Re: Clean Air Coalition Comment on Site Number: C915196B 1001 East Delavan Avenue Site Brownfield Cleanup- Remedial Investigation Work Plan

Dear Mr. Melnyk,

The Clean Air Coalition respectfully submits the following comments regarding the Remedial Investigation Work Plan for Site Number C915196B: Brownfield Cleanup at the site formerly known as GM/American Axle and Manufacturing (GM/AAM), currently owned by East Delavan Properties (EDP).

1. Community Impact

The Clean Air Coalition is a non-profit membership organization that builds power by developing grassroots leaders who organize their communities to run and win environmental justice and public health campaigns in Western New York.

The American Axle site located at 1001 East Delavan Ave. Buffalo, NY is known to be significantly contaminated. Approximately 110 thousand gallons of PCBs are located underneath this site. PCBs, known carcinogens, were found to be leaking into the sewer that flows under community members’ homes.

Clean Air joined with residents of the Delavan-Grider community in 2015 to advocate for a full remediation of this site. Clean Air members live and own property directly adjacent to the site, and also live and own property in the immediate vicinity of the site. The Delavan-Grider neighborhood is a historic Black community in the City of Buffalo with a rich history of community leadership, entrepreneurship, and pride. Due to the contamination of this property, our members and their families are afraid to drink their water and plant gardens in their backyards.

2. Historical Site Use Site Enforcement History

General Motors (GM) opened the facility in 1922. The company assembled rear axles, steering linkages, forgings, drive shafts, steering systems and related components. The facility also housed six oil fired burners, machining equipment, painting equipment and a wastewater treatment plant.

In 1991, GM reported a spill to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) that led to a discovery of PCBs beneath one of the manufacturing buildings. PCBs
are a group of man-made organic chlorinated hydrocarbons produced from 1929 to 1979, which were then banned from commercial use.

In 1994, GM found that PCBs leaked into a brick sewer line that feeds into the Scajaquada Creek. Scajaquada Creek is the historic body of water that flows through heavily residential areas in Lancaster, Depew, Cheektowaga, and the City of Buffalo, before it finally flows into the Niagara River to the Great Lakes.

American Axle (AA) purchased the facility from GM in 1994.

In 2006, GM agreed to remediate the property through a consent order, however the work was never completed.

The site was purchased by Jon Williams in 2008 under the entity East Delavan Properties (EDP). After years of organizing by residents, NYSDEC restarted remediation negotiations between EDP, AA, and GM. In 2009, GM filed for bankruptcy.

A $2.8M settlement was negotiated in 2012 for remediation that also absolved GM of liability. The total estimate at the time for remediation was $10M. Between 2015 and 2017, Clean Air members had numerous meetings with NYSDEC, members of the Western New York Delegation, and the property owner urging that remediation be expedited.

In 2017, $2.8 million was released from the NYS Superfund Program to fund remediation on a portion of the site. EDP advocated to arbitrarily split the property into two parcels, remove the majority of the property from the Superfund Enforcement Program, and apply for tax credits for remediation through the New York State Brownfield Program. The Buffalo Planning Board and the NYSDEC agreed. Later that year, a 5 acre portion of the site remained in the NYSDEC Superfund program and a 32.88 acre portion was referred to the Brownfield Program.

In the summer of 2018, the DEC committed to construct a pump and treat system to remove the contamination leaking into the sewer. The pump and treat system began in the Spring of 2019 and, despite numerous pump failures, has continued operation in 2020.

On behalf of our membership, Clean Air Coalition retained New York State Professional Geological Services, PLLC (nygeology). On behalf of our membership in the Delavan-Grider neighborhood of the City of Buffalo, we respectfully submit our comment to the NYSDEC.

3. General Comments

The Clean Air Coalition urges the NYSDEC to enforce a thorough, robust and aggressive plan at the former American Axle site that centers the human health, the environment and the community.

