

Brooks Announces Internal County Investigation To Protect Taxpayer Resources



PHOTO BY MATT DETURCK

Independent Accountability Counsel conducting internal investigation of County personnel, reviewing all ethics policies and safeguards to prevent future theft

County Executive Maggie Brooks Friday announced that Monroe County has established an Independent Accountability Counsel, led by former law enforcement officials and attorneys Donald Chesworth and Eugene Welch. The Counsel has launched a full internal investigation of all County personnel who have any knowledge of or involvement in the criminal activities of Robert Morone and former ROBUTRAD workers.

"As a steward of taxpayer resources, government has a duty to protect taxpayers and hold itself to the highest ethical standards," said Brooks. "The Independent Accountability Counsel

has been created so that outside experts in government ethics and law enforcement can engage in a full review of County personnel and ethics policies. If our independent investigation uncovers that any County employee acted in a way that was unethical or not in the best interest of taxpayers, I am prepared to take swift action against them. Impropriety and abuse of taxpayer resources will not be tolerated by this Administration."

The Independent Accountability Counsel was created in March of 2009. Its first objective has been to coordinate with law enforcement agencies during the ROBUTRAD investigation and ensure full, unfettered access to County records and personnel. In addition, the Counsel has commenced a full review of Monroe County's ethics policies and internal safeguards. It will work to improve the effectiveness of whistleblower protections and implement additional policies to support the ethical stewardship of government resources and operations.

"It isn't enough to punish those who have violated the public's trust – we must take steps to ensure that this abuse of taxpayer resources will never happen again," continued Brooks. "To fulfill this responsibility, our Independent Accountability Counsel will comprehensively review Monroe County's ethics policies and business practices to identify any potential areas for improvement. By implementing new safeguards to protect public funds, enhancing our ethics training for employees, and taking steps to protect whistleblowers, I am confident that we will fully restore the

public's confidence and prevent any future thefts."

Brooks concluded by praising local law enforcement agencies for their work to protect taxpayers and pledged the continued full support of the County as the investigation continues:

"Monroe County initiated this investigation and I am pleased that the recent charges bring us one step closer to recovering stolen taxpayer resources. I commend the U.S. Attorney, FBI, District Attorney, and Sheriff's Office for their thorough investigation. As their work continues, Monroe County will continue in our cooperative spirit with law enforcement, ensuring that investigators have access to all county personnel and information that they need to complete their inquiry and bring all offenders to justice."

Biographical Information:

Attorneys Donald Chesworth and Eugene Welch are partners in the firm Harris, Chesworth, O'Brien, Johnstone, Welch & Leone, LLP. Chesworth formerly served as Superintendent of the New York State Police, Monroe County District Attorney, and Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Eugene Welch served as an Assistant US Attorney and Assistant Attorney General in Charge, NYS Attorney General's Rochester Regional Office. They have previously served as outside ethics counsel for both the Monroe County Water Authority and the Rochester City School District.

Democrats Introduce Financial Oversight Legislation

Rochester, New York – June 17, 2009. Democrats in the County Legislature last Wednesday proposed two pieces of legislation that they say will strengthen the public's ability to gain access to critical information about how their tax dollars are spent. One piece of legislation will enhance transparency by having all contracts, bidding documents and contract award determinations related to the federal stimulus program posted on the official Monroe County Web site. The other legislation seeks broader and more specific disclosure of information related to the County's annual Capital Improvement Program (CIP), which typically comes with a roughly \$500 million price tag.

Democratic Leader Harry Bronson (D-Rochester, Brighton & Henrietta), the sponsor of the stimulus fund tracking proposal, said, "This legislation will provide equal financial information to taxpayers and elected officials. With the new tools in the legislation announced today, we are confident that we will bring a new level of transparency to the County's fiscal practices, helping prevent potential fraud, corruption and other wasteful spending. We and the public should know exactly how the stimulus funds are being spent and we hope our colleagues in the Republican majority feel the same way."

Speaking of the proposal related to the CIP, Legislator Paul Haney (D-Rochester & Brighton), the bill's sponsor, said, "Each and every year this administration gets a blank check from their Republican Majority, but this is no ordinary blank check—it's a \$500 million check that creates a mountain of debt that must be paid generations into the future. With the reforms we've proposed today, elected officials and the public will be provided the same level of access that only the administration and Republican majority currently have."

Candidate Calls for Accountability & Responsibility in Greece Police Scandal

(Rochester, NY) The following is a statement by Dan Maloney, candidate for Greece Town Supervisor, in response to the press conference held by John Auberger on June 24, 2009:

"Suspending police Chief Merrit Rahn without pay may be a good first step, but it doesn't get to the root of the problem" said Dan Maloney, candidate for Supervisor in the Town of Greece. Referring to recent reporting by the Democrat and

Chronicle and other media sources in regard to the lack of background checks in the hiring of subsequently convicted police officers, Maloney said, "It was the poor hiring practices by the town government that got us into this mess. The officers in the Greece police force serve our community with honor and decency, and they don't deserve the ridicule brought on them by the irresponsible actions of some in town government."

"Greece police officers and their

families deserve better. We need to restore dignity and pride to the town of Greece. If elected this November, I pledge to enact the recommendations of the New York State Law Enforcement Accreditation Council report to ensure better hiring practices and restore respect for the police force."

"I believe the overtaxed citizens of Greece need the current town administration to come clean about its role in creating this situation.

President Harry Truman said "the buck stops here" in regards to people in power taking responsibility for the outcome of their governance. The time is long past due for John Auberger to own up to his part in the scandals of town government. It's time that the hard working residents of Greece stop paying for the sins of the current town officeholders, with costly litigation, investigations, and convictions."