



County of Lackawanna

Lackawanna County
Government Center
123 Wyoming Ave
Scranton, Pennsylvania
18503

Meeting Minutes

Board of Commissioners

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

10:00 AM

Commissioners' Conference Room

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:01am.

This week's veteran to lead the Pledge of Allegiance is Nick Colacicco. He is currently a member of American Legion Post 207. He served in the United States Navy for 4 years from 1969-1973 and was a Petty Officer 2nd class. He currently lives in South Scranton.

Present 2 - Chris Chermak and Bill Gaughan

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: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

Proclamation Presentation

[25-0105](#)

Proclamation declaring May 4-10, 2025, to be "National Correctional Officers and Employees Week" in Lackawanna County.

Presented

[25-0106](#)

Proclamation declaring May 2025, to be "Foster Care Awareness Month" in Lackawanna County.

Presented

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

Resolutions

[25-0110](#)

Approving Current Payables

Attachments: [3H50LFDO.pdf](#)
 [3H50LFDP.pdf](#)
 [Res 25-0110.pdf](#)
 [signed approving current payables](#)

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: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

[25-0100](#)

Awarding the Professional Contract Performance and Financial Auditing Services

Attachments: [Boyer Ritter LLC.pdf](#)
 [Legislative Cover Sheet Boyer and Ritter 04 23 2025.docx](#)
 [Res 25-0100.pdf](#)
 [signed Prison Medical Audit Boyer and Ritter.pdf](#)

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: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

[25-0101](#)

Entering into an Agreement for the Prison

Attachments: [Lackawanna County Siemens Service Agreement Proposal 2025 - Prison.pdf](#)
 [Legislative Cover Sheet Siemens 04 23 2025.docx](#)
 [Res 25-0101.pdf](#)
 [signed agreement siemens industry](#)

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: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

[25-0102](#)

Entering into an Amended Consulting Agreement

Attachments: [signed PFM Group Strategic Management Planning.pdf](#)
 [Res 25-0102.pdf](#)
 [PFM STMP Phase II Contract.docx](#)
 [signed PFM extension agreement](#)

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 Bill Gaughan: On the question is most people in the audience

and watching at home know, Lackawanna County last year faced serious, serious financial crisis. Probably the worst that I've seen in my years in public service. I think it even probably rivaled the city of Scranton's back in 2014. The county was staring down a structural deficit of about \$37,000,000, roughly \$19,000,000 in unpaid bills, possibility of not being able to meet payroll, credit rating downgrade, and many other issues that were very, very serious. So, essentially, it was kicking the can down the road over the better part of the last ten to fifteen years that put the county's financial, and fiscal future at risk. It was really a moment of truth. And rather than ignore the problem or kick the can down the road further, and quite frankly, we couldn't do that because there's there really was no more road left, I chose to face it head on. And that's why we made the decision to enter into the state strategic management planning program and hire the financial experts at PFM. Their work, along with the work of Mr. Bulzoni and others in this building, has been instrumental in getting us on the path to long term stability. Phase one of their engagement was to identify the financial and operational issues that brought us to this point, and there was many. Now that report was thorough, honest, and in many ways, it was very, very difficult, bare the truth about how bad things really were. And that report is online, if anybody wants to take a look at it, on the county's website. So today, we're beginning phase two implementation. And when I say beginning phase two, we've already started working on the recommendations that were handed down to us and that we worked working on the recommendations that were handed down to us and that we worked really closely with on in the last few months. But today begins the second part of their engagement. It will now help us carry out the recommendations of the five year financial management plan, and this next phase, as Mr. Bulzoni alluded to, is critical. It's where I believe we start to rebuild the foundation of county government structurally, responsibly, and with an eye towards the future. Let me be very clear to everybody. This plan is working. This plan will take time, and it will require hard choices, but I am committed to the plan. I refuse to repeat the mistakes of the past, and I also did not, especially last year, did not wanna lie to the public just to score political points. I will make every effort not to rely on Band Aids and budget gimmicks, and I will never pretend that problems do not exist. If you remember last year, very shortly after taking office, I immediately acknowledged the issues and let people know we have a huge problem on our hands. And then consistently and constantly updated the public, whether it be at a commissioner's meeting or at a press conference explaining, hey, this is a train that's a mile down the track, but it is hurtling towards us, and it's really not gonna be pretty. So we are focused on building a stronger, more transparent, and more financially stable Lackawanna County. And it took courage to begin this work and make some of the decisions last year, and it will take resolve to see it through, and we are going to see it through. Thank you.

