



STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW

ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

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Contact – Office of Erie County Comptroller, 854-8400

COMPTROLLER CALLS FOR TRANSPARENCY IN AWARDING OF COVID BUSINESS GRANTS

Office of Erie County Comptroller notifies 43 North to preserve all documents, emails and receipts related to \$20 million in federal COVID funds awarded to struggling businesses

(ERIE COUNTY, NY) – Erie County Comptroller Stefan Mychajliw has notified 43North, the agency responsible for allocating \$20 million in business grants via Erie County, to preserve and protect all documents related to how the money is being disbursed. The Poloncarz Administration authorized 43North to select what businesses receive a portion of \$20 million in grants. This money is coming from the \$160 million in CARES Act recovery funds provided to Erie County from the federal government.

The Erie County Legislature approved the criteria on which businesses would be awarded or denied grants. 43North was given final authority to review and award grants to some of the more than 5,020 applicants.

The Office of Erie County Comptroller's request for 43North to save all documentation allows auditors to review how money was spent and distributed, especially funds allocated for advertising the program.

"The process of awarding these dollars must be fair for all businesses that applied. I want to know if additional money was spent on advertising or administrative costs. These are public dollars. I demand accountability. Taxpayers deserve to know how their money is being spent," said Comptroller Mychajliw.

The Comptroller's Office has requested 43North keep record of all documentation associated with the awarding and distributing of these grants. Those records include:

- Policies and procedures used to administer, evaluate and select grant recipients.
- Selection criteria and/or scoring rubrics for all applicants for the grants.
- Amounts distributed to grant recipients.
- Documentation as to how the grant dollars are spent.
- Documentation for any administrative costs incurred and spent from the CARES Act funding.
- Documentation for any funding spent by 43North that was not distributed to businesses.

"There's going to be 'winners and losers' when it comes to who is receiving grants. Fairness is what we want. We will decide whether or not this process was equitable for all," concluded Comptroller Mychajliw.

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