



COUNTY OF ERIE

MARK C. POLONCARZ

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

January 30, 2026

Erie County Legislature
92 Franklin Street, 4th Floor
Buffalo, New York 14202

RE: Authorization to Accept FEMA Funding for Submerse NY Grant Contract

Dear Honorable Members:

Enclosed please find a memorandum and proposed resolution from the Department of Environment and Planning (DEP) to authorize the execution of an agreement to accept \$10,000 in Federal Emergency Management Agency's Cooperating Technical Partners program funding, enter into a contract with the prime contractor - Cornell University, and amend a Capital Project Budget.

Should your Honorable Body require further information, I encourage you to contact Deputy Commissioner Bonnie Lawrence. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Mark C. Poloncarz", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark C. Poloncarz, Esq.
Erie County Executive

MCP/nb
Enclosure

cc: Daniel R. Castle, AICP, Commissioner of Environment and Planning
Bonnie Lawrence, Deputy Commissioner of Environment and Planning

MEMORANDUM

To: Honorable Members of the Erie County Legislature
From: Erie County Department of Environment and Planning
Re: Authorization to Accept FEMA Funding for Submerge NY Grant Contract
Date: January 30, 2026

SUMMARY

It is recommended that the Legislature approve the attached resolution prepared by the Department of Environment and Planning (DEP) to authorize the County Executive or the Deputy County Executive to execute the necessary agreements to accept \$10,000 in grant funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Cooperating Technical Partners program, enter into a contract with the prime contractor - Cornell University, and amend a Capital Project Budget to leverage this grant funding with local arts funding to provide an additional public art installation in Erie County.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There will be no negative fiscal impact on County resources. Funding will be added the Capital Project Budget to fund artwork as commissioned by the Arts in Public Places Committee for the Submerge NY project.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

Flooding and resiliency issues continue to impact Erie County and are expected to increase as the climate changes. Heavy and more frequent rain can cause inland flooding along streams. Recent wind events have created numerous seiches along Lake Erie and the Niagara River causing water levels to rise, encasing properties in ice, and flooding shorelines. The artwork funded by this grant will increase public awareness on flood risk, seiches, and climate change issues in a unique way and can be used in outreach campaigns to educate on flood preparedness, watershed and land use concerns, and adaptation for resiliency.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Water Resources Institute at Cornell University was awarded a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to educate the public on flood risk and resiliency issues throughout New York State. This project is called Submerge NY. They have selected Erie County to receive a \$10,000 grant to commission and install artwork that educates the public on resiliency and flooding issues because of art's unique ability to get people to pay attention.

DEP created the Erie County Resiliency in Art Committee made up of environmental stakeholders and members of the public to discuss potential locations and themes for the artwork and draft a Call for Artists for the project. The Erie County Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry is also a member of the Committee and has selected Isle View Park as the location for this project. Because funding must be utilized by September 2026, the group has partnered with the Art in Public Places Committee (AIPP) to access their experience and organizational structure to implement this project in a timely fashion.

In 2023, the County Legislature passed Erie County Local Law #4 to further develop the county's financial support of public art. The law created a funding mechanism related to certain capital projects. Specifically, the law requires one percent of the cost of qualifying capital projects to be allocated to a "Public Art Fund". The fund supports the implementation of public art projects chosen by the AIPP Committee and finalized in the annual Master Public Art Plan. The Submerse NY project is included in the draft 2026 Erie County Art in Public Places Master Plan. The grant funding will be added to the funds available to the AIPP Committee to implement this project and allows local art funding to leverage statewide art funding.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

The DEP will forfeit the grant funding, and the project will not be completed as planned.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

The necessary contract with Cornell University will be executed and the Capital Projects Budget will be amended.

**A RESOLUTION SUBMITTED BY:
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING**

RE: Authorization to Accept FEMA Funding for Submerge NY Grant Contract

WHEREAS, the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning (DEP) has played a crucial role in addressing flood risk and resiliency issues throughout the region for years including outreach and education on these issues; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has awarded funding to Cornell University for the purpose of administering the Submerge NY project to use art as a catalyst for flood risk and resiliency education; and

WHEREAS, Erie County was awarded a \$10,000 grant from Cornell University, as part of the Submerge NY project, to commission and install artwork in Erie County to educate the public on flooding and resiliency issues; and

WHEREAS, the Erie County Art in Public Places Committee (AIPP) was established to select art projects to be funded by Erie County Local Law #4 of the year 2023 and has created a structure for selecting art, contracting with artists, and installing artwork around Erie County; and

WHEREAS, AIPP has agreed to partner on the Submerge NY project and has added the Submerge NY project to their Art in Public Places 2026 Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, to proceed with the project it is necessary for Erie County to execute an agreement with Cornell University and amend the Capital projects Budget;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Erie County Legislature hereby authorizes the County Executive or the Deputy County Executive to execute the necessary agreements with Cornell University to accept \$10,000 for the Submerge NY project and modify the Department of Environment & Planning's Public Art Fund Capital Project (Fund, 410, Funds Center 16200) A.24067 as follows:

Project A.24067
Public Art Fund
Fund 410, Funds Center 16200

REVENUES	BUDGET	CHANGE	REVISED BUDGET
409010 State Aid Revenue	\$ 0	\$10,000	\$ 10,000
486000 Interfund Revenue Subsidy	<u>\$426,385</u>	<u>\$ 0</u>	<u>\$426,385</u>
	<u>\$426,385</u>	<u>\$10,000</u>	<u>\$436,385</u>

APPROPRIATIONS

Capital Project Expense	<u>\$426,385</u>	<u>\$ 0</u>	<u>\$436,385</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$426,385</u>	<u>\$10,000</u>	<u>\$436,385</u>

and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Director of the Division of Budget and Management is hereby authorized to implement any technical or budget adjustments as required to comply with federal, state, and local funding requirements or to effectuate this transfer; and be it further

RESOLVED, that authorization is hereby given to the County Executive and/or Deputy County Executive to amend contracts as necessary to implement any no-cost extensions that may be permitted by the grantor; and be it further

RESOLVED, that certified copies of this resolution shall be forwarded to the Office of the County Executive, Division of Budget and Management, Comptroller's Office, Department of Law, and the Department of Environment and Planning.