



COUNTY OF DUTCHESS

MARCUS J. MOLINARO
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert G. Rolison, County Legislature Chairman
All Legislators & Legislature Staff

FROM: Marcus J. Molinaro, County Executive 

DATE: December 14, 2015

RE: **2016 Adopted Budget**

Today, I sign and return the 2016 Adopted Budget and Capital Improvement Plan as amended by the County Legislature.

The 2016 Adopted Budget ensures critical county services continue without diminishment, and provides much needed tax relief to our residents, with a property tax levy reduction of more than \$1 million and the first property tax rate cut in eight years. County spending is down from the current modified budget, and we enable STAR property taxpayers to again qualify for a state tax rebate check next fall. We continue our commitment to targeted strategic investment in infrastructure, farming, tourism and small business development to grow our economy and private sector jobs. We continue to ensure vital services for our most vulnerable with enhanced supportive services for families as well as domestic violence and sexual assault prevention services. Our focus remains on smaller, smarter and more effective government that continues to set an example across New York State.

I am grateful for another thoughtful legislative budget review process this year. The final adopted budget includes several legislative amendments from both sides of the aisle that I am pleased to support including funding for important initiatives such as Domestic Violence Prevention Training, a new Community Development Coordinator position to focus and enhance urban development, a new Farm to Table initiative, Active Shooter Training, Hazardous Household Waste Disposal and new dollars for our Agency Partner Grant Program, as well as other initiatives. All of these enhancements came with a minimal impact to the original proposed budget.

When you consider where we began just four short years ago, it is a remarkable achievement that we can deliver to our residents a budget that not only maintains services, but enhances them; while providing them much needed property tax relief they deserve. Over the past four years, working together, we have overcome a \$40 million budget gap, rebuilt our county's general fund balance, improved our bond rating and reestablished Dutchess County's fiscal security. We have created strong partnerships with our local governments and our community agencies. Together, we have been able to consolidate government, reduce costs, improve efficiencies, and change the very way government functions, all under the constraints of state and federal mandated costs, which continue to consume 70% of our budget. While Albany delivered some relief – we must remain vigilant in our efforts to work with our state legislative delegation, Democrat and Republican, and fight for what relief we can secure.

Assemblywoman Didi Barrett and Senator Sue Serino are to be commended for their continued support of efforts to reduce costs and reshape mental health services in our county.

Now, we find ourselves at a critical point of transition, with many changes upon us. Office for the Aging Director Mary Kaye Dolan and Commissioner of Health Dr. Kari Reiber will be retiring and we thank them for their leadership and service. Assistant County Executive Mike Ellison will be returning to Albany to serve in the New York State Legislature and we look forward to his voice continuing our call for mandate relief and reform. When it comes to the annual budget process, however, certainly the most significant change is the upcoming retirement of Budget Director Valerie Sommerville. With vast knowledge, quiet grace and infinite patience, Val has guided Dutchess County's fiscal course through the challenges of Albany's mandate burdens, economic downturns and rising service demands; always trying to find an appropriate balance to protect our taxpayers. I know you join me in thanking Val for her leadership and her service and wish her the very best in retirement.

Change also comes to the Legislature, as we welcome new legislators and bid farewell to others who move on to new chapters in their personal lives or public service careers. We are grateful to the leadership of both caucuses; Majority Leader Angela Flesland and Assistant Majority Leader Donna Bolner as well as Minority Leader Barbara Jeter-Jackson and Assistant Minority Leader Alison MacAvery – each have guided their caucuses with wisdom and patience, and enabled a bipartisan dialogue that has resulted in a budget that benefits all of our residents. Thanks Budget Committee Chairman Dale Borchert for his stewardship of the annual budget review process; providing ample opportunity for legislators and the public alike to participate in shaping the final adopted budget. Together, we continue to demonstrate how much we can achieve when we engage in robust and civil discourse - coming together to mold consensus.

On behalf of residents and taxpayers alike, thank you, Mr. Chairman for your hard work and leadership at the helm of the Dutchess County Legislature. It has been an honor and privilege to work together with you over our many years of shared service. We look forward to our continued partnership with you as you become Mayor of our Queen City – the City of Poughkeepsie on January 1st.

As we head into 2016 and navigate all of the transitions before us, we are confident in knowing that we can address our challenges by engaging in the civil, constructive debate that has proven to result in better decisions and policy. There is much work ahead and we look forward to all of the opportunities before us to continue to make Dutchess County a great place to live, work and raise a family.

Best wishes for a happy, healthy holiday season and a successful new year!