



STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW

ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

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Contact – Office of Erie County Comptroller at Comptroller@Erie.gov, or 716.858.8400

COMPTROLLER MYCHAJLIW: BRING BACK THE ERIE COUNTY FAIR THIS SUMMER

Points to New York State Fair reopening this summer as reason why State and County officials cannot block the Erie County Fair from taking place

(ERIE COUNTY, NY) – Erie County Comptroller Stefan Mychajliw says the time has come to allow the Erie County Fair to make a return. Last month New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced the New York State Fair would take place over an eight-day period later this summer. The Comptroller sent a letter to New York State Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker, strongly encouraging him to work with Erie County Fair organizers and local leaders to provide the blueprint that would allow the Fair to take place. Comptroller Mychajliw says if organizers of that Fair have been given permission to re-open, then so, too, should coordinators for the Erie County fair.

“If the New York State Fair takes place, we should also be able to fully open the Erie County Fair. There are no protocols that the State Fair will meet that the Erie County Fair organizers cannot also accommodate. The great group of professionals that have successfully put on the Erie County Fair for years are capable of providing a safe and fun atmosphere for all,” said Comptroller Stefan Mychajliw.

The New York State Fair is set to return in accordance with New York State Health and safety guidance. That includes restrictions on capacity and social distancing, along with face covering restrictions and health screenings as needed.

“The New York State Fair is one of our biggest and most exciting tourist attractions that celebrates the spirit of New York and generates economic growth for the region and the entire state. I’ve said time and again that no one wants to open the Fair this year more than I do, and we are finally making it happen in a safe, responsible way with the 2021 Reimagined New York State Fair. This is an important step towards the full return of New York’s largest events as we continue to reopen and reimagine our state’s economy.”

Source: www.governor.ny.gov/news, Governor Andrew Cuomo, April 26, 2021

Comptroller Mychajliw says the Erie County Fair is just as important for the Hamburg and regional economy and is just as big. According to organizers the positive economic impact averaged \$7.8 million. The New York State Fair typically accommodates about one million visitors annually. The fairgrounds in Syracuse are made up of 375 acres. According to the Governor's office, the plan would be to re-open at 50% capacity, with buildings remaining closed. Guests would be asked to sit while eating or drinking, and rides would be continually cleaned and sanitized.

The Erie County Fair also welcomes approximately one million visitors on an annual basis. The fairgrounds consist of 275 acres with rides, food, vendors, live entertainment and more. The Governor had previously announced increased capacities at outdoor stadiums and casinos to 50%.

"The Erie County Fairgrounds are expansive. Our Fair is a favorite summer pastime for Hamburg families and people from all over Erie County. It is also a great opportunity to celebrate the significant agriculture community in Erie County. Fair goers and taxpayers deserve to have it back," said Comptroller Mychajliw.

The International Association of Fairs and Expositions has been working with a Pittsburgh based company to develop simulations of what would be required to safely re-open events like the Erie County Fair. According to the CEO of that firm, Epistemix, the Erie County Fair could successfully be held this summer.

"In all cases, by the time the Erie County Fair will be held in August, there would be enough immunity in the population, even if there were no mask wearing." "It would be safe to have the event, and there would not be an excess of infections because of the level of immunity that exists in Erie County, the forecast that exists at the time of the fair."

Source: Buffalo News, www.buffalonews.com, John Cordier, CEO Epistemix, May 11, 2021

Organizers for other fairs in the region continued to wait for guidance from government officials before they could wait no longer and had to cancel these important events for a second straight year. Organizers for the Erie County Fair, which is equal in size to the New York State Fair in terms of visitors, needs guidance from state and county health officials that will allow them some certainty to re-open this summer. But, Comptroller Mychajliw says, they cannot sit around and wait for health department bureaucrats to make up their minds. They need to get moving to prepare for the big event this summer.

"Our fair provides jobs, great entertainment, and is a big boost to the economy. Not to mention, we need to get back to some sense of normalcy. The Erie County Health Department and state health officials need to meet with fair organizers and provide all the guidance they can to reopen. The data already indicates it can be done safely. People have had enough. Summer is a special time in Buffalo and Erie County. It's time to make this happen," concluded Comptroller Mychajliw.

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