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

[25-0103](#)

Approving AAA Amendments

Attachments: [38-Lackawanna-Aging Well Amendment 2025.docx](#)
 [AAA-Telespond S.S.- OAAC Contract Amendment 2025-2026.docx](#)
 [Legislative Cover Sheet-Aging-Aging Well Amendment.docx](#)
 [Legislative Cover Sheet-Aging-Telespond Contract Amendment \(OAAC\).docx](#)
 [Res 25-0103.pdf](#)
 [signed AAA amendments](#)

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 Bill Gaughan: I'm very excited, and I cannot wait for us to start helping and serving, this community. I have to give you a compliment, all three of you. I had the opportunity to take a tour of that building, and I was just blown away, by what I saw and also blown away by the work that you do. Last year, I just had the opportunity to go out with one of the protective service workers in our agency, and I was blown away by, as you said, the need. You don't realize, because we don't always see it, how great the need is and the difficult issues that our elderly population is going through here in Lackawanna County. And I just feel so grateful, and we should be all so lucky that we have Sarah McDonald and you two, individuals who are committing to helping these people and have done an absolutely tremendous job. And the last thing I wanna say on this is the other reason we should be grateful is because we are doing things that no one else is doing in the state of Pennsylvania and really, in some respects, on the East Coast. So we're the leader, in this, and that's because of Sara McDonald. It's because of all the people in her agency. It's because we also have Jason Kavulich, who is the secretary of aging in Pennsylvania, who used to be the director. But Cliff and Helen, you both do such a good job, and, we really, really appreciate it. Thank you.

Commissioner Chris Chermak: I'll add to that too. So and you you reminded me about Jason. So Jason, when he was here, did such a good job. Obviously, that's why the governor stole them from us, but Sara had some big shoes to fill and she stepped right in and does a phenomenal job. And with the help of all of you and your programs, I mean, we do. We lead the state in things how we take care of the elderly, and, I can't thank you all enough for all that you do. And Sarah, thank you for really stepping up. Thank you.

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

25-0104

Approving a Grant Amendment

Attachments: [signed Drug and Alcohol 5 yr Grant Agreement.pdf](#)
 [Lackawanna Susquehanna Amendment 1 - 4100086659 - Prereview-Signed.pdf](#)
 [Legislative Cover Sheet Amendment to PA DDAP Grant Agreement with LSODAP.docx](#)
 [Res 25-0104.pdf](#)
 [signed 2025 Grant Amendment Drug and Alcohol](#)

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: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

[25-0108](#)

Approving a Service Agreement

Attachments: [Sprinkler System 2025 - 2030.docx](#)
[Beach Lake Sprinklers Maintenance.pdf](#)
[Res 25-0108.pdf](#)
[signed Agreement Beach Lake Sprinklers](#)

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: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

[25-0109](#)

Entering into Service Agreements with Johnson Controls

Attachments: [LackawannaCounty_CCTV_AC-CPQ-822469.pdf](#)
[LackawannaCountyGovernmentAccessCCTV-CPQ-853612.pdf](#)
[LackawannaCountyGovernmentCCURESSA-CPQ-833350.pdf](#)
[LackawannaCountyGovernmentEXACQSSA-CPQ-836010.pdf](#)
[SHERIFF Work Session Cover Sheet.pdf](#)
[Res 25-0109.pdf](#)
[signed Agreements Johnson Controls Sheriff](#)

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: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

[25-0111](#)

Approving a Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act in the City of Scranton

Attachments: [Legislative Cover Sheet Updated - 116 Norfolk Way.docx](#)
[LERTA Exhibit A.pdf](#)
[LERTA Exhibit B.pdf](#)
[LERTA Exhibit C.pdf](#)
[Res 25-0111.pdf](#)
[signed LERTA Scranton Norfolk Way](#)

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: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

25-0107

Appointments to the Workforce Development Board

Attachments: [WDB Nomination Letter for B. Bott M. DeSousa Patricia Laboranti K. Logan - 4-28-2025.pdf](#)
[Appt 25-0107.pdf](#)
[signed Appointments Workforce Development Board](#)

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: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

25-0112

Appointments to the Industrial Development Authority

Attachments: [Appt 25-0112.pdf](#)
[signed Appointments Industrial Development Authority](#)

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: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan

Opportunity for the Public to Address the Board

Michelle Tierney, Glenburn Township: I just wanna take this opportunity to share my gratitude for the two commissioners that are sitting up here who are working as a team to see how our county is continuing to grow and flourish despite the fact that you're missing a seat. There is no politics in this any longer because the two of you are an equal vote, and this is an opportunity for all of us to see that we do not need politics in running our county. And I wanna give some examples. I've sat here for the last few months and watching the two of you approve such beautiful, important things for our county. You work together as a team to give transparency by approving a new software for all of us in the community to see every step and every vote and every dime you spend. That's teamwork. You've both were I believe neither one of you were on the board when the assessment was approved. But yet both of you have worked together to educate us community members on how important it is for us to understand the importance of a reassessment in our communities. And you've been transparent. You've held town meetings. And you're continuing to do that in answering questions that all of us have because next year, all of us are going to be affected by our assessed reassessed homes. And I commend you because it is the only way that we have opportunities to receive revenue, and it's important for all of us to pay our fair valued share of our taxes. So I commend both of you to continue to educate us all on this reassessment because that is so important to all of us right now and so many of us have so many questions. I'm hearing that there's more town hall meetings and there there's different educational things. I hope that you're both on the same page with it so there isn't confusion with the deliberation of how we are going to pay our taxes with our new reassessed values of our homes. So I commend you

both to continue to share with us community members the important questions that we have and you're on the same page with going forward with our assessments. And again, this phase two and the opportunity that you both are proving to have financial experts help us with this strategic plan, I commend both of you. There's not any politics in it. You're you are both doing a great job in showing us community members that we don't need politics here. We need strong, important, educated people to help us all to make Lackawanna County the best county it can be. And the fact that our high percentage of seniors and the working with the seniors of aging, what you two are approving as a team for our county is commendable. And I wanna show you both that it can be done without politics. And I really commend both of you for continuing to share your knowledge.