Due to the significant history of soil contamination on this site, Clean Air is particularly concerned about the potential for groundwater contamination. Buffalo City sewers also run underneath this site, under homes, and flow into the Scajaquada Creek. Some metals mentioned
in the plan, lead and arsenic for instance, exceed New York State standards for groundwater. Groundwater in Buffalo is a serious concern to our health. The Remedial Investigation must comprehensively investigate for lead and other metals on this site, as well as investigate off site potential avenues for off site contamination.

Clean Air is concerned that this work plan only includes a portion of the site. It is unclear whether the implementation of this work plan will result in remediation necessary for the long-term protection of human health and the environment. Specifically, the site has been arbitrarily carved out of the group of sites once operated by GM and American Axle, which includes the Colorado Street site and the Saginaw sites. Although these are separate sites from what is in the application, they also may have a community impact. Clean Air believes it to be in our members’ best interest to group these sites together in a community effort.

We appreciate the NYSDEC's commitment to remediation of this property. We acknowledge that the work plan is more thorough due to oversight by NYSDEC. However, it is clear the NYSDEC has struggled to enforce timely and thorough remediation over the past two decades. For this reason, Clean Air requests that the NYSDEC create a Community Advisory Board that would allow residents and community stakeholders to partner with NYSDEC and the site owner for comprehensive remediation that the community deserves.

At the request of Clean Air members, in July of 2020, the Erie County Legislature unanimously approved a resolution, introduced by Legislator April Baskin, that proclaimed the County’s support for the establishment of a Community Advisory Group on site, as well as their backing of Clean Air’s comments on EDP’s Remedial Investigation Work Plan. This resolution is included in Appendix 1. 26 community groups have also requested that a Community Advisory Group is established. Letters of support are included in Appendix 2. Due to the amount of information and priority this site has in the community, we recommend that in addition to a Community Advisory Group, NYSDEC should also create a website to regularly monitor progress and be able to report it out to the community on a regular basis.

**Procedural History**

On June 25th, 2020, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation issued a notice for public comment for the 1001 East Delavan Avenue Site RIWP. The end date for public comment was set for July 24th, 2020. On July 8th, 2020 the NYSDEC extended the comment deadline until August 24th, 2020. These comments are therefore submitted in a timely manner.

**Technical Comments**

Clean Air Coalition retained New York State Professional Geological Services, PLLC (nygeology) to assist with the technical review of the Inventum Engineering (Inventum) Remedial Investigation Work Plan (RI and RIWP respectively) for the American Axle Brownfield Cleanup Program (BCP) Site. Comments prepared by nygeology are presented below.
Comment 1: Scajaquada Pathways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 3</th>
<th>3.3 Supplemental Remedial Investigation – 2007 to 2009</th>
<th>3.3.3 5x9 Sewer Investigation</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Lines 4 and 5: The RIWP states that the sampling of the Scajaquada CreekInterceptor (Interceptor) is no longer valid because of work done at the site. However, a summary of sampling results, as well as the work done to mitigate the impacts and the result of that mitigation, are not presented. In addition, there is no mention of the work performed on the Scajaquada Drain (Drain).

Analysis: Section 2.5.1 of the 2016 Energy Solutions Consortium Environmental Assessment (Energy Solutions, 2016) reported no detections of PCBs in upstream samples, but did detect PCBs in downstream samples of the Scajaquada Drain, and concluded that, since overflow was not occurring at the time, the source of the PCBs could not have been the American Axle Site.

Notwithstanding that American Axle is the only known PCB source in the area, the report goes on to say that the 5x9 sewer did not have a deleterious impact on the Drain. RIWP Section 2.2.3.1 indicates that the fill unit across the site is likely contiguous and the same as the fill used to relocate the creek; therefore, it is possible that discharge into the Drain could be coming from the fill into the Drain corridor or seeping in through the walls.

