



MEMORANDUM

ERIE COUNTY CAPITAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE

DATE: July 31, 2025
TO: Mark C. Poloncarz, Erie County Executive & Chair of the Capital Projects Committee
FROM: Natalie Nitsche
RE: 2026 Capital Projects Committee Meeting #5

Attendance: County Executive Mark Poloncarz, 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 Cihocki, Legislature Chair Tim Meyers, Minority Leader John Mills, Benjamin Swanekamp, Erich Weyant, Jessica Schuster, Tim German, Dominic Musilli, Nathan Lippitt, Charles Banas, Mark Rountree, Angela Marinucci, Dr Adiam Tsegai, James Blackwell, Curt Maranto, Sean Crawford, Melissa Farrell, Jerome Nicholas, Jordan Zyglis, Gina Burkhardt, and Jonathan Schechter.

Virtual Attendees: Timothy Callan

The County Executive called to order the fifth meeting of the Capital Projects Committee and confirmed there was a quorum.

The first item up for discussion and approval are the previous meeting's minutes. Director Cornell motioned to approve the minutes, and Chair Meyers seconded.

Buffalo & Erie County Public Library – presented by Angela Marinucci and Dorinda Darden

Project #1: Buffalo & Erie County Public Library-Variou Improvements

This request is for \$4 million and will include, but is not limited to, replacement of the Central Library's chillers, funds towards the green roof project, replacement of the HVAC system in the Rare Book Room, miscellaneous interior and exterior upgrades, hazardous material abatement, and miscellaneous site improvements.

The chillers will cost approximately \$3 million. The current chillers are at end of life, and only one is operable. Approximately \$500,000 will be used as contingency for the green roof project. The new HVAC in the Rare Book Room will cost approximately \$500,000. Interim Director Darden discussed the impacts of all of the projects.

County Executive Poloncarz inquired about the exterior marble panel stabilization. Chief Operating Office Marinucci explained that funds for that project are being applied for through New York State. COO Marinucci discussed the details of the aid and distribution.

The County Executive inquired about the five phases and funding costs. COO Marinucci explained that the library is confident that their requests will fund the projects.

Director Cornell asked if the library has explored joining the Enterprise lease program. COO Marinucci advised they would be interested.

Project #2: Shipping and Maintenance Vehicle Replacement Program

This request is for \$160,000 to replace vehicles which have reached the end of their lives. There are four vehicles used by the Shipping and Receiving Department which deliver materials to all 37 libraries. The Maintenance Department has five vehicles used for snow removal and salting. Interim Director Darden discussed the need and impact of new vehicles.

SUNY Erie – presented by President Dr. Adiam Tsegai and James Blackwell

Project #1: SUNY Erie Facility Master Plan-Phase 5-North and City Campuses

This request is for \$6 million to continue facility work master plan. This has been a continuing request. One project would be the roof repair of Kittinger Hall.

The County Executive confirmed that the County's share would be \$3 million, and the State would also be contributing \$3 million. Mr. Blackwell verified this. The County Executive inquired as to what other projects this would include. Mr. Blackwell discussed the original masterplan from 2021 which provided a list of numerous projects that need work. The immediate need is the roof and the funding that is left will also cover design for other necessary projects. Dr. Tsegai advised that the roof is an immediate need, but there are several buildings in need of repair.

County Executive Poloncarz asked if South or City campuses would need any funding in the next fiscal year. Dr. Tsegai discussed that the new South Campus is brand new and will not need any funding. Old South Campus needs to be discussed as far as next steps-programming has been consolidated into one building to minimize costs.

Director Cornell asked for a status update on the previous phases. There is \$14.5 million in unspent funds. Mr. Blackwell explained that there are capital projects currently taking place on all campuses. Commissioner Geary advised that some of the projects are backlogged and broke down the status of each of the phases.

Project #2: SUNY Erie North Sports Field Improvements-Phase 3A

County Executive Poloncarz asked for an update on Phase 1 of the sports field. Mr. Blackwell explained that phase 1 is a multi-purpose turf field located at North Campus which includes football, soccer, and softball fields/diamonds. This work is currently occurring. Phase 2 is in design for concession, restroom, and changing facilities. Phase 3 is a \$1 million request to

continue design (\$500,000 from the County, \$500,000 from the State).

Ms. Schuster asked about the life of the turf fields, warranties, and plans for the same. Mr. Blackwell discussed ongoing sustainability of the college. Fencing to help ensure longevity is part of phase 1. The school will rent the facilities for camps and public use.

The track will be the focus of phase 3 as well as the weight room in the Bell Center. Future phases will also include the baseball diamond.

Director Cornell asked if the fields will be playable in 2026. Mr. Blackwell confirmed that it is the case. Dr. Tsegai discussed the value of the college and the integral role sports plays into that and enrollment in general.

Project #3: SUNY Erie North-Salt Barn

This request is for \$1.5 million (\$750,000 County share) for a salt barn at North Campus. The current process is that salt is stored in the facilities barn. There are limitations on the amount of salt the college is able to store, and equipment is being stored outside in the elements.

Project #4: SUNY Erie North-Energy Implementation

This is a \$1 million (\$500,000 County share) request for energy performance contracting. This will help with sustainability of the college long term. There are rebates and incentives to be earned as well as a reduction of the use of electric and gas, and lowering costs. This would be for design.

Director Cornell inquired if there were any specific projects to be considered. Mr. Blackwell advised these funds would be used for identifying projects and design.

The County Executive asked if the projects were presented in order of importance. Dr. Tsegai confirmed they were.

