



Erie County Clerk
Michael P. Kearns



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE APPROVES FUNDING
FOR ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S ZOMBIES INITIATIVE**

BUFFALO, NY (May 21, 2019)—The Erie County Legislature approved a \$200,000 one-year grant to the Clerk's office to provide resources to assist county municipalities and communities facing zombie foreclosures. Erie County Clerk Michael P. "Mickey" Kearns will use the funds to form a collaboration between his office and the Western New York Law Center to create the **Erie County Clerk's ZOMBIES Initiative**.

Zombie homes have been a target of Kearns since he was on the Buffalo Common Council, and he strongly advocated zombie home legislation while serving in the Assembly and celebrated when it was signed into law by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo in 2016. The legislation requires the mortgage servicer to report zombie homes to the state registry and subjects them to fines of \$500 per day for failing to properly maintain the homes.

The WNY Law Center has been working on zombie property outreach services for a number of years and has been tracking Notices of Pendency filed on Erie County residences at the Erie County Clerk's office since 2002 and has data on file from 2006 to present.

"We have been working with the WNY Law Center for years on this very important issue. This funding from the legislature will now allow them to dedicate a full-time attorney and paralegal to the Erie County Clerk's ZOMBIES Initiative, which will give them tremendous resources to make a difference," said Kearns, who expects the initiative to begin June 1, once the contract is signed.

"I now have ZERO Tolerance for neglected properties in Erie County," Kearns added.

The **Erie County Clerk's ZOMBIES Initiative** stands for:

Zero tolerance

Open lines of communication

Municipal participation

Bank accountability

Interest investment in neighborhoods

Engage & educate communities

Solutions

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Under this Initiative, the WNY Law Center will now be able to increase its communication with municipalities throughout the county to better serve them with this growing issue of home foreclosures and abandoned zombie homes in their neighborhoods. This will also allow them to enhance the Erie County Zombie Foreclosure Task Force Meetings, which are held quarterly and were spearheaded by Erie County Clerk Kearns. The next meeting is June 4 in the clerk's conference room at 92 Franklin St.

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