



# *News Release*

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## **Office of the Dutchess County Executive**

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### ***Democrats Adopt False, Error Ridden Budget Democrat Property Tax Hike is nearly 12 %***

*Poughkeepsie...* Secret meetings, communication shutdowns, chaotic scheduling, and general lack of understanding about the operations of Dutchess County Government by the Dutchess County Legislature's Democrat Majority led them to adopt a seriously flawed 2009 budget.

According to Commissioner of Finance Pamela Barrack, "Legislative action on the original County Executive proposed budget could calculate to a **nearly 12% hike for county property taxpayers.**"

For the past three days, the County's financial and legal professionals have been struggling to determine the actual property tax increase and reconcile the more than 700 last minute budget amendments Democrats had kept secret for six weeks. When passed by the Democrats in a party line vote Wednesday morning at 2:20am, Democrats claimed their property tax increase would be only 2.2% compared to the Steinhaus original proposal which **cut the tax levy by millions of dollars** --- but in fact, the **Democrats' budget raises property taxes by nearly 12%, which is more than 5 times what they claimed** the night of their vote.

"This is what happens when you shut everyone else out of the process by being so secretive. The Democrat Majority hid their 700 amendments from the public, ignored Republican legislators, locked out the administration and even shut down the professional financial staff the

night they steamrolled through their budget adoption,” said County Executive Steinhaus. “By keeping their 700 budget amendments secret until the very last minute, the Democrats have wrecked havoc on the County’s finances and dealt a major blow to county property taxpayers when taxpayers can least afford it.”

Dutchess County Budget Director Valerie Sommerville and the financial professionals of county government were overwhelmed by the number of mistakes made by the Democrats in their amendments and their failure to reveal corresponding revenue adjustments when the Democrats made cuts to critical programs and services. Sommerville said, “For the past 17 years, the Budget Office has always worked together with the Clerk of the Legislature to go through the budget amendments approved by the Legislature’s Budget & Finance Committee during the 7-10 days that is normally between the Budget & Finance committee vote, allowing us to make the necessary adjustments together including reimbursable expenses, revenues, etc. If the same process had been followed that has been in place in the past, legislators and taxpayers would all have had a solid understanding ahead of time of what they would be voting on at the final board budget meeting and they would have known the true impact of a nearly 12% property tax increase from the costs of those amendments. This year, unfortunately, no one was allowed to see any amendments until just minutes before the final vote was scheduled to take place.”

Mistakes and false amendments added up to nearly \$10 million added to the tax levy compared to the 2009 budget proposal presented by the County Executive, bringing the 2009 property tax levy to \$95,094,534.

County Executive Steinhaus concluded, “The Democrat Majority knew full well there were mistakes and deception in the budget they adopted, but they brushed them aside as small, minor issues. Democrats cut public safety programs that cost the local tax levy zero as they are 100% reimbursed from other sources, like the District Attorneys *Crime Impact Initiative*. Democrats knowingly ignored revenue adjustments that had to be made and disregarded items they knew were unlawful – these are not small issues unless you consider the Democrats’ nearly 12% property tax increase to be ‘small’.”

The County Executive has until Monday, December 15<sup>th</sup> to issue any vetoes on individual budget amendments. It is expected the Dutchess County Legislature will meet on December 16<sup>th</sup> to vote on any possible veto overrides.

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