



News From

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BROOKS UNVEILS HISTORIC 2012 BUDGET: PROPERTY TAX RATE FLAT FOR 8TH STRAIGHT YEAR, SPENDING HELD FAR BELOW INFLATION

Budget is balanced & compliant with Tax Cap; responsibly funds vital services

Delivering once again on a vow to protect taxpayers, County Executive **Maggie Brooks** today presented her proposed Budget for 2012. The County Executive's 2012 Operating Budget, totaling \$939.8 million, freezes the property tax rate for the 8th consecutive year, holds spending far below the rate of inflation, and continues to make County government smaller, smarter, and more efficient, all while responsibly funding quality-of-life services.

"This is the 8th budget that I am submitting as County Executive, but I can say that every single one has started with the same question - what can Monroe County do to best serve the interests of local taxpayers and their families?" said **Brooks**. *"That's why I take great pride in presenting a balanced budget for 2012 that freezes the property tax rate for an 8th straight year, holds spending well below inflation, and responsibly funds the quality-of-life services that make our community a world-class place to live, work, and raise a family."*

No Property Tax Increase; Complies with State Property Tax Cap

For an unprecedented 8th consecutive year, **Brooks** has honored her commitment to local taxpayers by proposing a flat property tax rate. The 2012 Budget preserves the property tax cut **Brooks** delivered in 2008, and maintained over the last three years in the face of significant fiscal challenges, holding the rate flat at \$8.99 per \$1,000 of assessed value. As a result, the County property tax rate is lower now than when **Brooks** first took office. **Brooks** is also the first Executive in Monroe County history to hold the County property tax rate flat for 8 consecutive years.

New for the 2012 Monroe County Budget is the first-time impact of the New York State Property Tax Cap. While rising mandated costs have forced several counties across New York to take drastic measures to override the new cap legislation, years of stringent fiscal management and forward-thinking financial planning put Monroe County in a solid position to comply with the State Tax Cap for 2012.

"Monroe County's record of property tax stability is a critical component in our ongoing efforts to help employers create and retain local jobs and grow our local economy," said **Brooks**. *"Our record of results speaks for itself. In the past year alone our community has been named one of the strongest job markets in America and first in the nation for job*

growth. That stands as the strongest affirmation yet that Monroe County's commitment to fiscal discipline works, allowing taxpayers to boost our local economy by holding on to more of their hard-earned money."

Spending Held Far Below Rate of Inflation; Complies with Taxpayer Protection Act

A testament to **Brooks'** commitment to fiscal responsibility, the 2012 Budget holds non-mandated spending – or the spending that the County can control on a local level – far below the rate of inflation.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI), an indicator used to determine changes in the rate of inflation, currently stands at 3.9%. **Brooks'** 2012 Budget succeeds in holding non-mandated spending to a negligible increase of only 0.8%. As a result, the budget is in full compliance with the Taxpayer Protection Act of 2007, which acts as a first-of-its-kind local property tax cap by requiring annual increases in discretionary spending to be no greater than the rate of inflation.

"Our community is moving forward on the path to prosperity by leaps and bounds. Yet, Monroe County's commitment to property tax stability and economic expansion is only as strong as our dedication to reigning-in spending," continued **Brooks**. *"Each and every year, Monroe County sets aggressive goals to do more than ever before, with less than ever before. Through a combination of strict cost controls and the continued streamlining of County services, we've once again succeeded in holding non-mandated spending, or the spending that the County can control on a local level, far below inflation for 2012."*

A Top-Down Dedication to Fiscal Responsibility

For budget year 2012, Monroe County set aggressive internal budget targets to assist in controlling costs and doing more with less. Sharing in **Brooks'** commitment to fiscal discipline, Monroe County's internal departments worked to identify and secure \$8 million in operational efficiencies for the coming year.

The savings were achieved through a combination of innovative cost-avoidance measures, including the effective management of vacancies for funded positions, strict oversight of capital expenses and debt service, and implementation of general efficiencies across county government.

"When it comes to reigning-in spending, Monroe County leads by example," said **Brooks**. *"By embracing the principles of fiscal restraint that this Administration promotes from the top down, our departments were able to achieve \$8 million in general efficiencies for 2012. That is an absolutely incredible accomplishment, and I would like to thank our department and division leaders, in addition to Monroe County's nearly 4,500 dedicated employees, for working with me to achieve significant savings for taxpayers."*

Reducing the Size of County Government

For 2012, **Brooks** continues her efforts to make Monroe County government smaller, smarter, and more efficient. The County will support 42 fewer full-time-equivalent positions in 2012, resulting in the estimated savings of \$2 million. That includes 39 positions eliminated through attrition and retirements, in addition to 3 layoffs.

