

COLUMBIA COUNTY

For Immediate Release

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Columbia County ranked high for fiscal integrity

HUDSON, NY – At the County Board of Supervisor’s Meeting in Hudson tonight, Chairman Matt Murell (R-Stockport) discussed the recent Annual Update Document (AUD) released by New York Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli in which Columbia County received a “free of fiscal stress”.

This is the fourth year for DiNapoli’s Fiscal Stress Monitoring System, which evaluated the financial stability of local governments. The system evaluates local governments on nine financial indicators and creates a fiscal condition score. Indicators include fund balance, cash-on-hand and patterns of operating deficits. The system also evaluates environmental information such as population trends, poverty and unemployment. This year, it designated 40 municipalities across the state as fiscally stressed, including 10 counties, 10 cities and 20 towns.

Chairman Murell said that he is delighted with the rating and noted that Columbia County is enjoying its third year in a row with a modest surplus and no increase in county taxes. “A number of major actions taken by the Board of Supervisors over the last several years have kept the county finances stable,” he said. Murell cited the sharing of services, the transfer of the county nursing home to private ownership, a new medical and prescription drug self-insurance program, a significant reduction in taxes receivable and refinancing of debt.

Ron Caponera, Columbia County Controller, specifically pointed to the decision in 2015 to share services leading to operating efficiencies and tax reductions from the state.

Last year, 29 separate taxing authorities – including school, library, and fire districts, the City of Hudson, the villages of Kinderhook and Valatie and all of its 18 towns – have reached an agreement to cut costs to taxpayers through regional cooperation. The new Central Business Office oversees the sharing of services related to several county departments, among the inter-municipal agreements.

“This was a good example of political leaders from both parties and wide-ranging districts coming together to create a major comprehensive plan,” said Caponera. “It not only provides very meaningful tax reductions for our taxpayers, it also makes the municipalities and the county more efficient.”

County Treasurer P.J. Keeler said, “All of the complex negotiations on these and other efficiency-related programs are already showing significant fiscal results and will continue to bring about future savings for County taxpayers down the road. We are very pleased with the positive results to date.”