MEMORANDUM

ERIE COUNTY
CAPITAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE

DATE:	July 17, 2025
TO:	Mark C. Poloncarz, Erie County Executive & Chair of the Capital Projects Committee
FROM:	Natalie Nitsche
RE:	2026 Capital Projects Committee Meeting #3

Attendance: Deputy County Executive Lisa Chimera, Comptroller Kevin Hardwick, Budget & Management Director Mark Cornell, Commissioner William Geary, Commissioner Troy Schinzel, Commissioner Dan Castle, Deputy Commissioner Thomas Baines, Deputy Commissioner Tracy Cichocki, Legislature Chair Tim Meyers, Majority Leader John Gilmour, Minority Leader John Mills, Legislator Lawrence Dupre, Legislator Taisha St. Jean-Tard, Benjamin Swanekamp, Bryan Fiume, Erich Weyant, Jessica Schuster, Tim German, Dominic Musilli, Nathan Lippitt, Bill Whelan, and Aaron Naegely. Virtual Attendees: Timothy Callan

Director Cornell called to order the third meeting of the Capital Project Committee Meetings for 2026 and recognized a quorum.

The first item up for discussion and approval are the previous meeting's minutes. Commissioner Geary motioned to approve the minutes, and Comptroller Hardwick seconded the motion.

Next, Director Cornell discussed unfinished business in the form of a follow-up response from Deputy Commissioner of Highways Karen Hoak, which is included in the meeting's packet.

Sheriff's Office – presented by Bell Whelan and Aaron Naegely

Project #1 – Video Surveillance System
Deputy Superintendent Whalen explained that the camera system at the Holding Center was upgraded, but phase two never came to fruition. This request is for the installation of high-definition video security cameras to replace all of the outdated analog cameras and audio recording in certain areas and additional cameras in areas that we don't have them currently. Deputy Superintendent Whalen explained that improved/increased video surveillance will assist the County in potential lawsuits as well as for safety of both inmates and staff. These cameras would also aid in the investigation of crimes. It is anticipated that the cost will be $2.8 million.

Director Cornell and Deputy Superintendent Whalen discussed the possibility of phasing in the new technology. Deputy Superintendent Whalen advised the control center need is critical and can be added on to. Phase 1 would be $640,000 and phase 2 would be $2.2 million. More details

about this option will be provided.

Comptroller Hardwick and Deputy Superintendent discussed that even with the new facility, the current facility will still be in use.

Majority Leader Gilmour asked how and when the work would be completed. The Deputy Superintendent advised the work will most likely happen at night – little to no disruption.

Project #2 – Multi-use Facility

Sheriff's Office Sergeant Aaron Naegley explained that the Sheriff's Office houses the majority of its fleet vehicles at the Alden facility, but they would like to build a new structure centrally located in the County. This building is going to be multi-purpose: fleet operations (service), the Traffic Unit, the Jail Management reintegration program, shipping and receiving, and storage. The Sheriff's Office is required to have an indoor, secure impound for narcotics-related investigations of the US Marshalls, State Police, DEA, etc. The storage space needs to be climate controlled and there needs to be space to process the vehicles.

The new proposed facility would be 23,000 to 25,000 square feet with a 24-hour wash and decontamination area. The projected cost of this building would be about $9 million. There is also an option to have a developer build the facility and lease to own (approximately $500,000 annually for 7 years). Design will be about $500,000. There would be no more costs until the County moves in. Construction will be about 37 weeks. Sergeant Naegley also discussed some potential site options.

Director Cornell inquired about the use of space at the Center Road facility. Sergeant Naegley explained that the Centre Road facility houses the Investigative Unit, Special Services Division, and the Administrative Division. The Sergeant also explained why it is not feasible to house the community reintegration program at the Center Road facility.

Director Cornell and Sergeant Naegly discussed the possibility of integrating this request into the Alden facility project. Sergeant Naegley reiterated the focus on a central location.

Comptroller Hardwick asked if there is pricing to maintain/upgrade the current location. The Sergeant believes it will be $4.5 million, and it still will not be the size that is needed. The Comptroller inquired about the fate of the old building, and the Sergeant believes the County will maintain owner and could be used for storage or a warehouse. Commissioner Geary explained that it is not always functional sharing space with the Sheriff's.

Director Cornell asked for more information regarding the lease to own. Sergeant Naegley has discussed this potential project with three developers. The Comptroller asked if the price difference between a private developer and the County financing is that the contractor does not have the same obligations as the County. Commissioner Geary confirmed that is the case. Commissioner Geary described this as a win/win as the County would also not have to manage the construction project.

Buildings & Grounds – presented by Deputy Commissioner Tracy Cichocki.

Director Cornell asked Deputy Commissioner Cichocki to first present the request relevant to the Sheriff's Office.

Project #9 – Erie County Correctional Facility Renovations
Deputy Commissioner Cichocki explained that after a feasibility study, the County would like to proceed with the renovation and expansion of the Alden correctional facility. This request is $30 million for design.

Director Cornell asked Commissioner Castle to share his thoughts. Commissioner Castle explained that the steering committee chose the above-referenced expansion. The holding center is a maximum-security facility, and the correctional facility is medium security. A large part of the existing facility will be kept and renovated for other purposes-classrooms, a medical facility, etc. Commissioner Castle explained that the design is expected to be 10%-12% of the cost of the project.

