**ERIE COUNTY BUDGET COMMISSION** DATE: August 21, 2026
**MEETING MINUTES** **2027 BUDGET WORKSESSIONS**

| | Present: | Alternate Name: |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Jeffrey, Erie County Auditor | X | |
| Kevin Baxter, Erie County Prosecutor | X | |
| Caleb Stidham, Erie County Treasurer | X | |
| Janice Baum, Fiscal Officer | X | |

Others: Brenda Hurst, Chief Fiscal Officer, E.C. Auditor's Office and Kathy Herchler, Treasurer's Office

Mr. Jeffrey called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM to begin the day's 2027 budget work sessions with the following subdivisions: Ritter Library, Florence Township, City of Huron, Village of Milan, City of Sandusky, City of Vermilion and the Village of Castalia

**RITTER (VERMILION) LIBRARY**

Those present representing Ritter Library were Caroline Springer, Fiscal Officer and Cheryl Grizzell, Director

Ms. Springer gave an overview of the 2027 budget and informed the Budget Commission they are not anticipating much carryover. Any carryover will be used for their building. According to their building assessment (outlook of the next 20 years of all systems - HVAC, electrical, roof, etc.), in the next 3 years, an estimated $1.5 million is needed, years 3-10 will need an additional $2 million and another $2.5 million for years 11-20. Mr. Stidham asked where the funding will come from to cover the costs, with Ms. Grizzell stating they have enough to get through the next couple of years. They will see about State funding and may have to go back to the ballot in 2028, if necessary. The Library has minimal staff and not much left to trim. Mr. Jeffrey encouraged the Library to come up with a policy to address routine carryover.

On motion of Mr. Stidham and seconded by Mr. Baxter, to approve the budget as submitted.

| | AYE | NAY |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Jeffrey | X | |
| Kevin Baxter | X | |
| Caleb Stidham | X | |

Session adjourned at 9:09 AM .

**FLORENCE TOWNSHIP**

Those present representing Florence Township was Michelle Hemke, Fiscal Officer

Mr. Jeffrey called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM .

Ms. Hemke informed the Budget Commission that the projected carryover for 2027 in all funds totals approximately $500k - with plans for a fire station addition in the next 3-4 years. Fire vehicles are their biggest expense, with the roads being second most expensive.

Mr. Stidham said they have a relatively small budget and have a reasonable millage rate. Mr. Jeffrey asked if they have had any discussion with those jurisdictions that are having ambulance issues. Ms. Hemke said there has been discussion, but they have Citizens Ambulance Service and are happy with their service.

On motion of Mr. Stidham and seconded by Mr. Baxter, to approve the budget as submitted.

| | AYE | NAY |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Jeffrey | X | |
| Kevin Baxter | X | |
| Caleb Stidham | X | |

Session adjourned at 9:35 AM .

**CITY OF HURON**

Those present representing City of Huron were Stu Hamilton, City Manager and Isaac Phillips, Finance Director

Mr. Jeffrey called the meeting to order at 9:54 AM.

Mr. Phillips began with an overview of the financials - estimated expenses significantly less for 2027, as there were many capital projects in 2026 (still unsure for 2027), income tax is down 15%, expecting an increase in the fire fund (levy passed), which will replenish the fund and replace equipment, lowered their cost of trash and street lighting and will pass the savings to the taxpayers. Mr. Hamilton stated that the capital projects were pulled due to the failed income tax and want to insure a balanced budget. Discussion followed regarding the openness of combining fire services with Huron Township, or the possibility of a Countywide system. Mr. Hamilton said the support for both the City and Township has been universal and not sure if a combined fire district would accomplish anything besides a single levy, but is always open to the conversation. Mr. Stidham asked how much debt the City currently has - Mr. Phillips reported a total of $36 million total, including TIFs. Without the TIFs, $29 million total, with $11 million in the water fund, half of which is the water tower.

On motion of Mr. Stidham and seconded by Mr. Baxter, to approve the budget as submitted.

| | AYE | NAY |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Jeffrey | **X** | |
| Kevin Baxter | **X** | |
| Caleb Stidham | **X** | |

Session adjourned at 10:13 AM.

**MILAN VILLAGE**

Those present representing Milan Village were Julie Stelzer, Administrative Supervisor, Catherine Ramey, Fiscal Officer, Pamela Crosby, Mayor and Brian Rospert, Village Administrator

Mr. Jeffrey called the meeting to order at 10:21 AM.

