax on skill video games in the Commonwealth.

Skill video games, operated in a regulated environment, will significantly benefit the Commonwealth by providing substantial revenue and creating jobs. All games will be required to be connected to a terminal collection and control system that allows the Commonwealth to monitor all transactions and ensure that all taxes are accrued and paid.

Upon passage of this legislation, experts estimate that approximately \$300 million in annual tax revenue will immediately flow to the Commonwealth.

One of the largest skill video game manufacturers is located in my District. This industry has created hundreds of manufacturing jobs in and around my District. Nearly all of the components are sourced in the United States, many in our Commonwealth. Recently, manufacturing projects associated with skill video games have been reshored from China to Williamsport. The manufacturing of skill video games is creating good, family-sustaining jobs in our Commonwealth.

Additionally, my legislation will strengthen penalties for those who operate unlicensed and illegal games and gambling devices. These illegal gambling devices' negative impacts include but are not limited to the non-payment of local, state, or federal taxes, criminal activity, nuisance, and an increased strain on local and state law enforcement resources.

When so many small businesses, including bars, restaurants, and fraternal and veterans clubs are struggling due to the economic strain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, skill video games are keeping them afloat by providing them with supplemental revenue.

This bill will address both the need to clean up the market to rid us of illegal gambling, provide the state with tax revenue, and support small businesses by giving them access to an additional revenue stream.

I hope you will join me in co-sponsoring this legislation.

 Introduced as [SB706](#)

Memo Updated: April 10, 2023 12:21 PM

1 scrip, card or other means approved by the department which is
2 redeemable only at the establishment for cash. Cash shall not be
3 dispensed directly by the terminal.

4 Section 1502. Winnings.

5 A player's net winnings from the play of a licensed skill
6 video game terminal shall be classified as compensation under
7 section 303 of the act of March 4, 1971 (P.L.6, No.2), known as
8 the Tax Reform Code of 1971.

9 CHAPTER 17
10 TAX

11 Section 1701. Tax imposed.

12 (a) General rule.--A tax of 16% of all gross profits
13 generated by skill video game system play shall be paid to the
14 Commonwealth by the distributor. The distributor shall submit to
15 the department by the 20th of each month:

16 (1) A report of gross profits under this subsection for
17 the prior month.

18 (2) Any tax payments due under this subsection for the
19 prior month.

20 (b) Deposit.--Revenue received from the tax imposed under
21 this section shall be distributed by the department and shall be
22 proportioned monthly under the following formula:

23 (1) Fifty percent of the revenue shall be deposited into
24 the General Fund.

25 (2) Twenty-two percent of the revenue shall be
26 distributed to individual counties proportionally based upon
27 the gross profits derived from the operation of all skill
28 video game systems within that county.

29 (3) Twenty-two percent of the revenue shall be
30 distributed to individual municipalities based on the gross

1 profits derived from the operation of skill video game
2 systems within that municipality.

3 (4) Six percent of the revenue shall be distributed to
4 the Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement for the purpose of
5 enforcing this act.

6 (c) Exemption.--Revenue generated from approved skill video
7 game terminals being played by the public and game credit
8 licenses to supply skill video game systems shall not be
9 subjected to the tax imposed under section 202 of the act of
10 March 4, 1971 (P.L.6, No.2), known as the Tax Reform Code of
11 1971.

12 (d) Information.--The distributor, operator and
13 establishment shall provide to the department any information
14 required by the department for the department's assessment and
15 review of taxes under this section.

16 (e) Prohibition on local fees and taxes.--No additional
17 taxes or fees, including amusement taxes, may be imposed on the
18 placement of a skill video game system or the revenue generated
19 by a terminal unless specifically authorized under this act.

20 CHAPTER 19

21 ADMINISTRATION

22 Section 1901. Governing practices and procedures.

23 The provisions of 2 Pa.C.S. (relating to administrative law
24 and procedure) shall apply to all actions of the department
25 under this act constituting an adjudication as defined in 2
26 Pa.C.S. § 101 (relating to definitions).

27 Section 1902. Law enforcement notification.

28 Notwithstanding any provision of this act or any other law to
29 the contrary, the department may notify law enforcement of
30 information relating to any violation or suspected violation of



WOODS talk

Asbury Woods ANDREW J. CONNER
NATURE CENTER
BROWN'S FARM
GREENWAY TRAIL

September
October
November
December
2024



Asbury Woods Launches Interactive Trail Map

The first week of September Asbury Woods will debut a new interactive trail map and visitor experience through Engage by Cell, a recognized leader in mobile technology solutions. The new program will allow visitors to use a QR code to have a dynamic trail map in their hands. "Blue Dot" waypoint locating will use GPS to show visitors where they are on the trail system to enhance navigation and wayfinding. The program will also include points of interest along the trails to provide a deeper level of engagement for visitors who want to know more about the flora, fauna and history of Asbury Woods. Seasonable updates will ensure that there is always something new to learn whether a first-time visitor or a frequent trail user.

