

Republicans Vote Against Flawed Budget

Statement from Minority Leader Gary Cooper and the Republican Caucus

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While there are many parts of the budget the Republican Caucus wholeheartedly supports, including but not limited to, the County funding of the Sheriff's road patrols, required funding to run elections, contractual and cost of living adjustments to our dedicated county employees and restoring our commitment to the future and education of Dutchess Community College students; there are serious concerns about the future economic stability of County Government finances the way this budget was passed along party lines by the Democrat legislators.

The ability of Dutchess County Government to function and provide the needed and expected services to taxpayers is in jeopardy with this budget. The budget and process leading to this morning's 2:20am budget vote can only be described in one word... flawed. A process that should take place in front of the public has taken place behind closed doors without input from or disclosure to the public.

We believe in open government and this process went against our fundamental belief that the work of the people should take place in front of the people. Tragically for the overburdened taxpayers of Dutchess County this did not happen.

We were unable to support a budget with flaws leading to an unknown tax increase, with revenue streams that simply do not exist and a fund balance that could potentially be depleted. If this process took place in the spirit of open government we would have been fully aware of the potential tax levy for our constituents, yet we are not.

The secret closed door meetings and unwillingness of the Majority to listen to County Department officials discuss the implications of the budget amendments to their departments was senseless. Making uninformed decisions is unconscionable.

This budget does not decrease taxes as the Majority would like the public to believe, it dramatically increases taxes while providing cuts that will have devastating implications on County residents.

The Democrat Majority abdicated their responsibility to both government and their constituents. The inaction of the Budget, Finance and Personnel Committee created the groundwork for a disaster that was made considerably worse by the failure of the Majority to disclose their 23 pages of budget amendments with nearly 700 line item changes until 8:30pm on the night of the originally scheduled Budget vote.

The public was left in the dark and legislators were kept unaware of the misguided and dangerous proposals of the Democrats. The Republican Caucus was unable to support this reckless, draconian budget.