

ERIE COUNTY FIRE ADVISORY BOARD – MEETING MINUTES

MEETING DATE:		September 24, 2026
LOCATION:		Erie County Training and Operations Center
CALL TO ORDER:		18:06
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:		
ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS:	PRESENT:	Ronald Endle, James Gajewski, James Guy, Douglas Lahnen, Thomas Morris, Robert Rackl, Charles Geary, Chris Couell, Joleen Schlossin Webex Attendance: Jon Torre, Mike Zekas, Kevin Herzog, Scott Plecha, Mark Mendola, Eric Karcher, Andrew Beehler
	ABSENT:	Jack Chiappone Jr., Shad Garner, Paul Gorczyca, Michael Griffin, Kevin Jewett, Scott Kuhlmeier, Dan Nash, William Renaldo, Peter Spilsbury Jr., Garrett Wynn, Robert Zacher
	EXCUSED:	Jennifer Andres
INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS:	Justin Stenta and Mike Lautersack from Lucid Diagnostics, which is a company focused on the prevention of esophageal cancer through early detection, using EsoGard. Esophageal cancer is the fastest growing cancer in the United States. It has increased in incidence by over 500% in the last 40 years. Average time from diagnosis to death is only 13 months with only a 20% 5-year survival rate. Firefighters have a 62% greater likelihood of developing this cancer compared to non-firefighters. This type of cancer is preventable through screenings though. Esophageal cancer has a defined diagnosable pre-cancerous condition called Barrett's Esophagus, which is what the screening is designed to look for. If we can successfully find esophageal pre-cancer, there are FDA approved technologies that burn, freeze or cut out the bad cells, and in 95% of those cases, healthy tissue grows back and can prevent the progression of cancer. In order to be screened, an individual must meet 3 of 8 risk factors, which are: occupation, male gender, Caucasian race, over the age of 50, obesity with BMI <30, past or present history of smoking, heartburn or reflux, family history of Barrett's esophagus or esophageal cancer. If an individual meets 3 of those 8 factors, there is not any out-of-pocket cost for screening. Recommendation for screening is once every 10 years. This is not a diagnostic test. Result is either negative or positive. Positive does not mean cancer, it means there are abnormal cells and require a closer look with a gastroenterologist. Screening involves swallowing a capsule down to the stomach and once complete, the capsule is pulled back up out of the mouth. There was talk about getting some screening sites set up around the county to get as many firefighters as possible screened. Chris will work with Justin and Mike to set this up.	
APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING:	DATE OF LAST MEETING:	5/28/26
	MOTION BY:	Doug Lahnen
	SECOND BY:	Ron Endle
	APPROVED:	Approved by all
REPORT OF OFFICERS:		
CHAIRMAN:	Everyone, I will be on vacation the night of the fire advisory board meeting. Bob has graciously agreed to run the meeting in my absence. I only have a few things to bring up... 1. Thanks to everyone who came out to the summer picnic and for Bob and Southline hosting. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. 2. Welcome a new member, just waiting on the County Executive to give the final sign off. Chuck Geary, currently with Twin District FC, previously with Southline FD. 3. If anyone needs help with their committees, please make sure to reach out to me and the Board, so we can make sure all our projects are moving forward. 4. Check with Jennifer as to the status of the Line of Duty Death info for the website. 5. Since I am a National Advocate for the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, I have the ability to offer the classes offered by the Foundation as an in-person, one-night offering. I will be working with Chris and Jon to get them on the county training schedule. I will talk with everyone soon. Kevin	
CO-CHAIR:	No Report	
SECRETARY:	No Report	
TREASURER:	+ \$32 this meeting and Jan meeting, - \$117 for summer picnic, \$126.92 total	

