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### **Local officials propose consolidation**

#### **Report completed on efficiency plan, help save funds**



Albany County Executive Dan McCoy introduces the completed Countywide Government Efficiency Plan that shows how local and county governments could save funds and help taxpayers through consolidation. Photo by [Emily Drew](#).

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ALBANY COUNTY — Local government officials recently announced the completion of an efficiency plan spanning throughout Albany County that proposes collaboration between local governments in order to both help taxpayers and save millions annually.

The “Countywide Government Efficiency Plan” shows how Albany County and local governments and districts have been implementing efficiencies through shared services since 2012. The plan also details further efficiencies that can be implemented throughout the county.

According to local officials, the efficiency plan was completed not only to save local governments money, but also as an attempt to lower property taxes. It was done in accordance with the property tax freeze credit law, a relief program to reimburse qualifying New York homeowners the increases in local taxes.

“We need to lower our property taxes, badly,” said City of Albany treasurer Darius Shahanifar at a press conference late last week.

According to the plan, prepared by Center for Research, Regional Education and Outreach out of SUNY New Paltz, the county and local governments will see \$15.8 million in annual savings from 2017-19. This six times more than \$2.4 million required by the freeze credit law.

Albany County Executive Dan McCoy said that 28 local officials have already signed on with the plan. He said the collaboration would provide the ability and funds to focus on other issues.

The plan details the proposed consolidations, including merging staff and services between the towns of Bethlehem and Colonie, and extending as far the Village of Green Island.

Already, some of the reforms outlined in the plan have been enacted, like shared highway equipment and personnel. According to the report, reforms of the Albany County Nursing Home has already seen savings and is expected to result in \$3.1 million saved annually.

As well, Bethlehem and Colonie already saw a proposal last winter to collaborate with Albany County on snowplow routes and share personnel. Bethlehem also first saw a proposal to consolidate dispatching services over two years ago. The plan outlines possible consolidations between Bethlehem’s and the Town of Guelderland’s dispatching services.