Mr. Stidham asked about the total of $1.3 million of transfers out in the matter of 2 years. Ms. Ramey stated that since COVID, multiple projects had been put on hold and are now beginning some of the projects. The majority of the transfers out are to the capital projects fund and are expecting a year-end balance of $1-$1.1 million.

Mr. Stidham asked about the investment income of the Village. Ms. Ramey said they are looking for a different security holding option, since Wells Fargo is no longer offering the service for schools and municipalities. Mr. Stidham encouraged moving $2 million previously held at Wells Fargo into a higher interest yield account.

Mr. Rospert distributed a handout reviewing their capital projects: water tower rehab, sidewalks, road paving, equipment replacement, generators for lift stations, looping project for South Edison and Elm Street. Projects for 2027: Lockwood water looping, street and sidewalk/curb repairs, Sleepy Hollow subdivision storm sewer replacement, transformer upgrade at the South Substation (most should be paid out of the electric fund, capital fund to subsidize), masonry repair and potential replacement of water and/or wastewater lines

Mr. Stidham said that the Village started the year with two full years of carryover, but now showing a 50% increase in expenditures in two years and is skeptical of the figures. He believes the Village is in a good position and encourages Council to have a conversation to give some money back to the taxpayers and by giving back 2 mills would equate to approx. $80k. Ms. Ramey said they understand and also wanted to mention that Council has proposed the income tax to change the proportion of G.F. and Capital Fund distribution to 60% General Fund/40% Capital (currently 80GF/20Capital). Ms. Ramey inquired on the timeline of when Council needs to decide. Mr. Jeffrey said it would have to be passed at a public meeting and sooner the better in order to meet the deadline requirements (resolution accepting the values and rates needs to be submitted back to the Auditor's Office by October 1st). Mr. Stidham clarified that the suspension of the millage would be for one year only. Mr. Jeffrey said it would be reviewed every year and offered to attend a Village meeting and speak with their Council.

Mr. Jeffrey asked if there was any update with the ambulance/EMS issues. Mr. Rospert said they have a meeting with Fisher Titus on Monday to discuss the new contract (service would be the same as the current). The Village Fire are going on the critical calls (serious or life threatening) and is resulting in almost double the call volume and costing more money because of paying the volunteers call-in pay. A lot of unknowns still remain.

Mr. Stidham moved to adjourn at 10:57 AM.

**CITY OF SANDUSKY**

Those present representing the City of Sandusky were John Orzech, City Manager and Michelle Reeder, Finance Director

Mr. Jeffrey called the meeting to order at 11:02 AM .

Ms. Reeder began with saying last year, the City was concerned with the Six Flags takeover of Cedar Fair - they are seeing a decrease in revenue, not much of a carryover in any of the funds. They have a lot of projects going on - the new rec center, large waterline line project with Cedar Point, the Landing project to name a few. Admission tax through July 2026 is down more than $500k YTD - with approximately $7.3 million collected through the end of July. The City is also experiencing a large decrease in income tax (business return on extension). Mr. Stidham asked what was causing the downturn in revenue with Ms. Reeder responding debt issuance for a large water project (come in as revenue, but also expensed out). Mr. Stidham questioned if they expect a decrease of $21 million decrease in fund balance (according to the tax budget) with Ms. Reeder responding yes and corresponds to several large projects (the Landing, Rec Center, etc.). Mr. Jeffrey asked when the new rec center would be complete. Mr. Orzech said construction should be complete in June 2027 and will stop the lease of the old Mills School once the new center is open. Mr. Jeffrey asked about the City's involvement with rebuilding the Cedar Point Causeway with Mr. Orzech responding that the City has agreed to refund/pay back $1.25 million of the admission tax collected back to Cedar Point for 22 years. Mr. Stidham asked about the State Theater hotel project. Mr. Orzech said the developer has 18 months to acquire funding and begin construction.

On motion of Mr. Stidham and seconded by Mr. Baxter , to approve the budget as submitted.

| | AYE | NAY |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Jeffrey | **X** | |
| Kevin Baxter | **X** | |
| Caleb Stidham | **X** | |

Session adjourned at 11:18 AM .

**CITY OF VERMILION**

Those present representing the City of Vermilion was Chad Angney, Finance Director

Mr. Jeffrey called the meeting to order at 12:05 PM.

