

**SUFFOLK COUNTY VILLAGE OFFICIALS
ASSOCIATION SPEAKS OUT AGAINST GOV. CUOMO'S SHARED SERVICES
INITIATIVE**

(Huntington, NY... May 4, 2017) In his typical management style of “READY, SHOOT and AIM,” the Suffolk County Village Officials Association (SCVOA) is greatly concerned and angered by Governor Cuomo’s and the State Legislature’s 2017 budget initiative mandating the County Executive to prepare a Shared Services Property Tax Plan. This seemingly “Motherhood and Apple Pie” initiative is fraught with egregiously flawed assumptions about local government tax reduction leadership, glosses over New York State’s arrogance in passing legislation without any local government consultation and finally distracts taxpayers from the real root cause of out-of-control property taxes, namely: New York State elected officials’ practice of saddling local government with a myriad of costly unfunded mandates.

Head of the Harbor Mayor Douglas Dahlgard states: “The Governor doesn’t seem to be aware of how local municipalities work together to reduce operating costs. He appears not to understand that local government leadership is directly connected and accountable to its residents.” Our NYS elected officials, if they actually engaged in a conversation with local villages, would have found that over 90% of Suffolk County villages have shared service agreements in place with all levels of government (e.g., other villages, towns, county, fire districts, ambulance services, school districts, etc.). Suffolk County villages have been incubators of governmental innovation and inter-municipal cooperation, all to the benefit of the taxpayer.

Lloyd Harbor Mayor Jean Thatcher states: “In any serious conversation regarding property taxes, unfunded mandates imposed by NYS on villages, towns, school districts, etc. constitute the 800-pound gorilla in the room. Villages have always actively sought, and routinely continue to seek, the most cost effective ways to deliver governmental services to their residents. First and foremost, NYS elected officials need to accept responsibility and honestly work to reduce the tremendous tax burden their legislative mandates place on local municipalities. No additional layer of oversight by NYS is either required or at all helpful.”

NYS is founded on the principle of local determination, a principle enshrined in its State Constitution’s “Local Government Bill of Rights.” Under the Governor’s new state mandate, villages are now required to have a deficit-ridden County Government that is responsible for developing “efficiency plans.” SCOVA is especially sympathetic to the mandate imposed on the Nassau County Village Officials to participate in an “efficiency process” with an indicted County Executive leading the process.

Islandia Mayor and President of the Suffolk County Village Officials Association Al Dorman states: “The Governor’s initiative is a classic power grab to undermine local government while diverting attention away from New York State’s own tax problems. Let the State and County clean up their own houses before messing up our clean ones!”