

## Saratoga County to Vote on Tax Cap Override

**(Ballston Spa, NY)** Saratoga County announced today that they will vote on overriding the NYS Tax Cap on December 6th following a public hearing on the 2017 Saratoga County Budget scheduled for 4:30 pm in the County's boardroom. Overriding the tax cap is necessary to maintain a structurally balance budget as recommended by the State Comptroller's Office. The budget guidelines provided by the comptroller state that the County has the responsibility to adopt structurally balanced budgets, and the override of the 2017 tax cap is necessary to provide the revenue needed to achieve that goal.

Board of Supervisors' Law and Finance Chairman Ed Kinowski provided oversight of the process leading up to the release of the 2017 Tentative Budget and the amendments approved by the Board of Supervisors. Kinowski stated that "our Board is well aware of the concerns raised by citizens relative to our consideration to override the State's tax cap and the decision to take this measure will ultimately allow the County to maintain the lowest and the most stable tax rate of all the 62 counties that make up New York State".

Evidence of Saratoga County's success in managing the cost of County government can be seen by comparing the 1992 tax rate of \$2.96 per thousand with the proposed rate of \$2.30 for the 2017 budget year. Current Board Chairman Arthur "Mo" Wright stated that "The reality is that a property owner with a home or business valued at \$200,000 was paying \$592 a year, twenty-five years ago, and would be paying \$460 a year in 2017 which represents a 22.3% drop in their county tax bill".

The tax cap, first implemented in 2011, limits the growth in property taxes to 2% a year or the growth in inflation, whichever is lower. As inflation has fallen in recent years so too has the tax cap. The cap for counties, cities, and towns has dropped to 0.68% for 2017. County Administrator Spencer Hellwig says that "the problem with the law is that it doesn't allow a carve-out for areas, like Saratoga County, that are having assessment growth, which is clearly tied to economic development and investment in new residential and commercial properties. This growth always requires more infrastructure upgrades, maintenance and services. Large scale development projects are often tax exempt and with counties forced to lower tax rates to come in under the cap, we are not getting the revenue we need to pay for these expenses. These tax exempt properties still need the services we provide whether those are law enforcement, emergency service, fire service, infrastructure service, or connecting properties to water or sewer."

Saratoga County's population has grown by 26,000 residents in the past fifteen years and it is the fastest growing County in the entire state. This growth increases the need and cost for personnel and infrastructure improvements which is why new positions were approved in the Sheriff's Department following the Board of Supervisor's budget workshop meeting, millions in capital improvements are budgeted to maintain 360 miles of county roads and 120 bridges, and the Emergency 911 radio system, that provides communications for every police and emergency service agency in the County, must be upgraded to manage the increases in call volume and function reliably with the recent advances in wireless technology.

Also, as they have done in the past, the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors will include a property tax flyer with tax bills sent to residents informing them about how State & Federal mandates affect their annual County taxes. "Mandates" are Federal or State created programs that are required to be operated by lower level governments. In New York State, most of these mandates are not accompanied by State money to pay for them. Because County government relies upon property taxes to operate, expensive State mandates become expensive property taxes on local taxpayers. The 2017 County General Fund Budget totals \$245,170,474 which includes \$56,551,768 in unfunded programs mandated by New York State Government. County government has little or no control over these mandate costs. In 2017, these Unfunded Mandates will consume 99.3% of the \$56,927,194 Property Tax Levy. This means that virtually all County property taxes will be spent covering these State mandates.