REPORT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES:	
COMMISSIONER:	No Report
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER:	-Successful smoke divers class last weekend. Started with 36 students and finished with 31. -Tomorrow night is the juniors program. There wasn't a large number of individuals signed up initially, but we have gotten more in the past couple of days and the turnout should be ok. We would like to look into how to get more involved in this program, change the dates, change the curriculum, etc... -Saturday is the women's only program. That program has a good number of students, some traveling from out of the county to attend. -There are two Beyond the Smoke programs coming up. The lecture for both is 10/15 and one class will come back on Saturday and one on Sunday. The funding for this program is coming from the Arno Act. -Last week, our two donated fire trucks were approved by the legislature. We will hopefully take delivery next week and put them in service and get people trained. -Vendors have been offering equipment for the fire academy to use free of charge. We have a full set of Holmatro extrication tools. Those will get mounted in one of the engines. The tools are ours for a year and then they will be swapped out for new ones. Other vendors have been offering supplies now as well. -The trailer we have that was donated by Tom Trzepacz will now be used as a recruitment trailer. It will be wrapped and stocked and able to be sent out for use by fire departments. This was part of last year's SAFER grant. Also approved by that SAFER grant was banners, tables, etc that can be loaned out for recruitment efforts. -New SAFER grant for this year was approved for a leadership/command county run class. -We did not get the v-fire grant to fix the old tower. -NYSOFPC special ops training would like to utilize the indoor tower in the winter for more training, bringing in people from around the state, making the academy more of a regional training site. -We hope to have an SFI meeting in the next month or so to plan spring training. Please get any course requests in asap. -Confusion surrounding the application process for classes. We must have an application AND a training authorization letter from each individual wanting to take a class in order to register them. TALs are right on the website prefilled with the appropriate course information and completed forms can be sent to TAL@erie.gov.
DEPUTY FIRE COORDINATOR:	No Report
ASST. FIRE COORDINATOR:	See Deputy Commissioner report
REPORT OF COMMITTEES:	
CANCER SCREENING:	No Report
EC FAIR:	Tom Morris – want to thank those that assisted during the fair this year. The fire truck pull was a great success and will return next year, with some minor changes. The maze will be a little smaller next year. Looking forward to next year, the Fire Advisory Board can assist by volunteering time and water donation. Let's get ahead of this so we're not scrambling at the last minute.
LEGISLATIVE:	Chris Couell – money for the Wall of Honor upgrade is in our funds and is ready to be spent. Need to get up to date quotes for the kiosk, lighting, etc. There will be a permanent set up at the academy and one to send out for department use.
LINE OF DUTY DEATH:	Ron Endle – waiting to get information on the website. Doug – if an autopsy is done in NYS and any marijuana is found in your system; a Line of Duty Death will not be approved and no benefits received.
RADIO:	Bob Rackl – heard that Kevin Hughes has a presentation that he will be giving to departments and will reach out to see if that is accurate and if he will come present for the Fire Advisory Board.
TRAINING:	No Report
WALL OF HONOR:	Jim Guy – ceremony will be 11/5 at 6 pm. There are three inductees, Father Dave Borowiak from Depew, Mark Butler from Snyder, and Eugene Braun from Eggertsville.
REPORT OF BOARDS:	
ERIE COUNTY FIRE CHIEFS MUTUAL AID ORG.:	Doug Lahnen – meeting Monday at East Seneca with a good turnout. There's going to be a firefighter's cruise with lectures on board during at-sea day. Percentage of the money generated will go to the National Fallen Firefighters

	Foundation. Will get some flyers on this. Autism awareness class is coming up in October. \$20/ person to attend, including free breakfast and lunch. Will get us flyers for this as well. Next meeting is at East Amherst on the 3 rd Monday of November, and this will be election night. Updated the by-laws and an individual no longer needs to be a current or past line officer to join the chiefs. Will be combining award ceremony with EC Fire Police, EC Auxillary, and EC Volunteers. Please make sure to nominate your deserving people.
ERIE COUNTY VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION:	Tom Morris – just had meeting this past Sunday. Trying to prepare for fair next year. Next meeting is Sunday November 15 th , also doing elections.
ERIE COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT OFFICERS ASSOCIATION:	No Report
ERIE COUNTY FIRE POLICE ASSOCIATION:	No Report
DISASTER ADVISORY BOARD:	No Report
EMS ADVISORY BOARD:	No Report
BUFFALO FIRE DEPT:	No Report
LACKAWANNA FIRE DEPT:	No Report
ERIE COUNTY HAZMAT:	Jim Gajewski – couple new trucks are in and outfitted, waiting on one more. We lost a member, Tyler Schneck, to a car accident recently.
OLD BUSINESS:	-
NEW BUSINESS:	-
GOOD OF THE ORGANIZATION:	Tom Morris – just lost a past chief in their department due to esophageal cancer and reiterates the importance of the esophageal cancer screening Rob Rackl – would like to see as many members of the board as possible attend the Wall of Honor ceremony to show support.
NEXT MEETING DATE:	12/3/26, Wall of Honor Ceremony 11/5/26 18:00
ADJOURNMENT:	19:39
MINUTES RECORDED BY:	J.Schlossin
MINUTES SUBMITTED BY:	J.Schlossin

