



THE LIST | A2

## PHOTO EXHIBIT ON DISPLAY

See the photography exhibit *Altered Perspectives* at the Prendergast Library Art Gallery in Jamestown, New York



SPORTS | C1

## MLB PLAYOFFS: INDIANS SWEEP RED SOX

Cleveland moves on to face the Toronto Blue Jays in the AL Championship Series

Tuesday, October 11, 2016

Serving our readers since 1888

@GoErie

facebook.com/GoErie

\$1

# Erie Times-News

Find us on all platforms 24/7



GoErie.com

## Floating danger



**Sherri Mason, a chemistry professor at the State University of New York at Fredonia, displays types of plastics found in Great Lakes tributaries at Four-Mile Creek in Lawrence Park Township.** GREG WOHLFORD/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

### Microplastics in Great Lakes tributaries raise health concerns

By Dana Massing  
dana.massing@timesnews.com

Tiny pieces of broken drinking straws and small fibers shed from fleece jackets flow from rivers into the Great Lakes, where the microplastics have already shown up inside fish and might be making their way into humans' drinking water.

A recent study of 29 Great Lakes tributaries in six states found plastic particles in all 107 samples. Although the Pennsylvania creeks that feed Lake Erie were too small to be included in the study,

See **PLASTIC**, A5



**This is a contributed photo of microplastics (shown here with a one-inch ruler behind them), which are pieces of plastic smaller than 5 millimeters wide. They were found in water samples taken from Great Lakes tributaries. A SUNY Fredonia professor involved in the study says microplastics are in lakes, rivers and creeks everywhere, including Erie County.** CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

## County Council: State must act now

### Legislators urge immediate steps to resolve casino funds issue

By Kevin Flowers  
kevin.flowers@timesnews.com

Erie County Council is formally asking the Pennsylvania Legislature to quickly

repair the state's gaming law so gambling revenues the county and other municipalities rely on will continue to flow.

A resolution on council's Tuesday meeting agenda urges state legislators "to immediately fix the local shared gaming funds language" in the law. Council's request

follows a Sept. 28 Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision striking down the host fees paid by casinos statewide.

The county receives about \$11 million annually in slot machine revenues from Presque Isle Downs & Casino in Summit Township under

See **GAMING**, A5



CITY & REGION | B1

### LAND BATTLE

Settlement stalemate over Elk Creek Township land case

## Breneman suggests new EMTA bargain

### Councilman proposes new 20-year charter

By Kevin Flowers  
kevin.flowers@timesnews.com

In the wake of Erie County Judge William R. Cunningham's court ruling on the city-county dispute over the Erie Metropolitan Transit Authority's charter, another potential compromise has been suggested.

This proposal comes from Erie County Councilman Jay Breneman, and he has shared it with members of County Council and Erie City Council. Breneman's proposal, which he presented to local officials over the weekend, suggests a new, 20-year charter for EMTA; an 11-member board of directors, with seven appointments made by the county and the remaining four by the city; and county government assuming the full state-required local match of EMTA funding, which is now about \$900,000 a year.

Currently the city and county, along with other municipalities that use EMTA's services, contribute to that local funding share. The city and county co-founded EMTA in 1966. The county budgeted \$368,130 for EMTA funding in 2016; the city budgeted \$270,000, according to financial figures from city government and county government.

The Erie Times-News obtained a copy of the new proposal, which also suggests that the county would set aside \$1 million "for use by the City of Erie for implementing multimodal capital projects" recommended in the city's comprehensive development plan, as long as those projects are recommended by both the city and the Erie Metropolitan Planning Organization, which helps set priorities for regional transportation projects. The county's Planning Department would assist with those projects, according to Breneman's proposal.

See **EMTA**, A4



POLITICS | A3

### SHOWING SUPPORT

Republican vice presidential nominee Mike Pence reaffirms his relationship with Donald Trump

VIEWPOINT | B6

### TRANSIT DISPUTE

Needless EMTA impasse wasting \$2 million reserve



LAKE ERIE MOMENT | B1

### FOR THE BIRDS

Erie man feeds gulls twice a day, every day

Volume 17 Number 10  
© 2016, GateHouse Media  
Questions? Call 870-1600

Obituaries ..... B4-B5  
Weather ..... B8  
Lotteries ..... C6

Classifieds ..... D1-D4  
Puzzles ..... D5  
Comics ..... D6-D7

TODAY  
Partly sunny  
66° / 51°

WEDNESDAY  
Partly sunny  
73° / 54°

THURSDAY  
Showers  
57° / 44°



MERCYHURST UNIVERSITY

## Get to know the spirit of Mercyhurst.

### Schedule your personal campus visit and tour!

Call us at 814-824-2202 to schedule your visit today.

## Gaming revenue boss to lobby legislators to restore local funding

By Ron Leonardi  
Erie Times-News

Perry Wood, the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority's executive director, plans to meet with several state legislators this week in Harrisburg to push for a new state gaming law he hopes will maintain previous county gaming revenue allocations.