Mr. Angney began with speaking of the main topics: wastewater treatment plant has EPA-mandated repairs totaling $100 million, in 2026 completed electrical repairs and purchased generators for the plant. There are significant issues with the collection system and infiltration. Total investment for the treatment plant will be close to $120 million. The roads are in rough condition with one bridge failed and closed, with estimated cost between $1-$1.5 million. A third party is assessing all 80 miles of roads and will use the findings to prioritize maintenance. The City have both a new fire and police station. The Muni building/service complex are in disrepair. They are working on establishing capital maintenance reserve fund in order to set aside money. Mr. Angney said that their revenue is down slightly for income taxes, as they increased the reciprocity from 0.5 to 1% and 75% of the City residents work outside the City limits. The carryover balance is okay. Mr. Angney said that a couple of years ago, their debt rating increased, which their carryover balance helped to increase the bond rating. General Fund carryover will be approx. $6.7 million, which is approximately 8 months carryover, which is their target range currently. The City is planning on using some carryover to put into the capital reserve.

Mr. Stidham said he knows there are issues, mainly with the Sewer and the City has mostly inside millage with a healthy carryover. But they are not in a position to suspend collections. Mr. Angney said he believed that the reason for the carryover balance year over year was prior lack of investment into the City buildings.

On motion of Mr. Stidham and seconded by Mr. Baxter , to approve the budget as submitted.

| | AYE | NAY |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Jeffrey | **X** | |
| Kevin Baxter | **X** | |
| Caleb Stidham | **X** | |

Session adjourned at 12:30 PM .

**VILLAGE OF CASTALIA**

Those present representing the Village of Castalia were Barb Weyer, President Pro Tem, Diane Schaefer, Consultant and Jacob Smith, Vice President

Mr. Jeffrey called the meeting to order at 12:30 PM.

Ms. Weyer began with discussing issues regarding a drainage problem. It is a big concern, but hate to use too much General Fund money and are trying to finish a street that was started 3 years ago. Ms. Schaefer said in 2026, the Village secured a $815k grant for the SR 269 intersection work. In 2027, capital projects include roadwork on North and South Washington, Depot St, sidewalks and school flashing lights. Mr. Stidham mentioned the Village has no excessive funds and House Bill 331 states that Villages must provide certain services and if unable to, the Village may have to dissolve by 2031. He asked if they have had that conversation with the Township. Ms. Weyer said they want to have conversation, but villages don't want to dissolve. She inquired what the real estate taxes would be if those Village properties became part of the Township. Mr. Stidham said that both the Township and Village have similar tax rates, with the Township being slightly higher but could also create efficiencies that could decrease the burden on the taxpayer. He stressed it is better to be prepared and have conversations with their taxpayers now. Ms. Weyer said they try to communicate with the Village residents but would like to have more information to help educate them. The Village already works with the Township and have a good relationship and all of Council want what is best for the Village.

On motion of Mr. Stidham and seconded by Mr. Baxter , to approve the budget as submitted.

| | AYE | NAY |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Jeffrey | **X** | |
| Kevin Baxter | **X** | |
| Caleb Stidham | **X** | |

Session adjourned at 12:55 PM .

**DISCUSSION/VOTING ON REMAINING BUDGET STILL NEEDING APPROVAL**

Those present include: Erie MetroParks (Beth Ferback, Sue Daniel, Melissa Price, Katie Burnsworth and Kurt Kresser), Sandusky Library (Craig Davis), Perkins Township (Alexis Koch, Jim Ommert and Jeff Musser) and Milan-Berin Library (Jolene Buehrer and Zach Rospert)

Mr. Jeffrey called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

**GROTON TOWNSHIP**

Mr. Stidham said there was a technical issue with omitting their road and bridge levy on the 2027 budget and is now corrected.

On motion of Mr. Stidham and seconded by Mr. Baxter , to approve the corrected budget as submitted.

| | AYE | NAY |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Jeffrey | **X** | |
| Kevin Baxter | **X** | |
| Caleb Stidham | **X** | |

**SANDUSKY LIBRARY**

Mr. Stidham said his position is to make no change, but said they should continue to review the budget, be mindful of the carryover balance and consider future relief to the taxpayers.

On motion of Mr. Stidham and seconded by Mr. Baxter , to approve the budget as submitted.

| | AYE | NAY |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Jeffrey | **X** | |
| Kevin Baxter | **X** | |
| Caleb Stidham | **X** | |

**PERKINS TOWNSHIP**

Mr. Stidham thanked Jim Ommert for having a conversation a couple of years ago to bring about reducing the millage collected and 2 years in a row. He thanked the Trustees for voluntarily suspending 0.4 mills of the General Fund (inside) millage for the 2026 tax year, payable 2027. Mr. Stidham stressed that the Fiscal Officer needs to present a more accurate tax budget going forward.