ERIE COUNTY FIRE ADVISORY BOARD SIGN IN AND CONTACT SHEET

MEETING:		☒ REGULAR ☐ SPECIAL	DATE: 9/24/26		LOCATION:		FTA		
	Name	Board Appointments	# of Terms	Expiration Date	Phone #	Email	Signature	ABSENT	EXCUSED
1	Andres, Jennifer		1st	12/31/2026	716-908-4446	jenniferandres919@gmail.com			
2	Beehler, Andrew		3rd	12/31/2027	716-954-9712	andrewbeehler@gmail.com			
3	Chiappone Jr., Jack		2nd	12/31/2026	716-628-5458	jchiappone813@gmail.com			
4	Endle, Ronald		3rd	12/31/2027	716-479-4186	ronfirellc@aol.com			
5	Gajewski, James		5th	12/31/2027	716-864-6748	commjim10@yahoo.com			
6	Garner, Shad		2nd	12/31/2026	716-984-6928	seabass126@yahoo.com			
7	Gorczyca, Paul		4th	12/31/2027	716-866-1634	gork315@gmail.com			
8	Griffin, Michael		4th	12/31/2026	716-714-9772	opie652@gmail.com			
9	Guy, James		3rd	12/31/2027	716-544-0327	jhguy@verizon.net			
10	Herzog, Kevin	Chair	4th	12/31/2026	716-725-2984	kherzog@twindistrict.com			
11	Jewett, Kevin		3rd	12/31/2027	716-512-9054	kevin.jewett@erie.gov			
12	Karcher, Eric		4th	12/31/2026	716-697-1395	ek7166971395@aol.com			
13	Kuhlmey, Scott		5th	12/31/2027	716-861-7933	scott.kuhlmey@erie.gov			
14	Lahnen, Douglas		4th	12/31/2026	716-864-2240	delahnen@gmail.com			
15	Mendola, Mark		1st	12/31/2028	716-445-3301	mamendola388@gmail.com			
16	Morris, Thomas		1st	12/31/2026	716-491-1979	eastaurorafire@gmail.com			
17	Nash, Dan		2nd	12/31/2027	716-870-9056	nashd2237@gmail.com			
18	Plecha, Scott		4th	12/31/2027	716-909-4206	s.plecha@yahoo.com			
19	Rackl, Robert	Co-Chair	5th	12/31/2027	716-341-3716	rwrackl@gmail.com			
20	Renaldo, William		2nd	12/31/2026	716-860-4093	wren713972@aol.com			
21	Spilsbury, Jr., Peter		5th	12/31/2027	716-583-0183	pspilsbury@wsfd5.com			
22	Wynn, Garrett		4th	12/31/2027	716-570-2209	gwynn@ucrestfire.org			
23	Zacher, Robert		3rd	12/31/2027	716-863-1388	bobjr@zacherelectric.com			
24	Zekas, Michael		3rd	12/31/2027	716-984-3606	michael.zekas@erie.gov			
WebEx: Jon Torre, Mike Zekas, Kevin Herzog, Scott Plecha, Mark Mendola, Eric Karcher, Andrew Beenier GEARY CHARLES									
Neaverth Jr., Dan Commissioner DHSES 716-983-6080 daniel.neaverth@erie.gov Nowak, Carraugh Special Assistant to DHSES 716-858-4595 carraugh.nowak@erie.gov Couell, Chris Deputy Commissioner 716-481-7970 christopher.couell@erie.gov Doll, Alexander Deputy Fire Coordinator 716-228-2822 alexander.doll@erie.gov Torre, Jonathon Assistant Fire Coordinator jonathon.torre@erie.gov Schlossin, Joleen Scribe 716-681-7111 joleen.schlossin@erie.gov									