



County of Lackawanna

Lackawanna County
Government Center
123 Wyoming Ave
Scranton, Pennsylvania
18503

Meeting Minutes

Board of Commissioners

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

10:00 AM

Commissioners' Conference Room

Call to Order

This meeting was called to order at 10:00.

Our veteran leading us in the pledge is Sgt. Bronson Cass. Sergeant Bronson Cass served for 10 years with the 328th Brigade Support Battalion in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard. He was deployed to Iraq in 2008 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Bronson served as a Transportation Specialist with the 56th Brigade Combat Team (Stryker), where he planned and oversaw supply route missions in support of theater combat operations.

Bronson's awards include:

Iraqi Campaign Medal

Combat Action Badge

Global War on Terror Medal

Army Commendation Medal

Bronson currently leads outreach and recruiting for Military & Veterans Services at Marywood University. While Marywood previously had a program related to military veterans, it was not focused on outreach or growth. Since stepping into this role, Bronson has prioritized building relationships and rebuilding the program from the ground up to better serve veterans and the community. He is here to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance and will brief us on the very first Military Service Fair to be held at Marywood this coming Friday.

Commissioner Welby clarifies that the Protect Your Neighbor Act is not on the agenda at this time and is being reviewed by county officials.

Present 3 - Chris Chermak, Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

Reading and Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this be Dispense with the Reading and Approve as Prepared. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

Opportunity for the Public to Address the Board (Agenda Items Only)

No comments.

Certificates of Recognition

All three commissioners express gratitude to our first responders for their swift response to the fire at Lehigh Valley Hospital and their dedication always.

Resolutions

26-0051

Approving Current Payables

Attachments: [Res 26-0051](#)
[3H50N12E](#)
[3H50N12D](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

26-0043

Approving a Juvenile Probation Grant

Attachments: [Juvenile Grant](#)
[Juvenile Probation Grant Legislative Cover Sheet Updated](#)
[Res 26-0043](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

26-0044

Entering into an Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement

Attachments: [County Employed Hearing Officer EM Proposed](#)
[Legislative Cover Sheet Elizabeth Munley](#)
[Res 26-0044](#)

A motion was made by Chris Chermak, seconded by Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote.

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

26-0045

Adopting a Procurement Card Policy

Attachments: [Legislative Cover Sheet PNC 2 11 2026](#)
[Procurement Card Policy Final](#)
[County of Lackawanna Commercial Card Program Agreement Revised](#)
[Product Sheet](#)
[Res 26-0045](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0050](#)

Entering into a Natural Gas Agreement

Attachments: [Legislative Cover Sheet UGI Energy Services 02 11 2026](#)
[Lackawanna County Maintenance Gas Confirm for EU 7795 Quote 36636 20260102120950](#)
[Lackawanna County Maintenance GasMaster for EU 7795 20260102120651](#)
[Nymex Graph 01.06.26](#)
[Res 26-0050](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0054](#)

Entering into a Ninth Amendment to a Concert Concession Agreement

Attachments: [20260213131711579](#)
[fully executed Live Nation Agreement](#)
[Res 26-0054](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Commissioner Gaughan expresses support for an agreement concerning the amphitheater on Montage Mountain, highlighting traffic and parking issues during concerts. He advocates for a long-term commitment to improve the venue, including major renovations, particularly backstage areas that deter artists. Recognizing the amphitheater's economic significance for Lackawanna County, they acknowledge the role of Live Nation and earlier county leaders in developing local entertainment infrastructure. This agreement is framed as an essential step towards future enhancements.

Commissioner Welby agrees and emphasizes the urgent need to upgrade outdated facilities and address significant traffic congestion that hampers accessibility to events, particularly concerts. He highlights the unacceptable delays and potential dangers posed by the current traffic situation, referencing recent incidents that underline the risks. He commits to collaborating with commissioners and pursuing state and federal funding to improve the infrastructure and alleviate traffic issues.

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0047](#)

Awarding the Arts and Culture Operational Grants

Attachments: [2026 Arts & Culture Operational Grant List](#)
[2026.02 11 Operational Grants Leg Cover Sheet](#)
[Res 26-0047](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0048](#)

Awarding the Arts and Culture Project Grants

Attachments: [2026.02.11 Project Grant Awards](#)
[2026.02.11 Project Grants Cover Sheet](#)
[Res 26-0048](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0052](#)

Entering into a Mural Joint Venture Agreement

Attachments: [Penn Ave. Vaudeville Mural Leg. Cover Sheet](#)
[Vaudeville Mural Design](#)
[2026.02.13 Joint Venture Agreement Penn Ave. Mural](#)
[Res 26-0052](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0053](#)

Entering into a Mural Artist Agreement

Attachments: [Penn Ave. Vaudeville Mural Leg. Cover Sheet](#)
[CONTRACT ARTIST - Penn Ave Mural2026](#)
[Vaudeville Mural Design](#)
[Res 26-0053](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0046](#)

Appointments to the Multi-Purpose Stadium Improvements Board

Attachments: [Res 26-0046](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

[26-0049](#)

Appointments to the Lackawanna County Housing Authority

Attachments: [Appt 26-0049](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Appointment be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

Motions[26-0042](#)

Motion to award the Plank Road Structure Replacement to the lowest, most responsible bidder Minichi Inc., 453 Ziegler Street, Dupont with a total bid of \$1,067,000.00.

