



STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW  
ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

December 14, 2020

Colleen Heidinger  
President  
43 North  
1 West Seneca Street, Floor 24  
Buffalo, New York 14203

Dear President Heidinger:

I am in receipt of your correspondence to my Deputy Comptroller of December 10, 2020. Unfortunately, it appears you are unwilling to provide information at this time, even though you provided a list of awardees to the Poloncarz Administration, individually to the eleven members of the Erie County Legislature, and now local media. Even more disturbing is that you refused to provide a full list of winners you falsely claimed does not exist. It appears you lied. WGRZ.com posted a list of awardees you refused to provide my office.

Although your letter states that the awardees were provided to the Legislature by the Poloncarz Administration, it is my understanding that the Office of Erie County Executive only informed Legislators of awardees in their districts. As such, it appears that only you, the Poloncarz Administration, and now a local media outlet is aware of who all the awardees are currently. This is but one alarming example of lack of transparency for which I am receiving complaints.

Of course, other concerns have been raised regarding the release of information to WGRZ. The story regarding the awardees was posted on the WGRZ website with an attachment that contained the list. However, the story was soon removed, apparently because it provided taxpayer identification numbers in the list. This release of sensitive information is concerning and may ultimately be problematic. As such, in addition to my previous requests, I would also like an answer to if anyone from, or associated with, 43 North released the information to WGRZ? If not, who did?

Even more alarming according to the list of grant awardees that has been posted publicly: a \$10,000 taxpayer funded grant to a left-wing blogger that not only attacks local and national Republicans but is on the political payrolls of Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz, the Erie County Democratic Committee (ECDC) and Democratic Party Boss Jeremy Zellner. This granting of public tax dollars to someone who is paid to attack Republicans and is on the political payrolls of the Erie County Executive, the Erie County Democratic Committee and its Chairman Jeremy Zeller, does not pass the smell test. It is highly suspicious. This is one reason why we demand the list of applicants that did not receive grants. I know of a Hamburg restaurant owned by three combat veterans, one of whom is 100% disabled, that was rejected for receiving a grant. Why is it that a left-wing website that attacks Republicans and is on the payrolls of Mark Poloncarz, Jeremy Zellner and ECDC received a grant, but a veteran owned restaurant that is struggling to stay open was denied?

I look forward to the information regarding awardees, applicants, criteria, and process when it is decided appropriate for taxpayers to know how their money is being spent. In addition to that information, we request a list of businesses denied grants, how all public dollars were spent, including, but not limited to, administrative costs and advertising. I will then be able to appropriately address taxpayers' concerns. My office is examining the use of other means if information is not provided to the public, considering these are public tax dollars involved. In the meantime, if you have any questions or information which could assist in making this program more transparent, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Stefan I. Mychajliw, Jr.  
Erie County Comptroller