Bob Bolus, Scranton: First off, I'm gonna be asking the district attorney and the US attorney to investigate the Lackawanna County tax claim bureau, Joe Joyce and his law firm. And the fact that when he was a director at a tax claim bureau, he was also an attorney whose firm was representing the tax claim bureau. And, we believe it was a major conflict of interest. We have lawsuits going to be filed, and he just snickered and laughed at him. But I don't think he's gonna laugh at the US attorney or the district attorney because wearing both hats is a major conflict of interest in this, and it's been brought before the commissioners what he was doing and was allowed to continue. They filed against me to sell my properties. I put up 50,000 in cash, was putting the other hundred together, and he's already filed against me because I missed one day, and I told him it'd be a couple weeks. So this is the kind of corruption we have that you guys are not looking at in any way, shape, or form of what's going on in the tax claim bureau, especially with a guy that's a solicitor and his law firm doing a representation, filling his pockets both ways. So as the young lady just said, you should look into that because we will be looking at it, but we're going the other route. We're gonna have the government look at it. There I was taken off the ballot here by a rhino on the Republican Party, Charlie Spano. I'm up for my expungement that I would be able to take the seat as mayor in Scranton. I am a writing candidate on a Republican ticket, and I'm asking people to pay attention to who we are and what's been going on and who's done so much for the county and the citizen this year as I have done over the last thirty some years. And nobody, including people like yourself and others in here, for thirty one years, I fed over thousands of people on Christmas day. How many gave up their Christmas? I delivered to the Child Hunger Outreach over a hundred and \$50,000 in disinfectant wipes. Same thing the Clark Summit Fire Department and the at the Weston Field. Plus thousands of trailer wipes have been delivered all over The United States to the flood victims. So I asked people to match my charitable end and otherwise. I don't look to get patted on the back, but I'm tired of the criticism I got in this county. Mr. Gaughan, I have a question for you. Who was Harry, Coleman? Is the county paying your legal fees, or are you paying them yourself? Can you explain how this process works? Maybe he'll understand it better coming from you. The county pays the legal fees is because the commissioner was sued in his capacity as commissioner and on the Election Board. So he is, attorney Coleman is representing through our carrier, through our insurance carrier? So in other words, we're paying as taxpayers the \$50 I just put up and the other taxpayers here are paying your legal fees where I filed against you. Commissioner Bill Gaughan: No. What you're saying is incorrect. When you sue someone in their capacity as a commissioner, I am under an insurance policy under the county. So, therefore, I have representation from the county. You sued me as a commissioner. I sued you individually.

Bob Bolus: That is gonna get thrown out. We're using taxpayers' money to pay your legal fees against what I file against you for using taxpayers' money to file your lawsuits against the assessments and everything else we filed. Harry Coleman here. I'm gonna subpoena him and see how he's being compensated. That's great. And we're gonna get to the bottom how you're misusing county funds for your own personal litigations that you created for yourself, and we're gonna clean up. As you said, we're cleaning up Lackawanna County. We're starting with you.

Joan Hodowanitz, Scranton: With regard to the forensic audit of WellPath, I would like to request that when that audit is completed, that you have a public meeting to discuss the findings, publicly just as you did with the annual audit. I know audit you say the word audit, and most people's eyes glaze over. The annual audit is basically looking at the numbers and making sure they balance, and it's usually a dry process. But a forensic audit is looking for evidence of possibly criminal wrongdoing. And whether or not such evidence is uncovered, I still think that this audit should be publicly discussed. So, hopefully, you'll keep that in mind. I know it will be many moons before it's completed, so I don't expect to see that soon. With regard to the digital budget book, I too am very impressed by it. Of course, I downloaded the file. I don't know. It's like 11,000, 12 thousand, whatever. It a lengthy document. Very impressive. You seem to have folded in a lot of information that PFM provided with its work. But I noticed that in terms of the number crunching, we were basically showing just the general fund. The narrative did allude to many of the special funds, but you didn't have that line by line breakdown. I asked Dave about this, and he said, hopefully, in future years, he'll eventually add those special funds. Just my opinion, but I know that one decades ago when I was in high school, there was no such thing as financial literacy for students. I remember being shocked when I got my first paycheck and they took out FICA. And I said, what in the world is FICA? I had no idea. I mean, that's how financially illiterate I was. And I think it's important that we make an effort to get the general public, especially the tax paying public, educated on how their money is taxed, how it's collected, and how it's spent. And the public has to do its part. It has to be willing to sit down and go through this kind of information and pay attention. Does no good to complain once you get the bill on the mail. I mean, that's a day late and a dollar short. But it's your tax dollars, and if you don't wanna pay attention, that's up to you. The election snafu with the printers, is it safe to assume that the printer is picking up any additional costs and not that county?

