

Good afternoon Chairman Loughran and members of the Economic Development Committee. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak before you. My name is Albert DeBenedetti, I reside at 215 Glenalby Road, Tonawanda NY and I am a constituent of Legislator Kevin Hardwick. I am a disabled, retired, former elected official and I assure you that my appearance before this committee is in no way a precursor to any candidacy for public office, but the observations of an individual who retains a keen interest in local government

I am here today to briefly speak to Comm. 1E-5 on your agenda, the MOU for the proposed lease agreement between the Buffalo Bills and the County of Erie for the use of "Ralph Wilson" Stadium. This item results in the commitment of in excess of one hundred and twenty-five million dollars of local property tax revenue thus making it, outside of the annual budget, the most significant vote you will make in your career as an elected official. I am here today to speak neither for nor against the proposed lease but to comment on the process and offer some suggestions.

It is clear from the 2013 Budget amendment process that this Legislature has placed the highest priority on the reduction of property taxes. It is in that context that I urge you to review the proposed lease and determine what impact if any, it has on the 2013 Budget and subsequent budgets? Does it require additional expenditures not in the current 2013 budget and if so, how will it be balanced with either new revenue and/or cuts in expenditures or is there a probability of the creation of a budget deficit which result in a property tax increase in the FY 2014 budget.

I would suggest that the proposed lease MOU should be accompanied by written reports on its potential budgetary impact from the County Budget Director, the County Comptroller, the Erie County Fiscal Stability Authority and any other entity the Economic Development Committee deems appropriate. These reports should not only analyze the impact on the 2013 Budget but on the subsequent budgets thru the course of the proposed ten year lease. I strongly urge that the aforementioned reports be formally presented to this committee by their respective authors for review by all Legislators prior to any committee recommendation and subsequent vote by the full body.

I believe by following this process you will fulfill your responsibilities under our "checks and balances" form of government and enable yourselves to make a better informed decision, thus increasing the probability of successfully achieving your goal of protecting the property owners of Erie County from unnecessary, unforeseen tax increases!