



ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE NEWS

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION

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Ulster County Legislature Adopts 2025 Budget

(Kingston, NY) – Following the adoption of the 2025 County Budget Tuesday night in a bipartisan vote of 17-4, the Clerk of the Legislature will deliver the Adopted Budget to the County Executive for signature. The total spending plan of \$475,837,692, will not raise taxes in the new year and is offset through an appropriation from the fund balance of \$35,873,632.

“This budget makes critical investments in infrastructure, mental health, housing, public safety, and social services, reflecting our commitment to the people of Ulster County. I’m proud of the thoughtful work and amendments proposed by my colleagues to better serve our communities and look forward to these programs making a real difference,” **said Chair Peter Criswell (District 7, City of Kingston).**

The Legislature made a number of changes to the Proposed Budget that will address the waste stream and make investments in our county workforce and local agriculture. Through the addition of \$25,000 for the creation of a Zero Corps, these funds will propel zero waste initiatives at county events in line with Executive Order No. 1. The Legislature has committed an additional \$25,000 to explore opportunities to work with the growing industrial hemp sector to bolster support for local agriculture and manufacturing.

“This Budget is a product of careful deliberation and consideration by members of the Ways & Means Committee and the Legislative Body as a whole. Through our amendment to increase our payment on Bond Anticipation Notes [BANS] by nearly \$10 million, we are reducing the total interest payments by the County, moving into compliance with our Debt Management Policy and making a significant stride towards compliance with our Fund Balance Policy,” **said Legislator John Gavaris (District 15, Ellenville, Wawarsing), Chair of the Ways & Means Committee.**

Among one of the key personnel changes made by the Legislature, the Budget has been amended to include the Receptionist With Typing position in the Office for the Aging. This position was dissolved in the Executive’s Proposed Budget. Following information, support and feedback from the public the Legislature saw the crucial role this position plays in assisting the public.

“We heard from many seniors and caregivers how valuable this receptionist position is. As the face of Office for the Aging, this role serves as an entry point, providing valuable information to seniors and their families on not only the services the Department offers, but direction to other areas such as HEAP, Section 8 voucher applications, issues with their electric bill and countless other challenges our seniors face. I am grateful to my Legislative colleagues for recognizing this need and keeping this position in the

Budget,” **said Majority Leader Abe Uchitelle (District 5, City of Kingston)**, the author of the amendment.

“Office for the Aging often serves as the first point of contact a senior or their family for the entire County, whether its seeking home health aide referrals, access to meal programs or simply looking to pay their tax bill. Having a knowledgeable human being answering the phone who is familiar with not only OFA’s services, but the entire County’s functions is invaluable to our neighbors when they need assistance and allows our seniors to continue to lead independent lives. I am grateful to my colleagues that we recognized the importance of keeping the Receptionist position at Office for the Aging to allow them to continue their important service,” **said Legislator Gina Hansut (District 10, Highland & Marlborough)**.

In keeping with the Legislature’s commitment to expanding access to efficient and expansive public transportation, the Legislature has approved an amendment to create two Bus Steward positions within UCAT. Serving as a pilot program at, these Bus Stewards will ride high traffic routes alongside the public to provide information on the route, schedule and assist passengers loading groceries or securing their bicycles.

“Since the Legislature passed the fare-free policy in 2022, we have seen a substantial increase in new riders choosing to take public transportation. While this has reduced the number of cars on the road and served as a model for other transportation systems, there is a learning curve for the public to understand the routes and schedule, “**said Legislator Chris Hewitt (District 21, Rochester), the author of the budget amendment.** “By placing a knowledgeable, community-minded individual on the bus to answer questions and assist passengers we can reduce rider confusion, keep our drivers focused on the road and make the entire system run more efficiently. I look forward to the implementation of this program and measuring its efficacy during the next year.”

Legislators Kitchen, Litts, Maloney and Roberts voted against approving this spending plan.

“The 2025 Budget includes major policy changes which should have greater Legislative oversight and does not include any tax relief for our residents despite us being out of compliance with our fund balance policy. We continue to overtax our neighbors who are already struggling to keep their head above water. Accordingly, this was a Budget I could not support. I look forward to working with my legislative colleagues and the Executive to address the affordability crisis in Ulster County by taking less money from the pocket of our constituents and reducing the substantial tax burden we place on our neighbors,” **said Minority Leader Kevin Roberts (District 12, Plattekill)**.

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