"The message is the gaming funds are an important source of revenue for local economic development efforts, and that the amount needs to stay same and the flexibility of the funds also needs to stay the same," Wood said.

Wood said he will meet Thursday and Friday in Harrisburg with six legislative leaders from the state House and Senate.

"We need to make sure the leadership in Harrisburg know we are paying attention to how they are fixing the state gaming law and that they know the local share of gaming revenue is absolutely essential to economic development and local government," Wood said.

The state Supreme

Court in late September struck down the host fees paid by casinos statewide to counties and municipalities, ruling the previous framework for distributing casinos fees violated the nonuniform tax provision in the Pennsylvania Constitution.

The state Supreme Court is giving state legislators four months to fix the state's gaming law.

The state's previous gaming law, which took effect in 2004, mandated that host municipalities/counties annually receive 2 percent of gross slot machine revenues or \$10 million, whichever is greater.

Erie County has received about \$11 million in revenues annually from Presque Isle Downs & Casino since it opened in Summit Township in 2007.

The county has kept \$5.5 million annually, and the other \$5.5 million has gone to the independent Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, which evaluates grant and loan requests and distributes money to area nonprofits and other recipients for economic and community

development projects.

Wood said the Gaming Revenue Authority has distributed more than \$40 million in grants and loans since Presque Isle Downs opened in 2007.

"Those funds are driving a lot of new and creative activities," Wood said.

Although the state gaming law is in limbo, there will be no interruption of Gaming Revenue Authority funding distribution the remainder of the year, Wood said.

The Gaming Revenue Authority is expected to announce its next batch of funding recipients Wednesday, he said.

Wood is encouraging area residents to visit his agency's website at [www.ecgra.org](http://www.ecgra.org) and to click on the "call to action" link.

"If the legislature can't fix it, we know there will be a \$5.5 million gap in the Erie County budget," Wood said. "We want to be an active agency in resolving this issue."

Ron Leonardi can be reached at 870-1680 or by email. Follow him on twitter at [twitter.com/ETNLeonardi](https://twitter.com/ETNLeonardi).

## GAMING

Continued from A1

the law, and keeps \$5.5 million. That money is used to fund libraries; award grants to various local agencies; and to make payments on the county's existing long-term debt.

The other \$5.5 million is distributed by the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority, which invests that money via grants and loans in various economic and community development projects throughout the region.

Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper's \$99.1 million general fund budget proposal for 2017, which council is now considering, includes \$5.5 million in slots revenues once again.

Across the state, municipalities and counties that receive gambling funds are concerned about the future of those revenue streams. The Supreme Court gave state legislators 120 days to repair the gaming law because of the potential effect on

municipalities.

Councilman Kyle Foust, who sponsored the resolution, said that effect and the fact that Erie County and other communities count on yearly gaming revenue is why he and other council members want to see the legislators rectify the issue quickly.

"Obviously this has major financial implications for our county budget that could blow a big hole in it," Foust said. "Plus there's the long-term effect. Gaming money has allowed us to do important projects in this area we probably wouldn't have been able to do otherwise."

The state's gaming law took effect in 2004 and mandates that host municipalities/counties annually receive 2 percent of gross slot machine revenues or \$10 million, whichever is greater. A lawsuit filed by Mount Airy Casino in the Pocono Mountains, however, argued the assessment violates the state constitution by imposing a heavier tax burden on lower-performing casinos.

A copy of the resolution is being sent to local legislators

including state Sen. Sean Wile, of Millcreek, D-49th Dist., and state Reps. Patrick Harkins, of Erie, D-1st Dist.; Flo Fabrizio, of Erie, D-2nd Dist.; Ryan Bizzarro of Millcreek, D-3rd Dist.; and Curt Sonney, of Harborcreek, R-4th Dist.

It will also be sent to Gov. Tom Wolf's office, as well as to the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania.

Harkins said he is confident that "it will be addressed quickly, because it has such a huge effect on communities. I'm supposed to meet with a couple of people (Tuesday) about it."

"This will be a top priority," Harkins said, adding that he has also spoken with Foust and County Councilman Fiore Leone about the gaming law.

County Council meets Tuesday at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers at the Erie County Courthouse, 140 W. Sixth St.

Kevin Flowers can be reached at 870-1693 or by email.

Follow him on Twitter at [twitter.com/ETNflowers](https://twitter.com/ETNflowers).

## PLASTIC

Continued from A1

they "absolutely" contain the kinds of microplastics found in the rivers that were part of the research, a Chautauqua County, New York, professor said.

"You're not going to find a body of water anywhere without them," said Sherri "Sam" Mason, a professor of chemistry at the State University of New York at Fredonia and a co-author of the study published in the journal Environmental Science & Technology.

"It doesn't matter where you look, you find plastics," Mason said. "They're everywhere."

The latest study she helped to publish looked especially at microplastics, which Mason said is "any piece of plastic smaller than 5 millimeters" in diameter. She said most are comparable in size to the period at the end of a sentence.