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: Yes.

Joan Hodowanitz: Good. We have that in writing. Right? That's good. That's the way it should be. And have you reviewed the internal controls to make sure that that doesn't happen again?

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: Yes. Beth Hopkins and her and her team at the elections bureau have already done that.

Joan Hodowanitz: No. That's the way it should be. With regard to the absent county commissioner, I know that the whole matter is in the courts, and so I'm not gonna get any specific information, nor should I. But I do wanna make the general observation. In terms of planning budgets and financial oversight as county commissioners, that should be a year long process. You know, you don't pass the budget, and then come July 1 or August 1, you sit down and start thinking about next year's budget. It should be an ongoing process. And I'm getting a sensing that I think we may not even have a third commissioner by the July 4. I'm hoping I'm wrong. I'm hoping that, you know, we get one sooner rather than later because whoever it is, that person needs to be able to hit the

ground running. That person is gonna have a lot of homework to do. And so let's hope that the court process doesn't drag this out unduly. I would hate to see this come to the fall when there's just two people here, one Republican and one Democrat. And that, in my mind, is not gonna be very entertaining at all. So let's hope that we get commissioner number three. Thank you.

Linda Bonakevich, East Benton: I'm a judge of election up in East Benton. And in November, I was sent a gentleman as another clerk to my office without even me knowing in which I had my team, and it turned out to be he turned out to be a felon. So I wanna know why I was sent a felon as a clerk? And by quarter to nine, I had him removed by the sheriffs because he's a known disruptor. He's been arrested before for doing this for political reasons. So that's one question. And on in Saint Patrick's State Parade, thirty minutes before congressman Rob Bresnahan marched in the parade, a drunk driver passed the barrier of that big garbage truck, weaved his way in, knocking over a girl that was selling her stuff in the carriage, physically hitting her with a car, continued his way down the wrong way down Biden Street, turning on Wyoming onto the sidewalk, almost killing the pedestrians that were waiting there to watch a parade. If he didn't hit the pole, which stopped him, he would have killed somebody. It wasn't in the paper. I didn't see it anywhere. It wasn't reported. I do have all the information. I took videos of it. I got his license plate. I've got everything. Meanwhile, there's police all over the place. Why did that gentleman get through that barrier and almost cause somebody's death?

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: I have no idea. We can't answer that. We can't answer that. We in this room. That would be the city that you'd wanna talk to.

Linda Bonakevich: Well, I'm here to tell the public and inform the public that this is this happened right before my eyes. And the girl was physically knocked over with his car. Yeah. And it wasn't in the paper. Why wasn't it in the paper? I mean, what if they came to what if he came down and killed Rob Bresnahan, our congressman? I'm disgusted over this. Really.

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: Yeah. I'm sorry to hear that. I don't we don't have answers to those questions. I don't I mean, I don't even remember that. I didn't know about that, but I mean, the city had garbage trucks and vehicles blocking all the roads.

Linda Bonakevich: Yeah. I don't know. Well, I'm still investigating it. I'm sure the police department will be on top of that for the next one. That's for sure. And, also, we had an assessment meeting at 09:00 on Tuesday. I got to the door. There was a nice little letter saying that, oh, we're not open some circumstances. So we hit the buzzer, and there's other people with me. And they let us in, and they proceeded to tell me, oh, there's no sheriff. No sheriff in town to finish the assessments today. So I started taking names, and then a sheriff appeared twenty minutes later. So I did have my assessment, which I'm grateful for, and the other people that were behind me did. But there was many, many people that did not, and I think it needs to be extended because there's a lot of people that have to appeal now because there's no more room for appointments on the phone or in person. So I think it should just have a little more time for people to get their knowledge out to the assessors.

Kara Francis, Lackawanna County: Before I go into my specific request for today, just wanna provide some background information. So last month, I attended the Board of Elections meeting in April and I'm and I mentioned I wasn't sure how many times that I actually stood at this podium addressing the no excuse, mail in ballots in the drop boxes. I went back to listen, to the meeting this morning on ECTC because after the motion to get rid of the drop