Further, Energy Solutions also stated that modeling conducted by Conestoga Rovers Associates (CRA) reported that more than 99% of flow from the 5x9 sewer was being diverted to the Interceptor, and that the remaining risk, although calculated to exceed health standards, was not realistic. The model was also adjusted for dry flow conditions based on corrected population at the time. The resulting temporal concentration in Scajaquada Creek at Forest Lawn Cemetery was 3.24 x 10^-5 ug/l, exceeding the 1 x 10^-6 ug/l limit for PCBs in a Class C Waterway.

It is also unclear whether NYSDEC has reviewed and accepted the Energy Solutions work done for East Delavan Properties (EDP).

Requested RIWP Revisions: A current analysis of the sewer exposure pathways should be included in the RI. Refer to specific comments made herein to the RIWP Sections 4.2 Conceptual Site Model and 5 BCP Remedial Investigation Scope of Work.

Comment 2: Metals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 4</th>
<th>4.1 Existing Conditions</th>
<th>4.1.3 Groundwater</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Section 4.1.3.1 Metal: The RIWP Section 4.1.3 Groundwater Paragraph 1 Lines 2 and 3 state that there are no significant impacts to groundwater on the BCP Site. Yet, the subsection on metals
clearly reports Class GA Groundwater Standard exceedances of Arsenic in MW-807 and Lead (about 15 times the standard) in MW-04.

**Analysis:** The RI should consider all current exceedances to prepare for the Alternatives Analysis.

**Requested RIWP Revisions:** Consider all current exceedances of metals in groundwater in the RI. Refer to specific comments made herein to the RIWP Section 5 BCP Remedial Investigation Scope of Work.

**Comment 3: Pesticides**

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<tr>
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<th>4.1 Existing Conditions</th>
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</table>

**Section 4.1.3.2 Pesticides/Herbicides:** The RIWP reports several exceedances – particularly of Dieldrin in MW-807 – of Pesticides/Herbicides “just above” the Class GA Groundwater Standard.

**Analysis:** The referenced Dieldrin measurement of 0.03J ug/l exceeds the Dieldrin Class GA Groundwater Standard of 0.004 ug/l by an order of magnitude. The RI should consider all current exceedances to prepare for the Alternatives Analysis.

**Requested RIWP Revisions:** Consider all current exceedances of pesticides in groundwater in the RI. Refer to specific comments made herein to the RIWP Section 5 BCP Remedial Investigation Scope of Work.

**Comment 4: 250 Colorado Street**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 4 BCP Site Conditions</th>
<th>4.1 Existing Conditions</th>
<th>4.1.4 Groundwater Flow</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**General:** The RIWP states that data on the influence of groundwater flow was not available from the 250 Colorado Street Site.

**Analysis:** While EDP has no obligations at the 250 Colorado Street Site, it is clear from all the historic reports for that site and the BCP Site that the active pumping at that site is the controlling factor in groundwater flow in areas adjacent to LNAPL known to be present on the BCP Site.

**Requested RIWP Revisions:** Consider the effect of the pumping at the 250 Colorado Street Site when discussing existing groundwater flow. Refer to specific comments made herein to the RIWP Sections 5 BCP Remedial Investigation Scope of Work and 7 Remedial Investigation Report.
Comment 5: Scajaquada Pathways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 4 BCP Site Conditions</th>
<th>4.1 Existing Conditions</th>
<th>4.2 Conceptual Site Model</th>
<th>4.1.4 Groundwater Flow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**General:** In reference to Comment 1 above, the RIWP does not address the flow of groundwater to the 5x9 sewer, the Interceptor or the Drain.

**Analysis:** In addition to the active pumping at the 250 Colorado Street Site, discharges to the 5x9 sewer, the Interceptor and the Drain are the main mechanisms for groundwater leaving the site.

**Requested RIWP Revisions:** The RIWP should consider all extraction points and groundwater discharge area in the discussion of existing conditions and in the conceptual site model. Refer to specific comments made herein to the RIWP Sections 5 BCP Remedial Investigation Scope of Work and 7 Remedial Investigation Report.