Attachments: [Legislative Cover Sheet Updated Plank Rd](#)
[Plank Road Bid Recommendation](#)
[Mot 26-0042](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Commissioner Bill Gaughan, that this Motion be Passed. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Commissioner Chris Chermak, Commissioner Bill Gaughan and Thom Welby

Opportunity for the Public to Address the Board

Bob Bolus, Scranton: Bob disagrees with Commissioner Gaughan's proposal and thinks we should cooperate with ICE. He thinks Commissioner Gaughan should support ICE and everything ICE is doing. He claims he has offered FBI Director Kash Patel the church he purchased to be used as an office or for containment. He wants protections from the immigrants, not ICE.

Marty, Dalton: Marty says Scranton has a history of immigrant communities going back over 100 years and explains the financial and cultural advantages of this. He disagrees with the current practices of ICE and wants to help the county protect immigrant communities.

Rabbi Daniel Swartz: The Rabbi reads a notice from members of the Scranton area ministerium in support of immigration and welcome immigrants and

refugees to our area. The notice is signed by a number of clergy in the area. Sarah Balmer, Moscow: Sarah adopted her daughter from China and was a lifelong republican. In the last year, Sarah and her family have grown uncomfortable with ICE's tactics. She saw a run in with ICE outside the Scranton Cultural Center and it started to worry her. She claims she supports law enforcement, but she can no longer trust ICE to uphold the Constitution. She does not want her daughter or her family to live in fear and asks that we take on the Protect Our Neighbors act that Commissioner Gaughan has proposed.

Julie Schumacher-Cohen, Scranton: Julie would like to thank the commissioners for even considering a welcoming policy for the county. Julie says her life has been enriched by her immigrant and refugee neighbors and is not approving of the current ICE and federal government tactics. She gives several examples about the importance of immigration and welcoming refugees and ties the current times back to World War Two. She cites that the Pope has also spoken out against the current practices of the federal government. She asks that the county pass the act proposed by Commissioner Gaughan.

Amber Viola, Scranton: Amber supports a plan for county level restrictions on cooperating with ICE. She says the immigrant population is our fastest growing population in the area. She worries for her daughter and any interactions she may have with ICE. She says we cannot afford to use our county taxpayer money to work with ICE, saying it is the federal government's financial responsibility, not ours.

State Representative Maureen Madden: Maureen represents the 115th Legislative District in PA and traveled here from the Poconos to commend us on the Protect Our Neighbors Act. She cites the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution and says that racial profiling is not probable cause for search and seizure, yet it is what is happening now. She cites an example from Minnesota. She worries what the local impact would be, especially to our nursing homes and care facilities. She wishes more local governments would stand up to the federal government. She urges everyone to keep pressing their local representatives on the issue.

Lauren Cummings, Old Forge: Lauren is here to talk about the tax bills. She says everyone who is worried about immigration should attend the Prison Board meeting and talk to the DA and the Sheriff. She says that all three current Commissioners own the tax increase as none of them put up enough fight against it. She says we should have re-opened the budget. Solicitor PJ LaBelle stepped in and said that could not have been done.

Len Dobson, Peckville: Len says he worked on a different budget with Commissioner Chermak but says that Commissioner Gaughan and Commissioner McGloin would not meet with him or his team. Len says there is a difference between regular immigrants and illegal immigrants. He recommends a book called The Invisible Coup.

Michael Nicotera, University of Scranton student: Michael is in favor of the Protect Your Neighbors Act. He says there has been a lot of vitriol against some of the more vulnerable populations within the community and that even legal immigrants are victimized. He is happy the county is looking to take a step in the right direction.

Will Cohen, Scranton: Will is a faculty member at the University of Scranton. He says we have to question why ICE would have such a large presence in any particular place. He says anything ICE does that is constitutional can be supported, but otherwise, we cannot stand for it. He says groups have been misrepresented by lies and we should not bear false witness to these things.

He reads a statement from Jim Hovland, mayor of Edina, Minnesota.

Joan Hodawanitz, Scranton: Joan tells the Commissioners that she appreciates when they take a stand. She likes to hear when you support or don't support something and why, no wishy washy answers. She tells Commissioner Gaughan not to worry about the new communications policy, as anything he says at the meetings will be heard. She appreciates him for taking a stand on important issues, whether she agrees with him or not.

Madonna Munley, Archbald: Madonna is upset with the new communications policy put in place by Commissioner Welby and Commissioner Chermak. She is also a part of a group in Archbald that has been working to protect the borough from the effects of data centers. She goes on to explain the effects of these proposed data centers and data center placements. She says no elected official would take a stand before, but is happy that Commissioner Gaughan has and has been involved in the fight with them. Commissioner Welby chimes in saying that the new communications policy is a reestablishment of a former policy.