Additional Asbury Woods content, videos, quizzes, feedback forms and links to upcoming programs and events will provide a one-stop-shop for all things Asbury Woods. The platform provides easy to use, app-like interaction with the convenience of not having to download a specific app to your smartphone.

To kick off our new platform, Asbury Woods is launching a trail naming contest! Currently there is a short trail that connects the Guided Trail to the east end of the boardwalk trail. This trail is called the Meteorite Trail as a nod to the large rock that sits at the intersection with the Guided Trail. The name meteorite is misleading. In fact, this unique rock is a glacial erratic. A glacial erratic is a rock that differs in type from the composition of rocks native to the area and was deposited in a new location through the movement of glaciers. Glacial erratics can be small pebbles or the size of a building but were all moved from their original location to where they rest due to glacial activity. They often are in unusual locations, don't match the surroundings and often show signs of scouring from movement over the surface of land and ice.



You can be part of Asbury Woods history by submitting your suggestion for a new name for this trail! Use the QR code below to visit our new mobile visitor platform and submit your suggested trail name by November 1. While on the platform, check out the interactive trail map, the points of interest and view upcoming events.

This initiative was made possible thanks to funding from Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority's Building a Better Future: Parks, Fields and Trails Grant Program.

Upcoming Events
Page 3

Winnie the Pooh's
Asbury Adventure
September 21

Scary Creature
Feature
October 10, 11, 12

6 Mile Trail Run
October 12

Winter Wonderland
December 1 - 30

Volunteers
of the Year
Page 7

Tammi Michali

From: Laurel Mitchell <lbmit73@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 10:05 AM
To: Tammi Michali
Subject: Re: 2024 CelebrateErie Chalkwalk - Sponsor/Artist Pairing

External Sender - From: (Laurel Mitchell <lbmit73@gmail.com>)

[Learn More](#)

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Tammi,

So sorry to have missed you over the weekend. We were fortunate to be able to get the design done completely on Friday, finishing just seconds before the big rain storm that hit downtown that evening!

While it's always fun to work among the crowds and hear the encouraging comments the visitors to C.E. have, it was especially nice to hear people mentioning that they recognized the tree logo of ECGRA and then talk about the organization positively. It was a joy to work on this mural and I was glad to have my teenage niece assist - as a result she's now hooked and hopes to work on the chalkwalk again next year. :)

We both thank you for the opportunity to be involved in our community this way and to help support the city and ECGRA.

Warmly,
Laurel

On Tue, Aug 20, 2024 at 3:03 PM Tammi Michali <tmichali@ecgra.org> wrote:

Laurel -

Thanks so much for the fantastic job you did on the chalkwalk this past weekend!

I was there Saturday and hoping to meet you, but maybe next year!

Best,

Tammi

From: Laurel Mitchell <lbmit73@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, July 25, 2024 6:56 AM

To: Tammi Michali <tmichali@ecgra.org>

Subject: Re: 2024 CelebrateErie Chalkwalk - Sponsor/Artist Pairing

Advertisement

Innovative farming coming to east side

A.J. Rao

Erie Times-News USA TODAY NETWORK

In June 2023, an innovative farming project broke ground at the Joyce A. Savocchio Opportunity Park, raising hopes the former Superfund site would finally live up to its name and bring opportunity to Erie's east side.

In the coming months, those hopes are expected to be realized.

The project, a public-private partnership called Grow Erie, aims to bring a commercial aquaponics facility and a community greenhouse to the 25-acre park, located at the intersection of East 18th Street and Downing Avenue.

Construction of the aquaponics facility is underway and should be completed by late October, said Erie County Redevelopment Authority CEO Tina

Mengine. She anticipates the facility to begin growing by January.

Construction of the community greenhouse is expected to begin in late fall.

Together, she said, the facilities represent a \$5 million investment and are expected to generate roughly \$750,000 annually to help revitalize one of Erie's poorest neighborhoods.

"This is one of my favorite projects," Mengine said. "I love it because it's on the east side. I love it because it's urban agriculture, which everyone talks about as the future of agriculture. For us to have such a forward-thinking, high-tech facility in this location is very cool."