boxes that was not responded to. The judge made some very interesting statements regarding the ballots, and I wanted to reference them in my statement today, but I can't find the video. We only get a few minutes to speak here, and so had I known that I was gonna need to lay an additional foundation last month for the public, for the board, for the public, and then, of course, for the future readers of the paper outlining, my concerns or problems that I see with drop boxes and with mail in ballots, you know, I would have done that. Hindsight, of course, is 20/20, especially in light of what just happened last week. So once again today, I'll be very clear. I'm against the drop boxes, and now I'm even more passionate about my disdain for the no excuse mail in ballots after this past week's debacle. At the meeting, I also requested a response to my two right to knows that were put in on November 7 regarding the election. The right to knows requested answers related to ballots, the number of provisional ballots, the number of ballots that were dropped off at all the polling locations. I asked questions about the surveillance, the cost of the surveillance, or was the surveillance that was being conducted active, was it an active surveillance, or was it looked at once there was an issue? So those right to knows were very complex. Again, it's been six months now, not five months, so I'd like for those to get addressed. So with my specific request today, please see that the video on the election board meeting is placed back up on ECTC's website or at least viewable for the public. Please see that my right to know request on November 7 are responded to. And then regarding what happened, last week is definitely a tragedy. I just spoke to Beth about it and advised her that I would have liked to actually help defend her on social media. But because Lackawanna County does not have the public comment section on, the public's not able to comment. What I would have shared with the public was that this human error incident is not the first time that there's been a human error incident with ESNS, electronic security and systems, whatever the name of the company is. This is not the first time. In fact, it's happened several times where a human error has occurred. So today, my third request is that I'm specifically requesting the public section, the public comments be turned back on for the Lackawanna County, social media. All the social media. I believe there's Facebook, but there might be other social media. And then, again, with what's happened now in the past, for all of us that are concerned about election integrity that have been looking at these issues since, 2020, my fourth request today is to encourage you, the Lackawanna County Commissioners and possibly the solicitors, to go back to the counties that have had the same issue with human error and find out the if there was an investigation done by those counties. Ask the counties whether they had district attorneys that looked into it, state attorney generals, and or federal agencies, God bless you, such as the Department of Justice or possibly even the FBI. And then my final request for today is that, I'd like to see in light of the confusion that could be out there regarding the ballots, and, I'd like to see that maybe there's a public statement or an additional training provided to the judge of elections encouraging the use of provisional ballots in the event that somebody outside of Scranton has an issue and they're confused and may have inadvertently, discarded their ballot.

Suzanne Green, Benton Township: Concerned citizen. And to elaborate on, all the things that miss Francis had asked for, an investigation would be an appropriate action at this time. There has been numerous reports of misprinting by printing company has been involved in multiple reports of misprinted ballots, including over 28,000 ballots that were misprinted in November of twenty four in Saint Clair County, Alabama creating chaos on their election day, including March 24, Bingham, Jefferson County, Alabama,

incorrect ballots received from the printer. The ballots were reportedly The proofs in the box well, let me say it again. Sorry. Let me start over here. The ballots Jefferson County received for the Brighton Precinct were incorrect, although the proofs they received from the printer for the precinct were correct. ES and S admitted to the printing error and blamed human error for this issue. Sound familiar? We do have reports directly from miss Hopkins that the proofs that she received were correct for the precincts in Scranton. However, the interior of the boxes had incorrect ballots. This appears to be exactly the same issue. So it's a systemic issue possibly with, election systems and software, e s and s. And then there's more. I could go on and on. However, what I'd like to say is that I believe that there were some errors that happened here at Lackawanna County. And I believe that those errors need to be addressed and a report provided to the public to state exactly what happened because something some policy or procedure either wasn't followed or does not exist currently. So some something needs to be provided to the public so that we are aware that this kind of situation will not happen again, And that will at least start a healing so folks will have more confidence in the election integrity. Alright. So, we've been informed too that Lackawanna County Republican Party has mitigated the confusion by reaching out to each and every, Republican voter, 545, and they are reaching out to them. I believe that there may have been some attempt from the county, although I'm not sure exactly what it is because I don't have, specific information on that. However, I believe that a process could have been done where the incorrect ballots could have been collected from the voters, the 545 voters, and exchanged for correct ballots. That would have mitigated a lot of confusion because we have heard from other voters in outlying areas as miss Francis had started stating, outlying areas, Jessup, Blakely, Old Forge, where folks are confused. They've heard media, social media, even media from the county itself stating to dispose of these ballots, incorrect ballots, and then a new ballot would be coming to them. We've heard that folks are confused with that and may have improperly disposed of their mail in ballot. What is this going to do? Possibly voter disenfranchisement. If I didn't say that word, please I apologize for that. But also voter suppression. If voters think that they threw away their ballot and now they can't vote and they find out from the oh, no. That was the good one. We're in Blakely. That was only Scranton. Oh oh my gosh. I threw it away. Garbage man already came. What am I gonna do now? Well, you're not gonna be able to vote. So now what? So there needs to be some messaging that comes out to the public and an investigation, sir.

I'm Jo from Lackawanna County. I would like to know, how do you sleep at night? Lackawanna County taxpayers and residents and small business owners are being ruth ruthlessly crushed under your neglectful heel. Tyler Technologies, just forty minutes ago, turned me away from my in person appointment due to not having a sheriff present. Why is not having a why is having a sheriff present even necessary? I would like to know. Why is that do you know why that's necessary? For security. We're being turned away because of it?

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: For security reasons.

