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# Sharing is caring | Albany County exec releases state-mandated plan to lower property taxes

🛗 Aug 03, 2017 🚨 Ali Hibbs 🗾 Albany County, Bethlehem, Colonie, Government, Guilderland, New Scotland, News, Towns

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Albany County Legislator Paul Miller (D-Guilderland) speaks at Monday's public hearing on the County's shared services plan. Seated is Jim Malatras, president of the Rockefeller Institute, which helped create the plan. Photo provided.

**ALBANY COUNTY** — After two and half months of information gathering and analysis, County Executive Dan McCoy has submitted a Shared Services Property Tax Plan to the legislature that could potentially save taxpayers nearly \$7 million a year if fully adopted. The proposed savings in the plan would be added to more than \$15 million in savings by 2019, already agreed to in previous shared service efforts throughout the county.

The statewide County-wide Shared Services Initiative, enacted in the 2018 state budget, requires county officials to lead the effort to develop localized plans that find property tax savings by coordinating and eliminating duplicative services and propose coordinated services to enhance purchasing power. The chief executive of each county is expected to coordinate their county's effort to engage elected leaders and school district officials to identify and review potential areas for shared services and taxpayer savings.

The Albany County Shared Services draft report, prepared by the Rockefeller Institute of Government, will be reviewed and the legislature may issue an advisory report with recommendations. The Shared Services Panel, consisting of the chief executive officers of every municipality and school district and led by McCoy, will continue to review, gather input from the public, and analyze proposals in order to finalize the plan by September 15, the deadline for public input and a

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panel vote.

To assist in the process of putting the plan together, the panel worked closely with the Benjamin Center at SUNY New Paltz.

"Given the tight schedule we were given to conduct our work and to gather information, I am pleased with the draft plan we've put together," said McCoy. "The work we've done together has demonstrated to me that an inclusive process works."

The report addresses several areas where shared services could be implemented, including: shared specialty equipment and the use of a shared personnel database; enhanced use of joint purchasing for goods and services for municipalities; consolidation of duplicative functions and exploring energy efficiency programs. The panel will continue to examine in depth potential savings in healthcare (without reducing benefits), debt consolidation and refinancing, and workers' compensation.

"This plan represents a consensus-driven approach from local governments and school districts across the county that will not only reduce costs to taxpayers, but will improve services through better coordination," said Rockefeller Institute of Government President Jim Malatras. "We look forward to getting input from the community to finalize this plan."

The first public hearing on the plan took place on Thursday, Aug 3, at the county Harold L. Joyce building on State St. in Albany. Two additional public hearings have been scheduled for August 7, in the large meeting room at The Crossings, 580 Albany Shaker Road, and on August 29, at Bethlehem Town Hall, 447 Delaware Avenue in Delmar. Both will begin at 5:30 p.m.

The County Legislature is now reviewing the proposal and will provide comments and suggestions to Chairman Sean Ward, who will submit them to McCoy for consideration.

"Some of the Legislature's initiatives, like anaerobic digestion [of county waste], have already been included in the Executive's report," said Ward, thanking McCoy, the panel, the Benjamin Center and the Rockefeller Institute.

Democratic Majority Leader Frank Commisso said many municipalities were not supportive of sharing services when the county first introduced the idea in the 90s.

"They felt they would be giving up some of their turf," he said. "But in recent years, there's been a new frame of mind, and we've already saved millions of dollars through sharing services." Commisso also touted the \$26 million anaerobic waste digesting system, which would turn waste into fuel, which Albany County is exploring in collaboration with Saratoga County.

The vote on the final plan must be held by September 15, at which time the plan must be submitted to the state. If it is approved by September 15, the county executive will hold a public presentation on it by October 15.

If the plan fails or is not voted on, the county will go back to the drawing board and endeavor to meet the 2018 deadlines.

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The county executive's proposed plan can be found at: http://www.rockinst.org/lgs/PDF /8.1.17\_draft\_albany\_co\_Shared\_Services\_Plan.PDF

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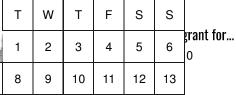
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