

NEWS



Edward A. Diana
Orange County Executive

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For more information, contact Kristin Jensen at
kjensen@orangecountygov.com or 845.615.0544

County Executive Diana Comments on Budget Hearings

Goshen - At today's meeting of the Orange County Legislature's Health and Mental Health committee, the budget for Valley View was presented to the Legislature. In response to the Valley View budget and the proposal to defund Valley View effective June 30, 2012, as presented in the County Executive's proposed 2012 budget, the Democratic Caucus, Legislator Anagnostakis, and Legislator Eachus presented their plans to effect savings for Valley View in 2012.

Unfortunately, many of the figures being used by the Legislators are out of date and inaccurate. The figures in the CGR report commissioned by the Legislature to study Valley View are from 2009. Many of the cuts and savings to which they all refer have already been implemented and the savings realized.

In their recommendations, both Legislators Anagnostakis and Eachus refer to IGT funds, \$7.1 million and \$3.5 million, respectively. However, as has been clearly explained to the Legislature on numerous occasions, no additional IGT funding is projected to come to Orange County in the foreseeable future.

All three submissions from the Legislators recommend using general fund surplus to make their plans work. Orange County has never used general fund surplus to balance other funds, including Valley View. To begin doing so now is not a precedent I am prepared to set.

The Legislators' recommendations also refer to staff reductions of 73 FTEs as indicated in CGR's report. Since 2009, 123 positions have already been eliminated from Valley View staffing. These are among the deficiencies in the proposals presented by the Legislators.

Orange County is not alone in the challenges we face in supporting our public nursing home. More than 10 other counties in New York now find themselves in similar predicaments. Just this past week, Saratoga County joined those ranks, announcing that they too are looking for ways to ease the financial burden of their 277 bed nursing home.

It's important to understand that based on the continuing decline of reimbursements, as well as

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New York's move toward managed care next year, the fiscal challenges we now face will only be exacerbated.

It is unfortunate that we have now been forced to make these difficult decisions. We would be in a very different place today if the Legislature had heeded my recommendations from 2003.

At that time, after presenting the 2004 budget, I sent a letter dated December 22, 2003 to all Valley View residents and family members stating:

Our Residential Health Care Facility currently costs County taxpayers \$51 million per year to operate. Of that, \$9 million comes from locally raised taxes. That is roughly 12% of all the taxes County Government collects from residents. If we continue to follow the trend, by the year 2010 the County's taxation cost of operating the facility will be \$20 million annually.

My goal, as it has always been, is to preserve the quality care, and the jobs, here in Orange County for Orange County residents. I look forward to continuing to work with all of the stakeholders on this important issue.

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