Jo: Well, I understand. But who puts a sheriff there? And why isn't there one there when there should be? Because we're being turned away. I was just turned away, and I have the proof of my appointment right here if you would like to see it. And I took pictures of my being present in the building. You know, Tyler Technologies continued bungling of our property reassessment brazenly scorns homeowners by scrapping appointments and dodging desperate calls, abandoning us to valuations that could plunder our homes and

livelihoods. Your county website is a deplorable tangle of maliciously hiding critical audits and reassessment details from those you betray. We demand an immediate public forum where Tyler Technologies and you, our supposed leaders, are dragged before the community to face our righteous fury. The forum would rip open the veil of secrecy, forcing transparency as residents lambast valuation errors and demand unfiltered answers on tax impacts. It would shatter our complacency your complacency, I'm sorry, with public scrutiny, compelling accountability, and arm the taxpayers with the clarity needed to survive this catastrophe. You're strangling the very souls you swore to serve. Convene a forum or be complicit in our ruin. And I would also like to address the recent ballot debacle where four 545 Republican voters in Scranton were sent the primary ballots right for the printing error. It's a grotesque betrayal of our democratic rights. This catastrophilic blunder blamed on election systems and software raises grave suspicion of systemic incompetence or worse, especially as it's targeted only Republican voters. Such a fiasco undermines the integrity of our elections and demands far more than apologies. You must restore faith through relentless scrutiny and accountability. You've trampled our sacred right to vote, convene a forum, and answer for this unforgivable travesty.

Theresa Redplay, Moscow: I'd like to address a lot of the things that you talked about earlier today. I like the senior adult advocacy program concept. This being a huge area for people that are retired older. We have a huge need for these people to be helped and, I'm a realtor by trade and income into a lot of older people that really desperately need help. Unfortunately, some of these programs, the adult advocacy center and programs like that because I've made calls for them on their behalf, they have to fit income requirements. And it's it seems like it's almost convenient that they're, like, \$40 above the minimum requirement to qualify to get help from these agencies. So there's just a swath of, older people that they might be \$10 or over the income limit to qualify for getting help from these agencies and they don't get the help. So if a neighbor doesn't help them or a relative doesn't help them, they fall through the cracks. The these older people, not to focus on them, but they're the large one of the largest populations in our county is retired people. As a realtor, I know these people cannot afford a 33% tax increase. It's just not there. Most of them are on social security. And by the time they've paid all their bills, there's nothing left. And a lot of them don't even fill out their medications because of it. So they're going to lose their homes, as a result of this increase, and I applaud your effort. I know it's a lot of work to collaborate some way to balance the budget, and I completely agree with you that the budget should be balanced or it's the area will not be viable. It's gonna come to that point. So I totally agree with you there. Something needed to be done about the budget. But if you look at history, increasing taxes blights areas. It does not enhance areas and it never balances the budget. The what typically enhances areas is tax incentives for small businesses to come into the area, open a small business, service the community, employ people, and then through those revenues of those, small businesses can increase the revenue to the city, and that has proven to be very optimal way of, increasing revenue to the area. So I'm not hopeful at all that raising taxes 33%, especially in all these old it's gonna hurt them. It just gonna hurt everybody, the area, and the and, small businesses I just wanna speak on behalf of small businesses. I am one. We just get eaten alive by municipal agencies. And, you know, I've made some calls to voters in the city of Scranton for other obvious reasons, your printer mistake. Well, let me just address that real quick. As a small business owner, they don't print anything, and they don't print zip without my signature. I have to approve

what they print. So there's no doubt in my mind that just because you're a commissioner, they print something without your approval. So in my way of thinking that I'm almost a % sure in my mind that your people signed to have those ballots printed. So and they're probably just taking lessons from Luzerne County, which there's just a lot of issues down in Luzerne County with disenfranchising voters. So, just to sum it up, I do appreciate your efforts. I just disagree with what you're doing. I think it's just gonna continue to get worse. And sometimes when you increase taxes, I've never seen the budget balance. I've not it just they you know, every you see people getting raises. You see them spending more money, and it's like, oh my god. You know, on different whatever programs, but I won't hold up your time or anyone else's. Oh, one more thing, and I'll be done. I talked, the voter. I talked to the people with the voting. The one election where down in Southside, they did not give me a, final count. I was a vote watcher. They did not give the Democrat vote watcher the final count. They kicked us both out. This was during the 2020 election. Tony, Lackawanna County: I just got a couple questions. In your opening remarks, you stated that we're going to have a deficit of \$37,000,000. You said 37. Correct?

Commisisoner Bill Gaughan: Somewhere in that area.

Tony: In your budget message, print it December, I guess. You said our deficit was gonna be 28,000,000. Right. It started off at 37, and then we were able to cut in six months, we went up to 37?

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: No. We started that's what we started off at, and then we cut 90 positions. We cut the Department of Health. We made changes to health care. We were able to get it down after the cuts that we made to around \$2,728,000,000. PFM said we're gonna have a deficit of \$27,000,000. So we have \$27.29, 30 30 7.

Tony: Yeah. But that's what we're that's what we started at. That's what we started at

when we started the budget process in, July or, July.

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: We started off on paper. You could ask our CFO with roughly a \$37,000,000 deficit. After we made adjustments, eliminated positions, eliminated a department, made changes to health care, We got it down to the number that you that is cited in the budget document.

