



# ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE NEWS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **ULSTER COUNTY STRIVING FOR ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL**

Kingston, NY – The Ulster County Legislature authorized several Capital Projects to various county facilities for upgrades and renovations to ensure compliance with the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA.) Facilities included in this round of upgrades are the Mental Health Offices, Ulster County Fairgrounds, Trudy Resnick Farber Building, County Courthouse, County Office Building and Emergency Management Offices. Sidewalk replacement, ramp installations, entryway improvements, upgrades to door handles, braille and other signage, and renovation of rest rooms are just a few of the projects planned.

"Too often people with special needs are overlooked. Sometimes a little thing can either create a barrier, or open a door – Literally," said Craig Lopez, Chairman of the Public Health and Social Services Committee. "Ulster County is committed to eliminating those barriers and making all of our buildings and facilities accessible to everyone. In fact, just recently the County installed two handicapped lifts at the county pool," he continued.

Legislator Chris Allen (D-Saugerties), Deputy Chairman of Public Health and Social Services agrees, "This undertaking demonstrates Ulster County's continuing focus on serving the needs of individuals with disabilities, their care givers, and loved ones."

Lopez explained that while all new County projects include ADA compliance and energy efficient measures, retrofitting for these measures on older buildings, while just as vital, can be challenging and costly. Adding braille to signs and elevators, visual aids and making curb cuts are relatively simple. Widening a doorway or adding a ramp or an elevator in a 50 to 100 year old building often requires some design and engineering expertise.

Lopez stated, "There are so many unique opportunities in Ulster County, but for individuals with special needs, some of the things that make them unique create unintended barriers." He noted that plans are underway for other public and private projects that include accessibility considerations to serve county residents and attract vacationing families with special needs. He points to plans for the Ashokan Rail Trail which includes construction of wheelchair friendly permeable surfaces, and noted that both the Catskill Mountain Railroad and the future Rail Explorers events are accessible.

Both Lopez and Allen urge local businesses, community groups, clubs and planners to follow Ulster County's example and plan ahead to ensure events and facilities are accessible to all.

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