Deacon Kat Tigerman, Madison Township: Kat is the Director for Evangelical Mission for the NEPA Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She brings written words from Bishop Christopher DeForest. He urges the Commissioners to pass the Protect Our Neighbors Act for the good of the community and cites Mark 12:31, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Jeff Moran, Scranton: Jeff lives in Finch Towers and has for six years. He states that code enforcement is giving everyone 15 days to be out of the building and says he has nowhere to go. He wants to know what the Commissioners can do to help.

David Burgerhoff, Scranton: David expresses his disappointment for our inability to get along. He says he wants safe neighborhoods just like everyone else. He says we should let ICE do their job and just because we are not working with them doesn't mean we have to work against them. He says we need to focus on resolutions to issues rather than inflating issues.

Brenda Johnson: Brenda is the president of the Lackawanna County NAACP and is a veteran. She is here to support the Welcome Our Neighbors Act. She asks that we each look at each other as people and put ourselves in other peoples shoes. She is thrilled that the county is exploring legislation like this and agrees that we need to be able to talk to each other in a civil manner to solve the issues facing the community.

Breeda Cronin-Holmes, Dunmore: Breeda says that just because the act is not on the agenda, people can still come and speak in support of it and wants to make sure that is clear to everyone. She says that just because people support this neighbor act doesn't mean that they support illegal immigration or open borders. She cites the 10th amendment, stating that the federal government cannot come in and commandeer local resources to do their job. She doesn't like that she or her friends and neighbors have to live in fear, especially after a member of the Dunmore community was taken by ICE while riding his bike to work.

Mike Giannetta, Scott Township: Mike says that the country voted for President Trump in support of his immigration policies and now the policies the country voted for are being carried out as such. He does not want to see the county become a sanctuary county and thinks that local officials should be working with federal law enforcement to keep people safe.

Linda Bonakevtich, Benton Twp: Linda is the Judge of Elections in East Benton and says that she has had a target on her back since coming to speak at these meetings. She says she has had multiple issues with other clerks being sent to work for her in the last few Elections, even saying that charges

were filed against someone at her polling place. She says she is just trying to protect her people and will no longer put up with this.

Beth Perry, Clarks Summit: Beth says that whether or not you support ICE, there are financial reasons for the county to stay away from assisting them. She says cooperating with ICE imposes significant, often uncompensated, financial burdens on local governments. She lists examples, such as jail operation costs, personnel overtime, and legal liability. She then cites multiple lawsuits in which counties were ordered to pay millions due to unlawful detentions. She highlights some of the bad practices of ICE and their lack of procedure and due process. She says the immigration enforcement is the job of the federal government and the county need not cooperate.

Commissioners' Other Business

Commissioner Chris Chermak expresses gratitude to veterans and first responders while emphasizing the importance of community safety and well-being. Commissioner Chermak outlines several challenges facing Lackawanna County, such as the impact of the recent tax increase and the length property reassessment. Commissioner Chermak advocates for fiscal responsibility and transparency in addressing these issues. He highlights the potential of data centers for economic growth, stressing the need for careful planning. Overall, Commissioner Chermak promotes a unifying approach to governance that prioritizes progress over political division.

Commissioner Bill Gaughan expresses his opposition to a new public communications policy implemented by fellow commissioners, which mandates that any statement representing the county must be pre-approved by at least two commissioners. Commissioner Gaughan criticized this policy as a means to stifle individual voices and reduce civic engagement, highlighting his commitment to clear communication with constituents. He also discussed his support for ICE legislation aimed at protecting civil liberties and ensuring proper legal standards are met when county staff interacts with federal agents. Furthermore, Gaughan urged caution regarding data center developments in Lackawanna County, advocating for a moratorium on any new projects to protect local resources and reiterating the importance of community input.

Commissioner Thom Welby brings up issues addressed by Commissioner Gaughan concerning the new public communications policy, data centers, tax assessments, and ICE activities. Commissioner Welby emphasizes that we are a county government, not a news organization. He says that this is a previous policy that was used. Commissioner Welby also clarifies his stance on data centers, saying he strongly opposes them near residential areas and cites concerns about their water and energy consumption. He says he is open to them under certain restrictions. Commissioner Welby also expresses discomfort with ICE and encourages them to take their focus elsewhere. He criticizes the 33% tax increase and says we need to focus on cutting spending. Commissioner Welby also says regular reassessments would prevent extensive delays in property evaluations, yet cites some errors in the recent reassessment. Commissioner Welby also states some ideas on helping residents with appeals and wants to review properties who hold tax exempt status. Commissioner Welby would like to see the board return to a more collaborative approach at running the county.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Commissioner Chris Chermak, seconded by Thom Welby, that this be Adjourn. The motion carried by the following vote:

This meeting was adjourned at 12:42pm.

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Thom Welby

Nay: 1 - Commissioner Bill Gaughan