Comment 6: LNAPL Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 4 BCP Site Conditions</th>
<th>4.2 Conceptual Site Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Bullet 5:** The RIWP does not address the historic sources of Light Non-Aqueous Phase Liquid (LNAPL) contamination in the former machining area and the powerhouse area at the BCP Site.

**Analysis:** The sources of LNAPL in groundwater at the BCP Site should be presented as part of the conceptual site model. Although LNAPL spatial stability is generally known to occur, it is unclear whether EDP’s closure of the former scrap metal pits in the powerhouse area completely addressed the contaminant source in that area. The fill outside the pit area may harbor residual LNAPL as is seen by slight increases of LNAPL thickness in some wells over time. The lack of information on LNAPL in bedrock in that area, and, in particular, under the building to the north, suggests that one potential historic source could be the former pits at the 250 Colorado Street Site.

**Requested RIWP Revisions:** Further LNAPL delineation is required. Refer to additional comments below and to specific comments made herein to the RIWP Section 5 BCP Remedial Investigation Scope of Work.
Comment 7: Historic Bedrock Well Construction

Section 4
BCP Site Conditions

4.2 Conceptual Site Model

**General:** The RIWP assumes LNAPL data from historic bedrock wells to be accurate and generally unchanging spatially.

**Analysis:** Spatial stability of LNAPL is known to occur following source removal. Construction data from the logs of the historic bedrock wells referenced in the RIWP suggest that LNAPL measurements in these wells may not accurately reflect site conditions. Since LNAPL tends to float on water, wells must be open to the formation to be able to examine the surface of the water. Historic bedrock well construction at the BCP Site followed the conventional site investigation procedure of casing off the overburden and incompetent rock surface as normally used to test for dissolved constituents at depth. However, at the BCP Site, the potentiometric surface of water in bedrock was much higher than the open part of the well, as illustrated below:

As shown above, LNAPL collecting above bedrock cannot enter the well since the part of the well open to the formation is too deep. Well data from wells with logs and water level data included in the RIWP is presented below:

**Requested RIWP Revisions:** Refer to specific comments made herein to the RIWP Section 5 BCP Remedial Investigation Scope of Work.
Comment 8: Pathways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 4 BCP Site Conditions</th>
<th>4.2 Conceptual Site Model (CSM)</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Bullet 10: The RIWP states that there are no current complete pathways at the site.

**Analysis:** Refer to Comment 1 above. Energy Solutions reported that the most recent modeling effort to date resulted in a temporal concentration in Scajaquada Creek at Forest Lawn Cemetery of $3.24 \times 10^{-5}$ ug/l, exceeding the $1 \times 10^{-6}$ ug/l limit for PCBs in a Class C Waterway. This shows that there was a complete pathway at that time. The RIWP statement assumes that the work completed by EDP has eliminated this pathway; however, this has not yet been confirmed.

**Requested RIWP Revisions:** Delete CSM Bullet 10. Also refer to specific comments made herein to the RIWP Sections 5 BCP Remedial Investigation Scope of Work and 7 Remedial Investigation Report.

Comment 9: SB BCP-15

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Section 5 BCP Remedial Investigation Scope of Work</th>
<th>5.3 Subsurface Soils</th>
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</table>

**SB-BCP15:** The RIWP shows the placement of SB-BCP15 in the southwest quadrant of the site in what appears to be an area between two buildings and near a building connector.

**Analysis:** The rationale for the location of this boring is unclear. By moving the boring location slightly east and due south, it can be placed in the fill corridor near the upgradient side of the Interceptor. Movement to this location will confirm that no constituents of concern have migrated along this utility corridor toward the western boundary of the site.

**Requested RIWP Revisions:** Relocate the proposed position of SB-BCP15 slightly east and due south in the fill corridor near the upgradient side of the Interceptor.

