



NEWS FROM  
**ULSTER COUNTY**  
County Executive Jen Metzger

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**\*\*\*\*For Immediate Release\*\*\*\***

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**Contact:** Amberly Jane Campbell, Assistant Deputy County Executive  
(845) 340-3800 x8958 / [acam@ulstercountyny.gov](mailto:acam@ulstercountyny.gov)

## **Ulster County 2026 Budget Approved by County Legislature**

**KINGSTON, NY** - The Ulster County Legislature voted on Wednesday to approve the 2026 Executive Budget with amendments — advancing County Executive Jen Metzger’s proposed investments to address food and housing insecurity, strengthen emergency medical response, improve public transit and infrastructure, and protect the environment, all while keeping property taxes flat.

“I want to thank the Legislature for approving this budget and for its partnership in carefully stewarding County finances during this challenging time, as the federal government cuts safety-net programs and shifts costs to states and counties,” **said County Executive Metzger.** “This budget meets immediate needs, including bolstering food and housing security, while investing in safe and resilient infrastructure and safeguarding Ulster County’s long-term fiscal health. I plan to sign the approved 2026 budget as soon as it is delivered.”

The Final Budget, passed with a vote of 14 to 8 with 1 absence, includes:

- **Emergency Medical Services (\$4.7M):** Direct support to local EMS agencies, performance-based incentives, and a new EMT certification program to address staffing shortages.
- **Food Security:** The Executive Budget included \$350,000 for food security grants, plus \$150,000 to expand home-delivered meals to seniors through the County’s Meals on Wheels program. A Legislative amendment added \$40,000 to the food security program to assist immigrant families in need.
- **Housing Stability:** \$640,000 to expand the Eviction Prevention Program with legal counsel for tenants; \$2 million from the Housing Action Fund to create a nonprofit-run family shelter with meals and caseworker support.

- Senior Transportation (\$30,000): Expansion of the Office of the Aging’s Neighbor2Neighbor program to increase rides for seniors to medical appointments and pharmacies.
- Transit & Infrastructure (\$14.5M): Paving 30 miles of County roads, replacing seven bridges, adding Sunday UCAT bus service in Kingston, new transfer points, and modernization of UCAT’s website and schedules.
- School Bus Safety: Launch of a stop-arm camera program to reduce illegal passing of school buses, funded through fine revenue reinvested in road safety.
- Climate & Environment: Construction underway on an all-electric, net-zero Emergency Communications Center in New Paltz; municipal climate solutions support; “Green the Scene” program to support composting and recycling at fairs and festivals.
- SUNY Ulster Support: \$7.1M in operating support, (plus \$4.3M in state-mandated chargebacks); creation of a Reimagining SUNY Ulster Committee to chart future capital investments.
- Community & History: The Executive Budget included \$80,000 for Revolutionary War 250th anniversary programming, and a legislative amendment added another \$20,000 for a total of \$100,000. Additionally, the final budget includes the County Executive Budget proposal to allocate \$30,000 for the Hometown Heroes Banner Program honoring veterans and community heroes.

The 2026 Budget also reflects negotiated increases in compensation for unionized employees and the first year of a new salary plan for non-represented employees, addressing wage compression and recruitment challenges.

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