Roycroft Campus – presented by Curt Maranto, Executive Director

Roycroft Campus Print Shop-Tower Entry Restoration

Executive Director Maranto explained that the Print Shop is one of the largest buildings on the campus, was built in 1901 with field stone, and is approximately 25,000 square feet. In the 1940s, the building was shuttered, and utilities were shut off. The goal is ultimately to restore the building completely. Pictures of the building condition included in slide deck. This request is for \$173,400 to fully restore the door and casement windows. This project will allow the organization to continue with education programming.

The County Executive asked how so much work could be done for such little funding. Executive Director Maranto explained that the door will cost about \$10,000, and each window will cost between \$6,000 and \$8,000.

Buffalo Center for Arts and Technology – presented by Sean Crawford, Director of Advancement

Opportunity Within Reach: East Side Center for Workforce Development, Education, and Accessible Social Services

This project is an investment of resources in a community that has been traditionally neglected in terms of childcare, workforce development, and healthcare. The request from Erie County is \$1 million towards the phased renovation of a workforce training/education center and community access space for health, financial, and social services. This project started in 2024. This funding would support expanding the first floor of the building (approximately 4,800 square feet). This would include conference room space, classrooms, meeting space for not-for-profit agency use, gallery space, and co-working space for staff. The total project cost is \$6 million.

County Executive inquired about what that the \$1 million will specifically be used for. Director Crawford advised Erie County's funds will be allocated for the first-floor renovations and the ongoing changes to the third floor. The County Executive also asked if the funds would be associated with the organization's other services. Director Crawford advised the renovated space would be utilized by the organization only.

The County Executive asked what impact there would be if the County could not provide these funds. Director Crawford advised it would slow down their timeline while they find another revenue source.

Spectrum Health – presented by Nick Jerome, Chief Financial Office and Melissa Farrell, Chief Operating Officer

1280 Main Street Revitalization

CFO Farrell discussed the services provided by Spectrum Health within Erie County as well as the history of the building and how the organization came to be there. CFO Jerome discussed the first phases of the renovation. This request is for \$400,000 to cover the increases in construction costs.

The County Executive asked if the overrun costs are associated with phase two or phase three. CFO Jerome advised it would be for phase three. County Executive Poloncarz asked what would happen if there were not enough money to complete phase two. CFO Jerome advised the current funding should be enough to complete the phase. Not receiving this funding would delay completing phase three. The County Executive asked if beginning phase three is dependent on completing phase two. The CFO advised they are separate.

Comptroller Hardwick asked if any other organization has picked up providing services that Spectrum had to stop offering as a result of the 2022 blizzard. COO Farrell opined that Spectrum offers as many telehealth services as possible, but there are longer wait times for services. The Comptroller asked if staffing has been affected by less space. COO Farrell confirmed that is the case.

Director Cornell asked if all of the grants have been received or if they are still getting approval.

CFO Crawford advised some have been awarded and some are still in review.

Buffalo Jewish Federation – presented by Jonathan Schechter, President of the Foundation of Jewish Philanthropies

Jewish Visitor & History Center

President Schechter discussed the tourism associated with a specific rabbi's grave. There are no visitor centers or restrooms. There is an existing building that was donated by the Adler family in 1925 that the organization would like to turn into a visitor center. This request is for \$300,000 to renovate the building which includes utilities, windows, electrical and HVAC, roof, foundation, interior and exterior restoration. There is a donor who would match Erie County's donation.

The County Executive asked how far it is from the rabbi's grave. Mr. Schechter advised it is about half a mile away. County Executive Poloncarz asked if the work would start in 2026, and Mr. Schechter confirmed that is the case. The County Executive and Mr. Schechter discussed the cost of septic and City water.

County Executive Poloncarz asked if, once completed, there would be outreach to Hasidic communities about the center. Mr. Schechter advised that they are already coming -the goal is to keep them coming. The grave is more for praying and less like a visitor center.

Legislature

Village of Hamburg Playgrounds-5 Playgrounds

This project was sponsored by Legislator John Gilmour. Legislature Gilmour was unable to attend the meeting, and no one from the Village of Hamburg was in attendance. This request is for \$1,182,401 to replace five playgrounds.

Environment & Planning – Presented by Mark Rountree, Chief Planner

Project #1: Agribusiness Park

This request is for \$600,000 to fund phase two road and utility design as well as improvements to the sewer plant to provide additional capacity for the companies inhabit the site. In the past year, SEQR and permitting have been completed. The water tower has been constructed along with the water line. The phase one access road and utilities are currently under construction. \$11.5 million was awarded from New York State.

County Executive confirmed \$400,000 from 2025 Capital Projects funding. There was a discussion regarding funds matching from the State and timeframes.

Commissioner Geary asked if the County is only responsible for the infrastructure. Mr. Rountree agreed that is the case.

Project #2: Renaissance Commerce Park

This request is for \$2.5 million for the relocation of the railroad to the western portion of the site as well as roads and utility work.

The County Executive asked about funds awarded by Senator Kennedy for the railroad work. Mr. Rountree advised it was \$4.75 million. The County Executive asked for a breakdown of costs. Director Cornell advised all funds move through the ILDC. Mr. Rountree advised that excess funds from prior capital projects will be enough to cover the cost of extending the roads.

Commissioner Geary asked if this would be an active railroad. It will. Commissioner Castle confirmed construction is moving away from Route 5. It is.

Chief of Staff Swanekamp advised that costs were higher than originally anticipated due to slag piles that need to be excavated.

County Executive Poloncarz asked if this funding would fulfill all remaining dollars to complete this portion of the site. They will.

The County Executive confirmed no public comment.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, August 14, 2025.

Motion to adjourn by Comptroller Kevin Hardwick, and Minority Leader John Mills seconded the motion.