



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARKING THE FIRST 1000 DAYS OF ULSTER COUNTY GOVERNMENT
Comptroller Elliott Auerbach Comments on Charter Success

KINGSTON, NY (September 28, 2011)... Ulster County Comptroller Elliott Auerbach offers his perspective on the first 1000 days of Ulster County's new Charter-form of government and the County's progress toward fulfilling the promise of a new government designed to be economical, efficient and effective.

"Already, so much good is evident in our Charter-form of government," said Auerbach who will make a detailed presentation to the Ulster County Chamber of Commerce's "Meet the Leaders" Program on October 6th.

Lauding how effectively County Executive Hein and his staff responded to the natural disaster caused by storms Irene and Lee, Auerbach said, "Mike set the county's resources into play before Irene arrived, was still very much hands-on when Lee followed and as a result no lives were lost." Auerbach offered major kudos to the County Legislature for its handling of the Legislative Commission on Redistricting. "This was a first in Ulster County, perhaps in NYS, but the Legislature appointed credible individuals then allowed them to apply the required legal criteria to create 23 brand-new legislative districts," said Auerbach praising the outcome of a process that neutralized traditional politics to create districts that are fair and equitable.

The Charter changed the Legislature by focusing the body on budget, policy and law and by downsizing it from 33 members to 23 members. The Charter segregated the functions of a county administrator from the Legislature by creating the elected Office of the County Executive and vesting it with broad executive authority.

New to the County, though, was the creation of the Office of the County Comptroller. Auerbach explains that the role of the Comptroller is often best described by what it is not. The Ulster County Comptroller does **not**:

- legislate or adopt resolutions or confirm appointments
- develop or approve budgets or appropriate funds
- establish, administer or oversee County programs
- manage, administer or invest county funds
- approve contracts or supervise procurement

"What we do," explains Auerbach, "is protect the public interest by monitoring County government to assess and report on the degree to which its operation is economical, efficient and/or effective

The mission of the Ulster County Comptroller's Office is to serve as an independent agency of the people and to protect the public interest by monitoring County government and to assess and report on the degree to which its operation is economical, efficient and its financial condition sound.

and its financial condition sound.” The Comptroller is the Chief Auditing and Accounting Officer of the County.

Being independent – elected by the people of the County – Auerbach explains is critical to fulfilling the mission of evaluating and reporting on the conduct and outcomes of County departments and offices.

Since his first reports to the public, Comptroller Auerbach has repeatedly noted that the County’s financial management system is inadequate and inappropriate, does not produce essential data in a reliable format and, manages financial data using a “DOS-like” system and multiple separate departmental methods of payroll management.

“There also remains a lack of standardization in how public funds are managed among the many departments and agencies,” said Auerbach, “there are redundancies and errors in data that can produce inconsistent and unreliable reports. It’s a shame that excessive staff time must be spent to compensate for the failures of the financial management system.”

A Charter Revision Commission has recently been seated to review and make recommendations on amendments, additions or revisions to the County Charter. “This is an important opportunity to ensure the independence of the comptroller position is maintained, the role of legislature clarified and power of the executive checked,” said Auerbach.

Auerbach will detail further his concerns regarding the County’s need to focus on the fundamentals of government management at the “Meet the Leaders” event. “If the Charter experiment is to achieve its full potential,” said Auerbach, “there are a host of basic needs that require legislative and executive action.”

The U. C. Chamber of Commerce “Meet the Leaders” event is October 6, 2011 from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the Courtyard by Marriott. Advance registration with the Chamber is required.

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