



# COUNTY OF ERIE

**MARK C. POLONCARZ**

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

January 29, 2013

Honorable Members  
Erie County Legislature  
92 Franklin Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Buffalo, New York 14202

**Re: New Multimedia & Videoconference Capabilities in the Rath Building**

Dear Honorable Members:

I am pleased to report to your Honorable Body that the Department of Public Works ("DPW") is developing a new, advanced multimedia & videoconference capability which will be available in the Rath Building to all County officials.

As some of you may know, the County maintains "state of the art" and secure videoconference capabilities at the Department of Emergency Services' emergency operations center ("EOC") on Broadway in Cheektowaga, and the Department of Health maintains a backup secure videoconference capability at its health operations center ("HOC") at Grider Street; however, capabilities within the Rath Building are unsecure and far more limited in scope.

DPW has been investigating the options for developing modern multimedia & videoconference capabilities for some time and proposed the idea of installing the function in the County Executive's conference room, a large central space in the County Executive department's secure suite on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor. Recently, DPW purchased the necessary television and peripheral equipment and they will be installing the equipment in the conference room shortly.

While the EOC is the primary communications center for the County during an emergency it should be noted it is not a full proof location. For example, during Hurricane Sandy, for approximately 1.5 hours, all of Verizon's telecommunications lines into the EOC were lost. In effect, while the EOC had power, there was a period of time where we could not communicate with our partners in government to deal with the potential disaster. Maintaining a capability in the Rath Building will allow County officials a redundant backup and convenient communications system.

The new videoconference capability will enable instant communication, presentations and sensitive information sharing, as necessary, between the Rath Building and County officials and employees based in this building, with the EOC and HOC, and federal and state officials, including in emergency and disaster situations, but also "routine" dialogue. For instance, we envision this capability being used by the Comptroller's Office and Division of Budget and Management when they engage in calls with ratings agencies, the Health Commissioner in engaging instantaneously with her counterparts

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in other county health departments and the New York State Department of Health, the County Clerk having secure discussions with the State Department of Motor Vehicles, the County Executive engaging in discussions with the Governor's office or Empire State Development, the Commissioners of Elections engaging their counterparts and State elections officials, the Public Works Commissioner engaging with the New York State Department of Transportation as necessary, and County fiscal officials having multi-party calls with bond counsel, financial advisors and the Erie County Fiscal Stability Authority during bond and note sales.

I believe that this capability offers the County significant opportunity to reduce travel expense for County officials who are required to engage in meetings in Albany or other locations across the state, but who will now be able to use the videoconferencing for routine, daily administrative tasks without the cost and burden of official travel, including the significant travel down-time associated with traveling to Albany and New York City for meetings.

When DPW, in collaboration with DISS, finishes the installation of the system, I will invite all legislators as well as the independent elected officials and executive department heads to a presentation and training session. If you have any questions regarding this initiative, please do not hesitate to contact me or Commissioner of Public Works John Loffredo.

Sincerely yours,



Mark C. Poloncarz, Esq.  
Erie County Executive

cc: District Attorney Frank Sedita  
County Comptroller Stefan Mychajliw  
County Clerk Christopher Jacobs  
Sheriff Timothy Howard  
Dennis Ward, Commissioner of Elections  
Ralph Mohr, Commissioner of Elections