

Establishing A Policy To Fund, Facilitate, Perpetuate And Support The Augmentation And Operation Of Local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) In and For The County Of Ulster

Referred to: The Law Enforcement and Public Safety Committee (Chairwoman Hansut and Legislators Clinton, Hewitt, Levine, Maloney, McCollough and Walls), and The Ways and Means Committee (Chairman Gavaris and Legislators Collins, Hansut, Kovacs, Nolan, Roberts, and Uchitelle)

Legislator Jason J. Kovacs offers the following:

WHEREAS, the provision of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is a critical public service essential to ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of Ulster County residents; and

WHEREAS, Ulster County's Towns and the City of Kingston face increasing operational costs in maintaining reliable EMS services, including personnel, training, equipment, and infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature recognizes the need to provide financial support to assist Town governments and the City of Kingston in meeting these essential public safety responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, the findings and recommendations outlined in the EMS Services Delivery Report for Ulster County, New York, dated March 26, 2024, prepared by the Center for Public Safety Management, LLC, emphasize the critical need for increased EMS funding and support to address staffing shortages, equipment needs, and operational challenges across the County; and

WHEREAS, upon closing of the 2023 financials, Ulster County ended with an unrestricted fund balance of over \$102 million, or 27% of total General Fund expenditures and operating transfers out; and

WHEREAS, a surplus is anticipated for the year ended December 31, 2024; and

WHEREAS, Ulster County's adopted Fund Balance Policy requires the unrestricted fund balance within the General Fund to be between 15% and 20% of current General Fund operating expenditures; and

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Comptroller released a report on or about October 31, 2024 finding that "at the close of 2023, the County was \$31.1 million over the fund balance threshold for the General Fund based on limits established by the Ulster County Legislature", and that over "the past three years, the County's operating surplus was \$136.4 million higher than planned;" and

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WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature finds it necessary and appropriate to allocate a portion of the unrestricted fund balance to support local EMS services; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate from a public safety, fiscal management and budget operations perspective to maintain on-going funding to support local EMS-related services, operations and programs; and

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature, pursuant to Ulster County Charter §C-11, is the legislative, appropriating and policy-determining body of the County; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that it is the Policy of Ulster County to fund, facilitate, perpetuate and support the augmentation and operation of local emergency medical services (EMS) in and for the County of Ulster in an amount not to exceed five million dollars per annum; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that in furtherance of this Policy, Ulster County shall offer an annual appropriation to fund the County's Towns and the City of Kingston for the administration of local Emergency Medical Services which shall be allocated annually according to a formula allocating 50% of the funds based on each Town's and the City's proportional population as determined by the most recent decennial U.S. Census, and 50% based on the Town's and the City's proportional total assessed property value as reported by the Ulster County Department of Finance; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the County of Ulster shall implement this Policy commencing in fiscal year 2025 and continue the same from year to year provided that sufficient unassigned funds exist in a given fiscal year; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that this Policy shall require as a predicate to the disbursement of any funds to a Town or the City of Kingston a contract or intermunicipal agreement in a form approved by the County Attorney and Legislative Counsel; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that any such contract or intermunicipal agreement in furtherance of this Policy shall require the funds disbursed be used solely for such EMS-related expenses, including but not limited to staffing, training, equipment procurement, and operational costs; and, be it further

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RESOLVED, that any such contract or intermunicipal agreement in furtherance of this Policy shall contain procedures for Towns and the City of Kingston to document the use of these funds to ensure accountability and transparency, including but not limited to the requirement that the participating Towns and the City of Kingston shall submit an annual report to the Clerk of the Legislature for distribution to members of the Ulster County Legislature detailing the use of funds and the impact on EMS services,

and moves its adoption.

ADOPTED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES:

NOES:

Passed Committee: Law Enforcement and Public Safety on _____.

Passed Committee: Ways and Means on _____.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

\$5,000,000.00 – ADDITIONAL 2025 FUND BALANCE APPROPRIATION

\$5,000,000.00 – ADDITIONAL 2025 APPROPRIATION DOLLARS