

NEWS FROM THE ULSTER COUNTY OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

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For release: Immediately

COMPTROLLER GALLAGHER CALLS FOR FULL INVESTIGATION OF COMMISSIONER OF FINANCE

Kingston NY (March 1, 2023)- On February 28, 2023, the Comptroller's Office was made aware of allegations of theft occurring at the Hurley Recreation Association and the subsequent removal of Ulster County Commissioner of Finance Burt Gulnick as the Treasurer of that organization. Given the seriousness of the allegations as they relate to cash oversight and management, I immediately reached out to the County Executive's Office and began an internal investigation. While the allegations are presently being investigated by state and local authorities, it is imperative that the County immediately take the appropriate steps to safeguard Ulster County taxpayers' more than \$214 million in cash assets.

The Comptroller's office recently communicated specific concerns about the absence of internal controls over cash receipts in a draft audit circulated to management last week that identified the potential for theft and error in cash collections within the County. These cash collections are in delinquent real property tax collection which is overseen by Commissioner Gulnick. Furthermore, the Comptroller's Office currently lacks access to critical systems that track tax collections despite repeated requests made by the Office over the last 12 months. The Comptroller's Office appreciates the County Executive's Office providing some of this requested data available today. We continue to call for full transparency and information sharing between the Department of Finance, and the Comptroller's Office as it relates to these, and all County transactions.

Since taking office in 2020, I have found my access to Ulster County financial information routinely denied and blocked. I have raised and documented my concerns about access to financial information with the County Executive's Office through multiple administrations. The Comptroller's Office currently has numerous outstanding requests for information that are over one year old. Requests made for both documentation and access are often left unanswered.

As the Comptroller, it is my duty to identify areas of concerns and to safeguard County assets. I have communicated red flags and internal controls concerns and have repeatedly been denied access to systems and information. The extreme nature of these allegations and their impacts on internal controls needs to be immediately addressed by the administration.

I will work with County Executive Metzger and the relevant appropriate partner agencies to verify that Ulster County did not suffer any losses and to confirm the integrity of Ulster County financial operations for the protection of taxpayers.

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