Bolstering the 2012 Budget are employee health care savings achieved through collaborative renegotiations with the County's workforce benefits providers, amounting to \$8 million, all without affecting the availability or level of benefits for existing employees. Monroe County also continues to avoid hundreds of millions of dollars in added workforce costs as a result of the responsible, prudent, and collaborative approach it has taken with regard to negotiating workforce collective bargaining agreements.

*"In crafting the 2012 budget, Monroe County tightened our fiscal belts and redoubled our commitment to making government smaller, smarter, and more efficient," continued **Brooks**. "By leaning hard on the principles of fiscal restraint, which serve as the cornerstone in our record of property tax stability and job growth, Monroe County has been able to shrink the size of government by over 380 positions in the past six years alone."*

Bridging the Gap to a Balanced Budget

As mandated costs continue to outpace the growth of local revenues, most New York counties face a significant structural resource gap for 2012.

To address this mandate-fueled shortfall, the 2012 Monroe County Budget reduces under-utilized and non-essential County infrastructure by calling for the sale of the vacant Gateway, Edwards, and Terminal Buildings, which are projected to generate an estimated \$2.5 million. \$31 million is expected from the sale of property tax liens.

These non-property-tax-bearing revenue enhancements, in combination with personnel reductions amounting to \$2 million, departmental efficiencies totaling \$8 million, and employee health savings of \$8 million, enabled Monroe County to successfully close a \$51.5 million structural resource gap for 2012.

*"When spending reductions, consolidations, and cost-containment alone don't get the job done, other counties have been forced to hike property taxes and cut vital quality-of-life services. Those are things I refuse to do in our community," said **Brooks**. "By utilizing responsible revenue enhancements in the 2012 Budget, we were able to close Monroe County's mandate-fueled structural resource gap, all without placing any additional burden on property taxpayers."*

No Reductions to Quality-of-Life Services

Brooks continues to make enhancing our community's world-class quality of life a top priority. Under her leadership, Monroe County has been recognized by Forbes Magazine

as the number one place in the nation to purchase a home and one of the best places in the country to raise a family. The 2012 Monroe County Budget responsibly maintains the services that are vital to maintaining our community's high quality of life, including in the areas of parks, public safety, and transportation infrastructure.

*"Our community is fortunate to enjoy a truly world-class quality of life," said **Brooks**. "That's why it is an unequivocal victory for local taxpayers that the 2012 Monroe County Budget is balanced, but also maintains responsible funding for quality-of-life services, including in the vital areas of parks, public safety, and transportation infrastructure."*

Averting Crisis at the County Level

Brooks' 2012 Budget successfully balances County spending while protecting taxpayers, but many New York counties have been unable to avoid crushing challenges in 2012. After years of State mandated spending being shifted to local governments, those counties are now being forced to adopt drastic solutions.

Examples include: Multiple counties with coming-year property tax rate hikes, some in double digits; slashed funding for public safety services; and massive layoffs, some amounting to more than 1,000 employees.

*"As a state-wide advocate for mandate reform, I've worked one-on-one with county leaders who are struggling to offset the cost of the nine mandated programs that consume 90% of all county property tax dollars collected, while simultaneously attempting to comply with the new tax cap," continued **Brooks**. "While years of forward thinking financial management did enable Monroe County to avert crisis in 2012, counties will continue to be forced to make painful decisions until Albany tackles the burden of mandated spending with the same vigor it showed in passing tax cap legislation."*

Leading the Fight for Mandate Reform

The single largest portion of Monroe County's 2012 Budget is mandated spending, which accounts for a staggering 82 percent of the County's total spending for the coming year.

*"The only thing standing between Monroe County and dramatic property tax relief for homeowners is the ever-growing cost of state-mandated spending," stated **Brooks**. "As a member of Governor Cuomo's Mandate Reform and Redesign Team, and President of the New York State Association of County Executives, I look forward to working with leaders from across New York to push harder than ever for real mandate reform in the days to come. It's an important issue, and it's time for Albany to get the job done."*

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