

Dutchess County Legislature Board Meeting

April 14, 2025

The session began with an Earth Day and Earth Month proclamation. It was presented by Minority Leader Valdes Smith and Legislator Kaul, and was unanimously approved by those present. The proclamation was lengthy and comprehensive. It began with the acknowledgment that the Earth's natural systems – water, soil, air – are essential to human life, that Dutchess County is blessed with abundant natural resources, that protecting our environment is essential for safeguarding the future of our children and generations to come, and that indigenous peoples have passed on ecological knowledge and sustainable practices. Several Dutchess County agencies and cooperating non-profit organizations were recognized and praised for their leadership, cooperation, collaboration and guidance in protecting the environment through planning, land preservation and conservation, protecting agriculture, recycling, and renewable energy projects. The Legislature affirmed its commitment to environmental stewardship and urged County residents, businesses and institutions to get involved and take action –such as participating in community cleanups, educational programs, tree plantings and energy conservation measures - to protect and restore our shared environment.

Members from the Hyde Park and Pawling historical societies thanked the Legislature for supporting their ongoing partnership with four other historical societies and Dutchess Tourism Incorporated. Town of Dover historian and chair of “the Beekman polling precinct REV250 work group” also thanked the Legislature for its support and reported that a consortium of local historians and societies were preparing to deliver programming for the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in 2026.

Legislator Faust, as chair of the Public Safety Committee and in accord with National Public Safety Week, recognized and expressed gratitude to all the 911 dispatchers and emergency response communicators in the County and the region,

Legislator Drago reminded all of Cornell Cooperative Extension's annual plant sale on May 16th and 17th.

Legislator Valdes Smith expanded on an issue that received much attention at the March 2025 meeting: closing a loophole that allows convicted sex offenders to operate businesses that serve minors. She reported that legislators hosted a public forum on the subject that included legislators, parents, and instructors, and that there will be a follow-up meeting open to the public on April 24th.

The Legislature unanimously affirmed all resolutions. The consent agenda items included resolutions authorizing the issuance of \$7.8 million “serial funds” to pay for a bridge and highway improvements (Resolution 4); accepting grant funding from NYS Office of

Temporary and Disability Assistance and from the NYS Office of Children and Family Services, and amending the 2025 adopted budget as it pertains to the Dept. of Community and Family Services, the Department of Planning and Development and the Shared Service Reserve Fund, and the Department of History (Resolutions 50, 51, 52, and 59); authorizing anticipated grant agreements with the Federal Aviation Administration and New York state Department of Transportation and amending the 2025 adopted budget as it pertains to the Public Works Airport Division and the Airport Capital Improvement Program (Resolutions 53 and 54);. authorizing the county executive to execute an inter-municipal agreement for county sign shop services to be provided by Dutchess County Department of Public Works to various municipalities (Resolution 55); authorizing installment payments of delinquent real property taxes (Resolution 56); a home rule request urging NYS Legislature to approve Senate Bill S-5492 and Assembly Bill A-5970, legislation that enables Dutchess County to extend authorization for continuation of three quarters of 1% sales and compensating use tax (Resolution 57); and adoption of a disposition plan for real property and acquired by Dutchess County through the in rem delinquent tax lien foreclosure process and repeal of Resolution number 244 of 1997 (Resolution 59).

The one item on the non-consent agenda, Resolution 22, expanded the list of County officials required to file an annual statement of financial disclosure pursuant to the County Code of Ethics. An amendment offered by Legislator Munn added members of the Resource Recovery Authority and the Water and Wastewater Authority.

Legislator Atkins and Legislator Drago made requests for Executive officials to come to the next session to illuminate certain projects. Pointing to a recently received memo relating to a plan to phase out the existing emergency shelter at the pods in the City of Poughkeepsie and replace it with a 50-bed facility at 21 Cheney Dr., Legislator Atkins said the memo was vague and unclear; he had many questions and requested that, sooner rather than later, Sabrina Marzouka, head of Dutchess County Community & Family Services present the full plan to the Legislature “particularly around Cheney Drive, but also around the hotels/motels.” This matter was addressed further in the public part of the session by Rebecca Edwards, Supervisor of the Town of Poughkeepsie. She expressed strong objections to the plan as it was outlined in the memo because, among other reasons it failed to address other sites or current plans to expand existing facilities such as Hudson River Housing site on the same road. She asked for more clarity, specifically regarding: (1) how many staff and case managers are planned, and whether it will operate like the current pods with people leaving first thing in the morning and coming back at night, and, if so, what services they can access, how they can get to them and where they will be; (2) whether it is safe to occupy the chosen site (at the prior psychiatric facility) given that it has asbestos and lacks ADA accessibility; (3) how this proposal fits within a broader comprehensive long-range plan, including what other investments are planned for other municipalities within the county. She noted how the community around the planned Oakley Street project was not consulted or asked to collaborate, and urged the

county not to make that mistake again. She said the problem of homelessness required all stakeholders to work together and asked for a seat at the table.

Legislator Drago requested executive staff come to review a report regarding the status of the StopGap supplemental service for EMS. He said he found the report “fairly inadequate in terms of the KPIs [Key Performance Indicators]”, saying it was “missing details on a number of towns..., the advertising campaign around public awareness, around when to call 911.” Legislator Munn concurred and requested specific data regarding any response time improvements if available, and if not, when it would be. Legislator Polasek offered his understanding that the report provided to the Legislature was “just a snippet” and a full first quarter report “is forthcoming.”

Other members of the public also spoke at the end of the session. One expressed appreciation for the Earth Day and Earth Month proclamation, the steps the County is taking to promote sustainability, and urged more national and local efforts around waste management.

Another, Daniel Atonna (a union member and community organizer) addressed several issues including rising homelessness; he promoted local “good cause eviction” legislation that limits unreasonable rent increases and protects against arbitrary evictions (and invited people who wanted his help in getting a campaign started to text him at 845-321-2663). He also urged transitioning away from the county incinerator asap and providing a just transition for workers, and, in addition, making the county public transit buses free.

Lastly, a Lagrangeville resident spoke about a county approved program involving the use of school bus cameras as the basis for issuing traffic tickets. He received a ticket 10 months ago but had not yet received a court date. Upon investigating the private company that had the contract for this project (Bus Patrol), he found that it had a history of corruption, was not advising recipients of tickets of their legal options, and was receiving as remuneration 70-90% of the ticket payments. He asked for more transparency.

The meeting ended with condolences for Richard Noel, a former county legislator and former county comptroller who also served in the Air Force National Guard.