Comment 10: Delineation of Groundwater Impacts

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<tr>
<th>Section 5 BCP Remedial Investigation Scope of Work</th>
<th>5.4 Groundwater</th>
</tr>
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</table>

**First Sentence:** The RIWP states that the existing monitoring well network has provided horizontal and vertical delineation of groundwater impacts at the BCP Site.

**Analysis:** The existing monitoring well network has provided good horizontal and vertical delineation of constituents of concern in groundwater; however, additional delineation is
necessary. This section goes on to require the placement of new wells specifically for this purpose.

Requested RIWP Revisions: Delete or soften this sentence.

**Comment 11: Bedrock Monitoring Well Construction**

| Section 5 BCP Remedial Investigation Scope of Work | 5.4 Groundwater | 5.4.1 Monitoring Well Replacement |

Paragraph 4: The RIWP states bedrock replacement monitoring wells will be double-cased with borings advanced 1 foot into bedrock to enable a 4-inch minimum diameter well casing to be grouted in.

**Analysis:** Refer to Comment 7 above. Given the water levels generally found at the BCP Site, there is a strong likelihood that this casing will not allow the detection of LNAPL at the overburden/bedrock interface.

Requested RIWP Revisions: Follow the procedure specified in Section 5.5 LNAPL Delineation, 5.5.1 Former Powerhouse Area Paragraph 4 Sentence 1 and 2: Monitor the cuttings for free oil, leave the boring open and monitor for LNAPL accumulation for 24 hours (overnight would be acceptable.) In addition, any well, including MW-4B, where LNAPL is present at a level significantly above the bottom of the casing into bedrock, LNAPL should be evacuated completely. If any LNAPL reappears in a well with a casing set significantly below the LNAPL elevation, the mechanism for its reappearance must be discovered and discussed.

**Comment 12: BCP-01**

| Section 5 BCP Remedial Investigation Scope of Work | 5.4 Groundwater | 5.4.2 New Monitoring Wells |

New Monitoring Wells BCP-01, BCP-02 and BCP-03: The RIWP states new monitoring wells will be placed to delineate conditions near the former utility vaults, the Drain and the Interceptor, and, that although drilled to bedrock, they will be screened in the clay unit.

**Analysis:** Refer to Comments 7 and 11 above. Given that well MW-4B is the only bedrock well in that area, and that it shows consistent LNAPL whereas other overlying units in the area do not, the RIWP should consider a closer examination of these locations using a more appropriate technique.

Requested RIWP Revisions: Follow the procedure specified in Section 5.5 LNAPL Delineation, 5.5.1 Former Powerhouse Area Paragraph 4 Sentence 1 and 2: Monitor the cuttings for free oil, leave the boring open and monitor for LNAPL accumulation for 24 hours (overnight would be
acceptable). If no oil is found, complete the well. If oil is found, install a new bedrock well as outlined in Comment 11 above, and blind drill an adjacent well screened in clay.

Comment 13: MW-04 and MW-807

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 5 BCP Remedial Investigation Scope of Work</th>
<th>5.4 Groundwater</th>
<th>5.4.3 Sampling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**General:** The RIWP does not plan to sample all wells; however, current conditions in certain wells with exceedances should be confirmed.

**Analysis:** Refer to Comments 2 and 3 above regarding exceedances in wells MW-04 and MW-807 for metals and Dieldrin, respectively.