Comptroller Hardwick asked how many people will be housed at the facility. Commissioner Castle advised that 922 beds are being proposed along with 22 medical beds. Comptroller Hardwick then asked what the current census is. Deputy Superintendent Whalen advised it is less than 800, total.

Comptroller Hardwick, Commissioner Castle, and Deputy Superintendent Whalen discussed seeking funding from New York State as well as the age and condition of other counties' facilities. The Comptroller suggested that collaborating with another county for a regional facility may encourage State funding. A discussion ensued about regulations and requirements about housing inmates from other counties as well as the State's involvement in the project itself. Commissioner Cichocki believes the State will have someone on site full time for the duration of the project. Staffing levels currently versus after the completion of the project were discussed.

Director Cornell examined some potential saving and funding efforts by the County as well as debt service. Ms. Schuster, Commissioner Geary, and Director Cornell discussed the pricing estimates currently and potential changes throughout the design process and its effects on the debt service.

Project #1 – Countywide Roof and Building Envelope Improvements
The County has several buildings in need of evaluation. Work may include building envelope assessment, caulking, waterproofing, windows, roof, and abatement as needed. This request is for $1.5 million, and projects to be prioritized would include: Public Safety, Old County Hall, and Lincoln Building exteriors along with the upper roof replacement of the Rath Building.

Project #2 – Preservation of County Buildings and Facilities
This request is for $1.5 million and includes repair, replacement, or improvement to all County building components. Projects to be prioritized would be the modernization of the freight elevator at 25 Delaware and the decommission of the EOC bunker at Chestnut Ridge.

Director Cornell inquired about the logistics of the freight elevator. Deputy Commissioner Cichocki

advised that the County would still access the elevator on an as-needed basis. Director Cornell asked how the bunker would be decommissioned. Deputy Commissioner Cichocki explained part of the process is to first evaluate all options. Director Cornell asked for energy costs to be provided.

Project #3 – Countywide Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing, and Misc Improvements
This request is for $3.5 million to repairs/replacement to maintain safety of building systems and equipment. Projects to be prioritized include boiler replacements at the Botanical Gardens and Holding Center and air handler replacement at the Erie County Correctional Facility. Any work done at the Holding Center would be done in conjunction with planning for the future construction.

Director Cornell and Deputy Commissioner Cichocki discussed the opportunities and setbacks of geothermal heating at the Botanical Gardens. A study was done, and it was deemed not to be feasible.

Project #4 – Countywide Code and Environmental Compliance
This funding would include assessments and/or renovations to County buildings to maintain code compliance and life safety improvements as required by the State. This request is for $350,000, and this would be used in conjunction with the County's Environmental Code Compliance term agreement as well as special inspections needed for inspection projects.

Director Cornell and Deputy Commissioner Cichocki discussed the current three-year term agreement.

Project #5 – Preservation of County Highway Facilities-Countywide
This project involves design and construction of highway maintenance buildings. This request is for $1.5 million and would be used primarily for the Clarence facility renovation/decommissioning/demolition.

Project #6 – Rath Building Improvements
Funding would continue the upgrades and renovations to the Rath Building. This request is for $1 million and will include electrical panel replacement at the Rath Building.

Director Cornell and Deputy Commissioner Cichocki discussed past years' leftover monies and commitments in place.

Project #7 – 2026 EC Energy Conservation
This submission is for a multi-year phased energy conservation and efficiency measure installation initiative at various facilities throughout the County. The request is for $5 million and would allow for the continued replacement of obsolete equipment and includes design and construction costs.

Director Cornell, Deputy Commissioner Cichocki, and Commissioner discussed incentives/rebates as well as an open-ended timeframe and contracts in place.

Project #8 – New Highway Maintenance Facility
This would fund the construction of a new highway maintenance building at the Harlem Road facility. The request is for $12.5 million. Site design is required, but the building design would mirror the Lancaster facility.

Project #10 – Convention Center Improvements
This submission is for general upgrades to maintain the building. The request is for $3.5 million and may include A/V and IT upgrades, facility finishes, and ballroom and energy improvements. This funding would provide for design and construction costs.

Director Cornell commented on the local bed tax law. $4.5 million going toward capital needs, which is divided between existing debt service on prior projects, current projects will be PAYGO-ed and remaining funds go into a capital reserve account. This year, available after debt service, is $3,765,633.

Minority Leader Mills inquired about the status of the structure of the building. Deputy Commissioner Cichocki confirmed the building is in good shape, except for the roof. Most of the needs are cosmetic. The roof will be a large, upcoming project. The Minority Leader asked how much money has been invested in the building in the last ten to fifteen years. Deputy Commissioner Cichocki advised the average investment is $3.5 million annually. Commissioner Geary confirmed that this money has not been needed for the structure itself. Chief of Staff Swanekamp advised that going forward, these upgrades will be self-funded through the local law.

Minority Leader Mills expressed concerned about tax payer money being used for this building. Commissioner Geary stated that the conventions are successful and have outgrown the hotel availability space downtown. Commissioner Castle also confirmed that utilization of the building is steady, but the biggest obstacle is the limited hotel rooms available downtown.

Director Cornell confirmed no public comment.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, July 24, 2025.

Motion to adjourn by Majority Leader Gilmour, and Comptroller Hardwick seconded the motion.