How will the facilities work?

The 17,000-square foot aquaponics facility will consist of a main steel building and two attached all-season greenhouse bays. The two bays will each house a large deep water culture pond and use hydroponic equipment to cultivate herb and leafy greens.

Hydroponics is a technique of growing plants that uses water-based nutrient solution rather than soil.

"Plants will be floating on rafts and their roots will be suspended in nutrient-rich water," said Paul Nickerson, cofounder and vice president of Integrated Agriculture Systems, a Harrisburg-based sustainable agriculture company assisting the project.

"The equipment for that is coming from the Dutch. They're the best at it. The style of raft that they use is rather new and high-end. This is one of their early bigger implementations of that technology."

Nickerson said the main building will house vertical racks for microgreen production, to include crops like pea shoots and micro-beets.

The main building will also include INTAG bioreactors that will process and recycle fish waste into natural growth nutrients for plant life cultivation, a process that will not require chemical, salt-based fertilizers.

Mengine said fish waste will be collected separately and the facility will not harvest fish as originally planned.

"Not rearing fish saves us about \$800,000," she said. "Plus, it's a specialized thing and we couldn't find buyers for all the trout, and it became too complicated."

Mengine said the facility is specifically designed for commercial customers like Curtze Food Service, a wholesale food distributor located near the park that's contracted to buy most of the facility's produce.

By contrast, the 2,500-square foot community greenhouse will be open to the public and operate as a co-op. The climate-controlled greenhouse, which will allow for year-round crop production, will be located across from the aquaponics facility, on the other side of Paragon Drive.

What will be the impact?

Mengine described Grow Erie — a partnership between the Minority Community Investment Coalition, the Redevelopment Authority and INTAG — as both an economic development initiative and a catalyst for community development.

“This used to be a dump site, a brown field — now, it will buzz with activity and jobs. And not minimum wage jobs,” she said. “This is all highly technical, so we’ll be teaching skills here. And ideally, we will add bays so that it becomes larger, and we’ll employ more.”

Mengine said MCIC, with the assistance of INTAG, will hire about a dozen workers initially, with a goal to include residents from the surrounding community.

James Sherrod, co-founder of MCIC and executive director of Bayfront NATO Inc., said Grow Erie will prove a change agent for the east side.

“There hasn’t been a lot of investment on the east side in a long time,” he said. “This is an opportunity for us to bring some employment and development here and hopefully spur other investment in this area.”

He added, “It’s also a great opportunity for the people that live in this area to have an identified area to come to and be able to work, grow fruits and vegetables, aside from being in their backyard.”

Mengine said annual profits of Grow Erie are estimated to reach \$748,000, which will be invested back into the community as well as into project expansion.

Funding for Grow Erie has been provided by sources like the city of Erie, the Erie Community Foundation, the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority and Diverse Erie. Mengine said the project has secured roughly \$4 million and has a number of pending grants to reach its \$5 million goal.

Gary Horton, MCIC co-founder who helped spearhead Grow Erie, described the park as a “beacon of hope and opportunity” for a neighborhood that’s long experienced disinvestment.

“From a personal and professional standpoint, I’m more than excited about the progress that we’ve made,” he said. “I’m already able to see the impact that it has had on the population that lives here — that even in our neighborhood, something can rise out of the ashes.”

The Corry Journal

Thursday, August 29, 2024

Union City approves 7 applications for Renaissance Grant funding

BY MARYANN MOOK
Correspondent

More houses in Union City will be getting a facelift.

Union City Borough Council, during its Tuesday meeting, approved seven applications for Renaissance Grant funding for home improvements.

The applications total a project amount of \$60,606, and \$23,600 in grant funding was requested.

Renaissance Grant funds are provided through the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA). The purpose of the Renaissance Grant Program is to remove housing blight, reverse deterioration, incentivize and spur private investment, make neighborhoods and communities more attractive, increase

the market value of homes and improve the municipal tax base.

The applications were approved from Round 1 of 2024-25 grant funding and included residential properties on Perry Street, North Main Street, South Street, South Main Street, East High Street and Fourth Avenue.

There are not any income requirements, but those requesting a grant must fill out an application, which must be approved by borough council. The grant is made on a 1:1 matching basis, and the maximum grant award is \$5,000.

The following types of improvements are permitted: doors and windows visible from the street; roofs, soffits, gutters and downspouts; exterior lighting; porches, stairs and steps; painting, siding and shutters; and chimney and ma-

sonry repairs.

