

Molinaro Proposes Massive Multi Year Reorganization of Public Works to Begin in 2013

Poughkeepsie, NY... Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro will discuss his major reorganization plan for the Dutchess County Department of Public Works with county legislators this afternoon as part of his ongoing budget information sessions. The plan is a three year reorganization of one of Dutchess County Government's largest and most diverse departments. The goal of the reorganization is to streamline operations for efficiency and cost-savings; develop public-private models for service delivery; and reduce redundancy of services.

The reorganization of the Department of Public Works will be a multi-year process targeted at reducing the size of the organization by nearly 15% over the next three years and reducing annual operating budget expenses. Position reduction savings, including salaries and benefits are expected to total nearly \$1.2 million in 2013 alone.

"Public Works is one of the most visible and identifiable departments for county residents, providing the services people value most such as snow removal, road repair, park and recreational amenities and more. However, Public Works is also one of the County's largest cost centers," said County Executive Molinaro. "This multi-year transformation will help to ensure our Public Works services remain sustainable for the future."

The Dutchess County Department of Public Works (DPW) consists of five major divisions:

- Highway Maintenance and Construction
- Engineering
- Buildings
- Parks
- Aviation

"Over the years, DPW has grown from basic infrastructure repair to a full scale construction company, a classic case of 'mission creep' that has become too costly to sustain," said County Executive Molinaro. "By integrating our service delivery and consolidating the organization to be more agile and flexible, we can better meet the needs of our residents."

County Executive Molinaro will begin a nationwide search for a new Commissioner of Public Works to replace Charles Traver, who retired in July. (Robert Balkind currently serves as Acting Commissioner of Public Works.) “As we move forward, our focus will be a return to basics: road and infrastructure repair and maintenance. We will seek new opportunities to partner with those outside of the county government including local municipalities and the private sector when they can deliver a project more efficiently and at a lesser cost; or where responsibilities can be distributed to reduce overlap and provide greater efficiency at all levels,” said Molinaro.

In 2013, the reorganization plan will include several major initiatives that will provide for annual operating budget savings through improved workflow, elimination of personnel services redundancy, and a reduction in overall staffing levels. DPW will continue to maintain a high level of core services to the public by focusing on improved overall efficiency through the following initiatives:

Centralized Business Office for All Divisions

In 2013, business office staff and functions will be consolidated into a centralized location to reduce redundancy and streamline business office functions. Business office functions include responsibilities such as contract maintenance, invoice processing, supply inventory as well as payroll functions. Payroll functions will be modernized with the expansion of an electronic timekeeping system to all divisions, replacing hand-written time sheets and punch clock systems and allowing for improved benefit time tracking. Currently, the electronic timekeeping system is used in the Highway and Engineering Divisions. In 2013, it will be expanded to the Parks, Buildings and Aviation divisions.

Reorganization and Consolidation of Highway and Engineering Divisions, including Auto Center Realignment

In 2013, the Highway and Engineering will be consolidated into one division. The two divisions share similar responsibilities in the design, construction, maintenance and rehabilitation of the County’s 395 miles of roads, 140 bridges and 178 drainage structures. The management structure will be realigned and consolidated to provide better coordination and streamlined oversight of both the Highway and Business functions, with a reduction in the number of management positions.

Highway crew work assignments will be restructured during winter operation and the summer construction season to allow for currently vacant positions to be eliminated while still providing essential highway maintenance services. For example, crew deployment will be altered to reduce travel time to and from work sites, providing workflow efficiencies. There will also be a greater focus on outcome based objectives to determine when private contractors or local municipalities may be able to provide greater savings and efficiency as compared to a County in-house effort.

“We will better utilize our highway outpost locations for crew deployment, reducing drive times for employees and allowing more time spent on road projects. We expect to conservatively save a half hour per day for every person on the crew, allowing us to make up the loss of the positions and still get the job done,” said Acting Commissioner of Public Works Robert Balkind.

Also as part of this effort, the County’s Auto Center will be merged into the Department of Public Works Highway Division. The Auto Center is currently part of Central Services. This is a logical realignment as the Highway Division is already responsible for the management and oversight of the Highway & Engineering equipment maintenance garage, and employs mechanics, garage supervisors and related support staff.

Other Initiatives and Efficiencies:

Parks Division

- Parks Division will work in partnership with Highway Division to increase efficiency for park and rail trail maintenance and repair.
- Exploration of expanded revenue opportunities for park resources such as private communication towers in remote area of various park facilities.
- Exploration of a joint venture with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to create a forest stewardship plan to improve forest management while providing the County with a possible new revenue opportunity.

Aviation Division

- Evaluate all building and ground leases to establish proper lease rates and terms.

- Evaluate costs/benefits of public vs. private management of Dutchess County Airport.

Buildings Division

- Relocate Building Division management and office from the County Office Building on Market Street in Poughkeepsie to Highway Operations building at 626 Dutchess Turnpike in Poughkeepsie. This will centralize DPW administration and improve office space utilization in the County Office Building.

“Government must be ‘right-sized’ for the conditions we face now and expectations reset if we are to be sustainable for the future. This multi-year approach is a more streamlined approach and maintains services while reducing county costs and improving efficiency,” said County Executive Molinaro.

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