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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTRACT BALLOONS FROM $30k TO $290k
Comptroller's Office Wants to Let the Air Out Of Amendment Inflation

Kingston, NY (July 12, 2016) – The Office of the Ulster County Comptroller has called on Legislative Leaders, the Count Attorney and County Executive to consider adjustments to the County's contract amendment process in the interest of fostering best practices and government transparency.

In question is a $30,000 contract between Ulster County and a computer technical support provider that has been amended nine times since it was originally entered into in 2012 and has ballooned to $245,000. A tenth amendment is currently under consideration that would inflate the contract to $290,000.

"Our analysis reveals what could be deemed as an unhealthy pattern," said Comptroller Elliott Auerbach. "While contract amendments are not unusual, this contract is proposed to increase to nearly ten times its original quote and has been amended twice every year since its inception." In a memo to both the Legislature and Executive, the Comptroller's Office stated "…considering that multiple amendments have been made fairly close to others, it begs the questions as to whether there was adequate planning for the long-term necessity of these services, whether we are adding unneeded pressure to our County budget, and whether the County is utilizing best practices in this regard."

The Comptroller's memo concluded by urging "the Executive and Legislature to formalize a procedure for dealing with the perpetual use of contract amendments and extensions. Perhaps placing limits on the overall number, dollar threshold, or timespan would help address the issue of seemingly endless amendments to contracts and ensure that County dollars are responsibly spent."

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