Borough Manager Cindy Wells recommended Council approve the seven applications because the improvements to the properties will help in the fight against blight.

There is currently \$90,547 in Renaissance Grant funding available, so there will be another round of applications.

"We look forward to seeing these projects complete and there will be more opportunities in the near future for more applications," Wells said.

In other news, Council approved a motion to remove, or satisfy, a lien for \$2,690 the borough has against property at 121 E. High St. The property was donated to the Erie County Land Bank, which requested the lien be removed.

◀ See Funding, P.2

Funding

(Continued from front page)

Council approved a quote in the amount of \$16,679 from Construction Services of PA for installation of a canoe/kayak launch at the American Legion ball fields. Construction Services of PA submitted the lower of two quotes. Because the project cost is below \$23,000, bids were not required. Wells told Council the quotes were received and reviewed by the borough's engineering firm, The EADS Group. The motion is contingent upon receiving an easement from the American Legion.

Council also approved a resolution accepting the audit report for the Erie Area Council of Governments. The audit was reviewed and accepted by COG members.

As a member municipality, Union City is required to approve the audit report.

In her reports, Wells said she had advertised twice for bidding for a towing company for a towing ordinance with no response. She asked if she should advertise it again.

"No, put it on the shelf for now," Council Vice President Matthew Joyce said.

In addition to Joyce, Council members present were James Kerns, Brian Osborn, Charlie Steadman and Melissa Winkler. Riley Cross and Pat Uber were absent.

Editor's note: Council has changed its meeting dates and times to the first and third Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the First Global Methodist Church, 42 E. High St. Due to Labor Day, the next meeting will be held on Sept. 16.

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Infinite Erie to help fund training in building trades

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A surge of construction activity in Erie over the last several years has underlined a problem: Erie isn't training enough people with the skills needed to do that work.

The construction trades training program at the Erie Center for Arts & Technology has been working to address that shortage through a training program that last year had 76 applications for 20 openings.

That effort has received a \$1 million boost that will enable ECAT to train more students and to provide on-the-job-training.

The site for some of that training was the backdrop Thursday for a news conference hosted by Infinite Erie, a group working to implement Erie's investment playbook by positioning the community to attract more public and private sector funding than like-size regions.

Members of Erie community chip in more than \$1 million

Kim Thomas, executive director of Infinite Erie, said Thursday that an additional \$1.028 million has been allocated for the program from Erie Insurance, the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority and the Erie Community Foundation.

The expanded funding will allow more students to be trained in the ECAT program. Beginning Sept. 24, a new class of 35 building trades students will begin training. Students will meet three evenings a week for a total of 20 hours a week, said Kate Neubert-Lechner, the group's executive director. She said ECAT had 175 applications for those positions.

With the support of Erie's Build Community Development Corp., the extra money will also allow those students to receive on-the-job training, often in the communities where they live.

Daria Devlin, director of social impact for Hamot Health Foundation and executive director of Build CDC, said the program will pay wages to students as they learn new skills.

“Recent studies have shown that we are facing a nation-wide shortage of construction workers to meet the industry demand, and that shortage has become a barrier to utilizing resources and scaling up neighborhood revitalization work here in the Erie community,” Devlin said in a statement.

“This investment allows us to expand ECAT’s existing, successful program and build a pipeline of skilled construction workers while simultaneously providing individuals with the opportunity to earn family sustaining wages.”

House will serve as training facility

Some of those wages will be earned working inside of 211 Parade St., an 1,100-square-foot home built in 1903, according to Erie County property records.

The property, owned by Bayfront Eastside Task Force, looks good from the street and has some people inquiring about rental opportunities, said Jeremy Bloeser, executive director of the organization. A new roof and windows on the front of the house already have been installed.

Open the front door, however, and it’s apparent that there’s a lot of work to be done, Bloeser said.

“It’s not ready to be lived in. It’s an empty canvas,” he said.

Devlin said the house is one of the locations where supervised students enrolled in the ECAT program can begin to improve their skills.

Donald Crenshaw, a Black contractor who attended Thursday’s announcement, said the training effort is an important step toward ensuring that the tradesmen working in the community reflect the population that lives there.

Devlin is inclined to agree “We need to do better to diversify our workplace,” she said.

Neubert-Lechner said that her organization is working to set students up for success even before they attend a class or start hammering nails on the job.

Many need to find ways to overcome challenges that can include childcare and a long list of other things that can stand in the path of success.

“Many students have so many barriers they don’t have a way to get started,” she said.

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