**Requested RIWP Revisions:** Expand analytical parameters in MW-04 and MW-807 to include metals and pesticides.

Comment 14: Scajaquada Drain - Hoyt Lake Pathway Confirmation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section 7 BCP Remedial Investigation Scope of Work</th>
<th>General</th>
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</table>

**General:** The RIWP does not currently recognize or plan to confirm the status of the active Drain pathway.

**Analysis:** Refer to Comments 1 and 8 above regarding the documented existence of a complete pathway to Hoyt Lake through the Scajaquada Drain. Although the work completed by EDP most likely has reduced PCB input into the system, this should be confirmed. Samples taken adjacent to the American Axle Site, the only known major source of PCBs in the area, exhibited higher concentrations than upstream and downstream samples. While the remediation work by EDP may have prevented more recent releases, it is possible that residual PCBs in the Drain may have predated EDP but were associated with the American Axle operation. With minor additional study, the current state of the Scajaquada Drain-Hoyt Lake Pathway should be confirmed to be used in support of the Alternatives Analysis.

**Requested RIWP Revisions:** Add Pathway Sampling to the Work Plan. For one high-flow and one low-flow event, collect water and sediment samples for PCB analysis at locations as follows: 1.) just before the 5x9 sewer enters the Interceptor; 2.) at one or two locations in the Interceptor on-site or as close to the site as possible; and 3.) at representative locations upstream of, adjacent to, and downstream of the site. Also refer to the specific comment made herein to the RIWP Section 7 Remedial Investigation Report regarding the modeling of the results.
Comment 15: Pathway Modeling

General: Once the pathway sampling has been completed pursuant to Comment 13 above, pathway analysis should be completed.

Analysis: The pathway analysis should include modeling to eliminate continuing concerns at Hoyt Lake relative to the BCP Site.

Requested RIWP Revisions: With respect to Comment 14, add Scajaquada Drain-Hoyt Lake Pathway, add Sewer Modeling as a bullet in the list of RIR components.

Comment 16: 250 Colorado Street Data

General: Once the synoptic data at 250 Colorado Street has been collected above, it should be added to the data set for analysis in the RIR.

Analysis: With respect to Comment 14 above, the 250 Colorado Street pumping regime is controlling important areas of groundwater flow at the BCP Site, including the former machine and powerhouse areas. Data from the site should be added to assist in the continued hydrogeological analysis of the BCP Site.

Requested RIWP Revisions: None; however, to the extent possible, data from the 250 Colorado Street Site should be included in the hydrogeological analysis presented in the RIR.

Comment 18: Green Remediation

General: NYSDEC requirements for the consideration of remedies that can reduce the environmental footprint should be considered in the Alternatives Analysis.

Analysis: The pathway analysis should include modeling to eliminate continuing concerns at Hoyt Lake relative to the BCP Site.

Requested RIWP Revisions: Understand and consider NYSDEC DER-31 on Green Remediation to the extent possible in the development of the RIR report. In particular, if location-stable PCB-
contaminated LNAPL is to remain on-site, the Alternatives Analysis should consider the possibility of in-situ treatment to degrade it to a non-toxic state over time; if such technologies exist and are applicable to the BCP Site, the collection of additional data may be warranted as a pilot study at a later date.

**Summary and Requested Revisions**

We appreciate NYSDEC’s commitment to the remediation of this site. We expect NYSDEC to reply to each of our technical comments. In the interest of keeping the RI Implementation on schedule, we have summarized our comments in the format of revisions we would like to have made to the RIWP as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>RIWP Reference</th>
<th>RIWP Revision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Scajaquada Pathways</td>
<td>3.3.3 5x9 Sewer Investigation</td>
<td>A current analysis of the sewer exposure pathways should be included in the RI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Metals</td>
<td>4.1.3 Groundwater</td>
<td>Consider all current exceedances of metals in groundwater in the RI.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3: Pesticides</td>
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<td>4.1.4 Groundwater Flow</td>
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<td>7: Historic Bedrock Well Construction</td>
<td>4.2 Conceptual Site Model</td>
<td>Refer to specific comments on Section 5 Scope of Work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: Pathways</td>
<td>4.2 Conceptual Site Model</td>
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Sincerely,

Rebecca Newberry
Executive Director

Appendix

Appendix: 1 Erie County Resolution

Appendix 2: Community Letters in support of Community Advisory Group