Like a period, some microplastics are round. Known as microbeads, the balls of plastic are used for exfoliation in various facial and body washes or in toothpastes and hand sanitizers and they're being eaten by fish, which are eaten by people. Mason has previously done research that found large concentrations of microbeads in Lake Erie, including a spot east of Erie off the coast of Barcelona, N.Y.

The Microbead-Free Waters Act of 2015 phases out the manufacture and sale of cosmetics containing microbeads by mid-2018.

But microbeads weren't all that Mason and other researchers found in the tributary study. Fibers/lines, including fibers from synthetic textiles like fleece and particles of fishing line, were the most frequently occurring microplastics in the Great Lakes tributaries, followed by fragments of larger debris like plastic bottles; foams from cups, takeout containers and packaging; films like



Different types of plastics found in Great Lakes tributaries, collected by Sherri Mason, a chemistry professor at SUNY Fredonia, were displayed recently in Lawrence Park Township. GREG WOHLFORD/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

plastic bags and wrappers; and finally pellets/beads.

Mason said the fibers include "things that come off our synthetic clothes when we wash them."

Approximately 1,900 fibers could break off one article of clothing in the wash, she said. Some microfibrils and microbeads are making it through wastewater treatment plants, Mason said. Researchers are just beginning to study whether the plastics are getting into drinking water.

In another example Mason gave, a plastic bag blows away in the wind, gets caught in a tree and becomes shredded, with the pieces eventually working their way into nearby water. Improperly disposed of plastic bottles, straws and even discarded pens can all

break down to form the microplastics found in the world's water, Mason said.

"What is the source of the plastic we find?" she asked. "It's us, humans."

She said the use of plastics began growing after World War II and is "tied to the disposable society we've become." In 2014, more than 300 million tons of plastics was produced worldwide, Mason said.

The tributaries study found that the more urban the environment through which a river flowed, the more likely it was to have higher concentrations of plastic, Mason said. The research done by the SUNY Fredonia and U.S. Geological Survey scientists included waterways in New York, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The highest concentration was detected in the Huron River in Michigan. The Buffalo River in New York and the Ashtabula River in Ohio also had high concentrations.

Pennsylvania wasn't part of the study because the commonwealth doesn't have any "major" tributaries into the Great Lakes, Mason said. She wasn't aware of any studies that included the Pennsylvania creeks and streams feeding Lake Erie, possibly because there hasn't been funding for the work so far.

Marti Martz, a senior coastal outreach specialist in the Lake Erie office of Pennsylvania Sea Grant, said she's sure Pennsylvania would have microplastic issues similar to other Great Lakes states.

"You are going to find it in local streams," she

said.

Great Lakes Sea Grant programs acknowledge the problem of marine debris, particularly microplastics, and have funded some research in a few other states, according to information from Martz.

She said Sea Grant staff members have been working to identify research gaps and priorities to help answer questions like whether contaminants end up in the tissue of organisms that eat the microplastics and what the implications are for humans.

A study of more than two dozen Great Lakes fish species found microplastics in every single one, Mason said. Mammals, birds, turtles and invertebrates also have been known to ingest microplastics.

Mason has said that fish can mistake the plastic for food. Not only can that cause them to eat less real food, but there's also concern that the plastic the fish eat could have absorbed hazardous chemicals that are known to be carcinogenic. And then people eat the fish.

Mason said researchers here are just starting

to look into whether microplastics are also making their way into human drinking water. She said a study in Germany found them in beer there and a Japanese study found them in sea salt.

In the meantime, Mason and Martz both said there are ways that people can help keep plastics out of the water.

Martz stressed the importance of properly disposing of plastic items and suggested considering items made of alternative materials.

"On a personal level, if people just think about all their purchase choices," she said.

Mason urged people to pass up plastic bags at stores and to forgo the beverage drinking straws they'll suck on for five minutes but are made of a material that will last in the environment for hundreds of years.

"If you realize we are the source (of microplastics), ultimately we are the solution," she said.

Dana Massing can be reached at 870-1729 or by email. Follow her on Twitter at [twitter.com/ETNmassing](https://twitter.com/ETNmassing).

**Erie County Medical Society**  
**6TH ANNUAL HEALTH EXPO**  
Saturday, October 15, 2016 • 11 am to 2 pm  
Macy's Concourse • Millcreek Mall

Health Screenings • Flu & Pneumonia Shots • Insurance Information  
Community Resources Information • Long Term Care Information

**FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

This program is made possible by our community partners  
Connoisseur Media • Highmark • AHN/Saint Vincent Hospital  
UPMC Hamot • UPMC Health Plan

A **FREE**, book-a-month program for  
**ALL children** living in Erie County  
from birth to age 5.

**IMAGINATION LIBRARY**

Register your child today!

#ReadMore @UnitedWayErie facebook.com/ErieImaginationLibrary

UNITEDWAYERIE.ORG/IMAGINATION United Way

The Imagination Library is a United Way of Erie County initiative in collaboration with The Erie Community Foundation and other funding and community partners.