



# ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE NEWS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Ulster County Legislature Eager to See Details of Shared Services Agreement**

On January 11, 2012, County Executive Michael Hein and City of Kingston Mayor Shayne Gallo held a press conference and announced a conceptual plan for the County of Ulster and City of Kingston to enter into an agreement for Ulster County to help with the City of Kingston's tourism promotion.

County Executive Hein acknowledged in his press conference "This agreement is subject to approval of the Ulster County Legislature and the City of Kingston Common Council."

It has been six weeks since the County Executive's press conference and both the City of Kingston Common Council and the Ulster County Legislature are still waiting on the County Executive to present a draft of the agreement for their consideration.

Ulster County Legislature Chairman Terry Bernardo said, "Shared services can save taxpayers' money and this merger could be smart government. We are eager to review this agreement and if it makes sense for the taxpayers of Ulster County, we want to help complete the merger."

This agreement has been touted as one that would save the County money, by the City paying the County \$30,000 and providing \$15,000 per year in "in kind" services in the form of Real Estate.

However, when Daily Freeman reported on the matter, Paul Kirby wrote: "If the deal is approved, a City of Kingston tourism employee, would go to work for the county, but not necessarily be the tourism office, Hein said."

In a meeting with Legislative leadership just four hours after the press conference, the County Executive failed to disclose to Chairman Bernardo and Vice Chairman Maloney that the County of Ulster would be hiring a City of Kingston Tourism employee as part of this plan.

"Withholding details such as this from the Legislature calls into question the whole plan. What else is he withholding, and why won't he show us or the Common Council the agreement?" said Chairman of the Economic Development and Tourism Committee, Jim Maloney. "We are in the process of reviewing a shared services grant that we could apply for. I would like the Legislature to understand exactly what the agreement is with the City of Kingston prior to applying for a shared services grant. It makes sense to agree to share services first, before asking for grant money to effectuate that agreement. Furthermore, we want to see this agreement first before taking any action - protecting our taxpayers dollars is what we were elected to do."

Deputy County Executive Ken Crannell has told Chairman Maloney's committee that "Ulster County should apply for the grant money and if the Legislature and/or the Common Council does not approve the merger, then we don't accept the money."

"It goes directly to the credibility of Ulster County with the State" said Majority Leader Ken Ronk. "You don't apply to the State for grant money and not be prepared to accept it." Leader Ronk continued "Legislators want to know "Was Paul Kirby wrong, or is the hiring of an employee for approximately \$70,000 in salary and benefits (the number used by Mr. Kirby), part of, in his words, the "deal"?"

The deadline to apply for the grant for shared services is March 21, 2012.

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