Tony: So in essence, you said \$37,000,000 at the beginning of the meeting, so it sounds

like we're still at \$37,000,000, but we're not.

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: No. I said that's where we started at. That's what we inherited.

Tony: Okay? But we're we're now at 20. Alright. Now my question is since at the, PFM

meeting after it was over and Gordon Mann said all he had to say. It was a nice it

was a very, very, very, enlightening meeting. But anyway, soon as the meeting was over, you said meeting adjourned. No questions. Like, why couldn't we say have some questions? Commissioner Bill Gaughan: Because that was a public caucus, and at a public caucus, that's for informational purposes only. That's the difference between a public caucus and a public meeting, which we're having now, which we're able to –

Tony: See, nobody knew that. Well, I rode up in the elevator with a lady from Carbondale who took time off. She was health worker. Another lady from Rancho, I mean, they had questions. I had questions. So it wasn't right. I think the next meeting, if there is one, we should be allowed to ask questions. Do you think that's transparent?

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: We have a two meetings a month, sir. You could ask any questions you want.

Tony: I mean, to PFM. If there's gonna be another meeting with PFM, shouldn't we allow be allowed to ask questions to PFM?

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: You can put them in an email, put them in writing, and I'd be happy to get the answers to you.

Tony: Anyway, you have a figure since you're, involved with this 33% increase and you drove it? How much more in revenue dollars? How much more in dollars, not percentage, in dollars do we expect to collect in 2025 as opposed to 2024 and 2023?

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: I could get you that. I don't know off the top of my head.

Tony: Oh, come on. You've been pushing this since god knows what happened. Pushing it. I inherited it because no one else didn't even pretend you're 30.

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: I inherited the problem, and then I had to take care of it. That's what you do when you're in leadership.

Tony: You should know off the top of your head or the CFO should know how much in revenue dollars do we expect to get in 2025 than we than we collected in 2024.

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: And I just explained to you, you know, a lot of the top of my head. I don't wanna give you an incorrect figure, but I can get that information.

Tony: How about an approximate figure?

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: I don't have an approximate figure for you, sir.

Tony: Alright. And I believe that's the other side. I calculated \$50-52,000,000 dollars. Whether that's right or wrong. So, anyway, \$52,000,000 are gonna collect correct the deficit we have right now in this year of \$27,000,000. So we're gonna collect another 50,000,000 next year and the year after that. So I just wanna let like, say going forward that this 33% maybe should be altered down the road because we're gonna have enough money in the kitty.

Commissioners' Other Business

Commissioner Chris Chermak: Well, I'll address a few things, but first I wanna go back to our corrections officers. I wanna thank all of them, especially the ones that just retired, Larry, Pete, and Eddie, for all their years of service. And to our foster parents, that is such a critical need, and to have them here today, especially one of our premier foster parents. I mean, what they do I don't know. But I appreciate what they do and just wanna thank them again. So a lot of questions on ballots. First of all, somebody mentioned provisionals. Any person that thinks there's a problem can go into their polling place and fill out a provisional ballot anytime if there's a question now I know there's been situations where the judge of election said, no. You can't do one. You can anybody can fill out a provisional ballot if they think there's a mistake. If they don't know if their mail in went through or their whatever the question is, everybody has a right to fill out a provisional ballot. No question. And if they go in there, they can. Come to the county building or call the number. But again, I can't stress that enough. Anybody can do a provisional ballot. As far as the investigation, well, there was an investigation. I personally investigated it. I have discussions with our district attorney, Brian, and we looked into what happened. And unfortunately, it was it was a mistake. And as far as Beth and Glenn and everybody in that office, I have a 100% confidence on what they do. They do a tremendous job. The work they do is monumental. The amount of paperwork and everything that goes on in that office is mind boggling. You

know? I'm sure Beth didn't sleep for two weeks when that mistake happened. I certainly believe with all my heart, it was not intentional. I have no reason to believe that. Matter of fact, they were mortified when it happened. You know? It's unfortunate. I was upset that it happened myself, but it happened. So will we get learn from this? Absolutely. Will things be double, triple, and quadruple checked? I'm sure they will. You know? Again, it was a mistake on many parts, but we'll get through it. The corrected ballots went out on time. They weren't late. Again, I'm not happy that it happened and but I'm not gonna hold anybody. I have all the confidence in the world in our people in that office. They do a very good job, and they work very hard to be tops in the States when ballots come in. We're always the first to finish. It's a huge effort on everybody in this county that participates. I'm down here when the ballots are coming in. It it's a tremendous, tremendous effort. Again, if there's any questions, go vote in person or fill out a provisional. That should take care of any of those issues. And, again, hopefully, we won't have to deal with that again. But when there's trains, there's gonna be train wrecks. So, you know, you'll have things. As far as the reassessment, I am hosting a town hall. And this is not a town hall to come and bash the county and bash the reassessment process and bash this and this is a town hall is gonna have three attorneys, two that are gonna deal with residential questions and information, one's gonna do commercial information and questions, and I have a professional appraiser. It's gonna be moderated by attorney Howard Rothenberg, but it's gonna give people information on how this process is working, what you need to do if you have questions, how you, do your hearing, how you get your comparable. This is all just to inform the public on what they need to do if there's questions that they have. So again, that's gonna be Monday night at doors open at 05:00 at Lackawanna College. It'll be in the theater. I'll be there as part of the panel as well to discuss things like clean and green and things that are out there for people to utilize to get some breaks on their property taxes. But, you know, again, this is for information, and to just educate people and answer questions that they may have so they can proceed because, you know, whether it's the reassessment go it's gotta get done. It's gotta get done properly. It's gotta be fair, and it's just you know, we're on that track. So again, if anybody has any questions, concerns, comments, come to the meeting. It's first come, first serve. I don't know how many of the theater holds, but when it's full, it's full. If it if it fills up, I don't know, but we'll be there. And finally, on a good note, for my wife, my mother, all the moms here, the foster moms, just I wanna wish them all very happy Mother's Day this weekend. Thank you very much.