On motion of Mr. Stidham and seconded by Mr. Baxter, the Board approve the recommendation of the Township to suspend collection of 0.4 mills for the 2026 tax year to be collected in 2027.

| | AYE | NAY |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Jeffrey | **X** | |
| Kevin Baxter | **X** | |
| Caleb Stidham | **X** | |

**MILAN-BERLIN LIBRARY**

Mr. Stidham appreciated the willingness of the Library to voluntarily reduce collection of a portion of the property tax and was pleased with the ongoing conversations with the Library and Zach Rospert. Mr. Jeffrey thanked the Library for the invitation to attend their Board meeting and was pleased with the discussion that was had.

On motion of Mr. Stidham and seconded by Mr. Baxter, the Board approve the recommendation of the Library to suspend collection of 0.4 mills, or as close to $100,000 as possible, for the 2026 tax year to be collected in 2027.

| | AYE | NAY |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Jeffrey | **X** | |
| Kevin Baxter | **X** | |
| Caleb Stidham | **X** | |

**MILAN TOWNSHIP**

On motion of Mr. Stidham and seconded by Mr. Baxter, the Board approve the recommendation of the Township to suspend collection of 1.3 mills of the General Fund (inside) millage for the 2026 tax year to be collected in 2027.

| | AYE | NAY |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Jeffrey | **X** | |
| Kevin Baxter | **X** | |
| Caleb Stidham | **X** | |

**HURON TOWNSHIP**

On motion of Mr. Stidham and seconded by Mr. Baxter, the Board approve the recommendation of the Township to suspend collection of 0.4 mills of General Fund (inside) and 0.2 mills of the Cemetery levy (inside)

| | AYE | NAY |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Jeffrey | **X** | |
| Kevin Baxter | **X** | |
| Caleb Stidham | **X** | |

**VILLAGE OF BERLIN HEIGHTS**

Mr. Stidham stated that due to two years of conversations, a substantial carryover and no clear plans, a reduction of 1 mill (estimated of approximately $30,000) would be appropriate.

On motion of Mr. Stidham and seconded by Mr. Baxter, the Board approve a reduction of 1 mill of the General Fund (inside)

| | AYE | NAY |
|---|---|---|
| Richard Jeffrey | **X** | |
| Kevin Baxter | **X** | |
| Caleb Stidham | **X** | |

**ERIE METROPARKS**

Mr. Stidham said he appreciated the attendance of the MetroParks at the monthly Budget Commission meetings. Last year, the Budget Commission reduced the MetroParks millage by 0.25 mills, which equated to approximately $600,000 and feels that the MetroParks is still in the position to give back a portion of the millage again for the 2026 tax year to be collected in 2027. He would recommend a motion of a reduction of 0.125 mills. Mr. Baxter seconded the motion.

Ms. Price asked if Mr. Baxter had time to listen to the deliberations, as Mr. Hinners was the one sitting in for Mr. Baxter, and was not in favor of reducing their levy monies. Ms. Price also said that she feels as though the MetroParks has not been given the same chance as other subdivisions have been given as they have newer members on their Board and she and Ms. Ferback are only a few years in their position. She is concerned that they are going to be unable to fulfill their promise to the taxpayers that just passed their levy. She is asking for the grace for one year in order to get their plans in place. The community survey that they conducted showed that there is a want for an ADA playground and will need more money. They are conservative on the money they have moved into their Land Acquisition Fund. Ms. Price said that she doesn't have the authority, but believes that the MetroParks Board would agree with her. Mr. Stidham stated that the MetroParks has asked for grace since he took office in 2022. As of last August, there were over two years of carryover, totaling $4.6 million, but will only have given up approximately $900k with the reduction.

Ms. Price said that large donors gave the amount that the Budget Commission took away and believes that they will have a hard time raising money going forward. She is unsure how to set aside money to be compliant, but also fulfill what the voters want.

Mr. Baxter wanted to confirm that he only seconded the motion to allow for discussion. He wants Jason to sit in for the vote as he doesn’t want the appearance of not being fully informed. Mr. Stidham withdrew his motion in order to wait for Jason at the next meeting.

Mr. Stidham moved to adjourn. Worksessions adjourned for the day at 1:19 PM.