

# County Executive Details Four Year Plan

By WKBW News



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BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW / releases) -- Erie County Executive Chris Collins has submitted a new Four-Year Financial Plan to the Erie County Fiscal Stability Authority. The plan is balanced and does not include out year budget gaps or an increase in the County property tax rate. The Four-Year Plan is a management tool that provides an outlook on county finances through 2014. The new plan is based not only on the 2011 Adopted Budget, but final financial results for 2010 and the first quarter of 2011.

"I am very proud of this plan as it is realistic, reasonable, and most importantly, a reflection of the no-nonsense approach to budgeting my administration has taken from day one," said Erie County Executive Chris Collins. "We continue to hold the line on taxes, use recurring revenues to pay for recurring expenses, and eliminate over \$190 million of taxpayer debt over the next several years. Let there be no mistake, Erie County is in solid financial shape. To achieve this sort of budget, you have to be willing to make tough decisions. The same decisions many Erie County families are making with their own finances."

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Shortly after Erie County Executive Chris Collins submitted a new Four-year Financial Plan he called "realistic, reasonable, and most importantly, a reflection of the no-nonsense approach to budgeting my administration has taken from day one" to the Erie County Fiscal Stability Authority on Monday, County Comptroller Mark Poloncarz issued a statement condemning the proposal.

"This revised Four-Year plan appears to be nothing more than smoke and mirrors. Using the County's fund balance for future expenses is not balancing a budget—a lesson we learned the hard way with the 'Red-Green' fiscal crisis. Additionally, the phantom savings from Lean Six Sigma initiatives that the Collins administration is citing to cut an additional 300 jobs are not supportable by any data provided," Poloncarz' statement read.

"As he has done in the past in an effort to save a buck, instead of cutting his high-paid patronage employees, or not spending top-dollar on outside lawyers to argue his frivolous lawsuits, Collins is going after the lower-wage jobs that directly impact the quality of service provided to the taxpayer."

Earlier Monday, Collins touted his plan, saying: "This Four-Year Plan is in great contrast from the financial reality the County faced when I took office in 2008," continued Collins. "We were under a state imposed 'hard'

Control Board with a bond rating that was near junk bond status. The County had significant budget caps going forward, had no rainy day fund to protect taxpayers, and was borrowing to pay for routine maintenance costs. On behalf of Erie County's taxpayers, we have come a long way in three-and-a-half years."

According to Collins, the highlights of his plan included:

- No out year budget gaps (modest surpluses in 2013 & 2014)
- Keeps property tax rate flat
- Reduction of over \$190 million in long-term debt from 2007-2014
- Elimination of 300 jobs in 2012 (workforce reduction of 20% since 2008 thanks to Lean Six Sigma)
- Sales tax growth at 3% (based on final 2010 results)
- Real property assessment growth at 2% (in line with possible NYS property tax cap)
- Use of recurring revenues for recurring expenses
- Minimal use of fund balance to pay for non-recurring debt service in 2012
- Maintains a healthy Undesignated Fund Balance of \$80 million, which is approximately \$29 million above the County Charter mandated 5% (appropriate and responsible based on \$1.1 billion budget)
- Capital Budget that continues maintenance and improvements to county infrastructure including roads, bridges and parks (No longer use long term bonds to pay for routine road maintenance, expense now built into operating budget)
- Plans to have Stability Authority continue to perform borrowing for Erie County, saving millions each year

The Erie County Fiscal Stability Authority is expected to vote on the new Four-Year Plan on June 13.