Commissioner Bill Gaughan: The ballot printing error came up, so I'd also like to address it. Last week, a ballot printer printing error affected 545 Republican voters in Scranton. Let me be absolutely clear. This was not a conspiracy. There is no confusion. There's no chaos. There's no investigations. It was a printer error acknowledged and owned by the vendor, Election Systems and Software, who has taken full responsibility. The issue occurred when the printer mistakenly used a 02/2024 file instead of the correct 02/2025 ballot for a small group of Scranton Republicans. As soon as our elections bureau identified the error, they acted swiftly. Corrected ballots were immediately printed, delivered by a courier, and are now in the mail to voters, and they've, should have received them by now. Our elections bureau caught the issue. They resolved it fast, and they implemented safeguards to ensure the integrity of the process. The old ballots have been deactivated. The corrected ones are color coded, and Scranton Republican mail in ballots will be counted separately to ensure full transparency. So let me once again repeat just so everybody fully understands. There was no fraud. There was no foul play.

There's no compromise to the integrity of our elections. I stand by the professionalism of our elections bureau, our director of elections, Beth Hopkins, and I commend them for their rapid response. Lackawanna County's elections are safe, they are secure, and they are well managed, and they always will be. In terms of the assessment was reassessment was brought up again, just for the record, and I know we've talked about this ad nauseam, there were, I believe, well over a dozen town hall meetings, if you wanna call them that, informational sessions that were held with the professionals who are conducting the reassessment, Tyler Technologies and our director of assessment or the, tax lien bureau, Pat Tobin. They had them all over the county, and if anybody wanted to go, they could have went to them. They had a really nice presentation, and they explained everything, and they also, answered everybody's questions. Just wanna talk for a minute about I attended a holocaust remembrance at the Scranton JCC on April 23, and it was a really, really, moving presentation. And I just wanna thank all of the people that were there and all of the people from the JCC who did such a wonderful job. Also, the United Neighborhood Center had an international dinner that I attended, which brought together students, tutors, families, and community members to honor 16 new citizens of The United States and of Lackawanna County, as well as celebrate student achievements and recognize, UNC's dedicated volunteers. It was one of the most moving things that I've ever been a part of to talk to the immigrant community that we have here in the city of Scranton and in Lackawanna County, productive members of our society who are doing a wonderful job and who gained United States citizenship. And as I talked to them, I just thought to myself, it's an absolute shame that immigrants are getting demonized in, today's political atmosphere because they really do contribute greatly to, Lackawanna County. We also I also attended a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the restoration of the Carbondale Train Station, which was put on by Leadership Lackawanna, the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority, and was really pushed by the mayor of Carbondale, Michelle Bannon. And it was very interesting. The Northeast Regional Railroad Authority executive director Larry Malski was there, and he had commented that the day that they were cutting the ribbon to revitalize this train station in Carbondale was forty years to the day that, Lackawanna County and the Northeast Railroad Authority took over the lines with the goal forty years ago trying to, get passenger rail service back. So it was really, well attended and a great achievement by all of those who were involved. Commissioner Chermak and I attended a arts and culture grant ceremony that was held at the Scranton Cultural Center. It was really wonderful to see the impact that county dollars, through our arts and culture department have on all of the different nonprofits and all of the different organizations that put on, whether it's plays, musicals, things that really gets get our students and young people involved in the arts community, so that was wonderful. Last two notes from me. The Armed Forces Day Parade will be held on Saturday, May 17 at 11AM in Downtown Scranton. I urge everybody to get down and support our veterans and our armed forces. We always would like to see the kind of crowd that we get on Saint Patrick's Day, down to see, our veterans and to acknowledge them and to honor them and all those in our armed forces. So if you have a chance, bring your children down, bring your grandchildren down, and it's really will be a great day. And, I just wanna wish, everybody a happy Mother's Day and especially my mom and my wife, Kelly.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Chris Chermak, seconded by Bill Gaughan, that this be Adjourned at 11:55am. The motion carried by the following vote.

Aye: 2 - Commissioner Chris Chermak and Commissioner Bill Gaughan