



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF ULSTER COUNTY EXECUTIVE MIKE HEIN



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ULSTER COUNTY MOVES TO PARTNER WITH TOWNS FOR BETTER, FASTER AND LOWER COST HIGHWAY SERVICES “Study Identifies Potential for Millions in Taxpayer Savings”

Kingston, NY (January 4, 2010) - County Executive Mike Hein convened a meeting today with Town Supervisors and Town Highway Superintendents, as well as representatives from the Ulster County Legislature, Pattern for Progress and the Center for Research, Regional Education and Outreach (CRREO) of SUNY New Paltz. The meeting was called to outline an innovative, decentralized approach to delivering highway services in Ulster County.

What was proposed today is the largest shared services initiative in the history of Ulster County and, according to consultant’s projections, it has the potential for million of dollars in savings to Town and County taxpayers.

“This innovative program calls for the decentralization of various highway services, from the County to the Towns, starting with the plowing, salting and sanding of County owned roads, and when in place, it will provide extensive cost savings. This overhaul will reduce duplication, provide better services and safer roads, and will do so at a lower cost to our collective taxpayers. If elected leaders are willing to work together in a non-partisan way, there’s no telling how much we can accomplish,” said County Executive Hein. He added, “When this overhaul is completed, no longer will residents see a municipal snowplow drive with its plow up over an unplowed road simply because it’s not “theirs”. This shared services approach is a clear path to savings for Town and County taxpayers and, in my view, represents the future of government.”

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New York State Secretary of State Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez said, “I am extremely pleased that the Department of State was able to support Ulster County’s innovative proposal to improve highway services and create cost savings for its residents. This type of inter-municipal collaboration to reduce the cost of delivering key public services, such as safe highways, is an important means to control property tax increases. It is precisely the kind of out-of-the box thinking that I hope is replicated by more communities across the state.”

John Valk, Supervisor of the Town of Shawangunk and President of the Ulster County Association of Supervisors and Mayors said, “With the Highway Superintendents on board, this program will provide our residents with safer roads during snowstorms and save money too. It is a very worthwhile pursuit.”

“I’m open to exploring any innovative idea that can help us provide better services and safer roads, at a lower cost. I’m sure there are many details to be worked out, however, I think that we can move forward and I think that a collaborative approach to our common challenges is a good way to go,” **said Gael Appler, Highway Superintendent of the Town of Marlborough and President of the Ulster County Association of Highway Superintendents.**

The meeting was convened by County Executive Hein to review the findings and recommendations contained in a New York State Department of State grant –funded Shared Municipal Services Study, commissioned by Ulster County in May of 2008. The study was conducted by Pattern for Progress and included extensive interviews with Town officials. The study was designed to identify potential savings opportunities in a number of operational areas, including highway services. The study also researched successful programs and models being utilized by other communities throughout New York State.

Expanding upon recommendations contained in the study and working with elected officials from all of the Towns, the County Executive proposed a decentralized, coordinated approach to the delivery of highway services, starting with the plowing, sanding and salting of County roads. This plan would offer the greatest opportunity for savings for County and Town taxpayers and could be implemented relatively quickly. One of the key factors in the County Executive's determination was the award of a \$481 thousand dollar grant, from the New York State Department of State to Ulster County and participating Towns, for the installation of an Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) System on all County and Town highway vehicles. The AVL system makes it possible to track vehicles in "real time" and thus to coordinate the timing and completion of snow plowing routes over a wide geographic area.

As a result of today's meeting, an Implementation Committee is being formed consisting of members of the Ulster County Association of Town Supervisors and Mayors, the Ulster County Association of Highway Superintendents, the Ulster County Legislature and representatives from the Executive's Administration, including the Commissioner of Public Works. The committee will be tasked with analyzing data and developing an action plan for implementing the new strategy prior to the presentation of Town Budgets for the 2011 fiscal year. The Committee's initial report is to be delivered to the County Executive within 45 days.

Implementation of the proposed strategy requires the negotiation of inter-municipal agreements between the County and participating Towns. These agreements are subject to approval by the Ulster County Legislature and participating Town Boards

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