

**RESOLUTION NO. 4-2019, ESTABLISHING THE
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE “REDUCE COUNTY SPENDING” TASK
FORCE OF THE LEGISLATURE OF THE COUNTY OF SUFFOLK**

WHEREAS, the “Reduce County Spending” Task Force of the Legislature of the County of Suffolk is required under Resolution No. 694-2018 to “submit a written report of its findings and determinations, together with its recommendations, to each member of the County Legislature, the Clerk of the County Legislature, and the County Executive” upon conclusion of its business; and

WHEREAS, the “Reduce County Spending” Task Force offers appreciation for the support and resources received from County Executive Steve Bellone, Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory, Minority Leader Tom Cilmi, Legislator Steven J. Flotteron, and all members and staff of the Suffolk County Legislature; and,

WHEREAS, the “Reduce County Spending” Task Force offers appreciation to the government employees and elected officials who provided testimony to this task force, including Comptroller John M. Kennedy, Jr.; Sheriff Errol D. Toulon; Ed Moltzen, Director of Shared Services; Dr. Robert Lipp, Director of the Budget Review Office; Police Commissioner Geraldine Hart; Health Commissioner Dr. James Tomarken; and, Information Technology Commissioner Scott Mastelon; and

WHEREAS, the “Reduce County Spending” Task Force agrees with the Legislature that further increases in County taxes and fees would be detrimental and harmful to Suffolk County’s taxpayers and economy; and

WHEREAS, Suffolk County is currently operating on a budget that was enacted without a vote of the legislature; and

WHEREAS, for the Suffolk County Legislature as a co-equal branch of government to limit government spending to the adopted budget, it must exercise its authority to enact the County Executive’s proposed budget by a majority vote; and

WHEREAS, the “Reduce County Spending” Task Force agrees that such borrowing has in large part caused four down-grades of Suffolk County’s bond rating since 2012, and that such downgrades negatively impact the debt service county

taxpayers are required to pay for necessary capital maintenance and improvements;
and

WHEREAS, as a fundamental requirement to reducing the County's spending, all departments and agencies should be required by the County Executive and the Legislature to provide accurate budgets with the expectation that spending will not exceed what has been approved and adopted; and

WHEREAS, the “Reduce County Spending” Task Force received testimony about the county’s inadequate budget controls, most evident by the Police Department significantly overspending its budgeted payroll in 2018, independent of significant overspends of overtime, despite a substantial vacancy savings built into the budget; and

WHEREAS, the “Reduce County Spending” Task Force asserts that Suffolk County should cease the practice of borrowing from dedicated funds to cover the cost of general government services; and,

WHEREAS, the “Reduce County Spending” Task Force asserts that Suffolk County should cease the practice of leasing property it has sold for a one-shot infusion of cash, which creates a long-term liability that far exceeds the immediate value to taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, the “Reduce County Spending” Task Force recognizes that the county’s collective bargaining units are currently working on expired contracts, and that collective bargaining agreements significantly impact the county’s spending and as such should be presented to the public for comment prior to adoption by the Suffolk County Legislature; and

WHEREAS, the “Reduce County Spending” Task Force asserts that the county must enforce its adopted budget to reduce county spending; and

WHEREAS, complete transparency to the public, excluding privileged and confidential information as defined in Freedom of Information and Open Meetings laws, is the best guarantee of responsible spending and accountability by our elected officials;
and

WHEREAS, the Suffolk County Legislature's Budget Review process currently allows for significant policy decisions to be debated and advanced outside public purview; and

WHEREAS, Suffolk County spends significant funds on contracts with private and non-profit organizations, but the purpose and necessity of those contracts are not evident to the public in the manner that the information is currently published; and

WHEREAS, the "Reduce County Spending" Task Force received testimony that approximately 1,000 county employees retire, resign, or otherwise leave their jobs each year, offering the county a tremendous opportunity to redesign its workforce; and

WHEREAS, the "Reduce County Spending" Task Force received testimony about the overlap and redundancy in work assignments across departments, including Information Technology, Human Resources, and policing assignments; and

WHEREAS, the elimination of workforce redundancies through consolidation, reassignment, and natural attrition, when paired with the deployment of new technological efficiencies, is a useful strategy in both the public and private sectors for reducing spending without depriving an organization's ability to offer services; and

WHEREAS, the large number of municipal jurisdictions with overlapping authority is one of Suffolk County's biggest challenges, with specific negative implications on the cost of doing business caused by the web of approvals and requirements to acquire licenses and permits that proves burdensome to the county's business community and suppresses economic growth; and

WHEREAS, the "Reduce County Spending" Task Force received testimony from multiple employees about frustrations with the county's Information Technology infrastructure, hardware, and software, including examples of outdated Operating Systems, such as Windows 7, software platforms, such as COBALT, and appliances, such as tape-based answering machines; and,

WHEREAS, the "Reduce County Spending" Task Force asserts that the county will be incapable of deploying technological efficiencies for the purpose of reducing spending unless it significantly invests in its Information Technology

infrastructure, hardware, software, data management and reporting systems across all departments in the county; now, therefore be it

1st RESOLVED, that every county employee and elected official should endeavor to spend within the County's adopted budget for the fiscal year; and, be it further

2nd RESOLVED, that should a county department find it necessary to spend in excess of the County's adopted budget for the fiscal year, and such request is first approved by the County Executive, such request shall be put forward to the Suffolk County Legislature for approval as a Budget Amendment, and such amendment shall require the affirmative vote of no less than twelve members of the Legislature; and, be it further

3rd RESOLVED, that the Suffolk County Legislature should be required by county statute to vote directly on the County Executive's proposed Executive Budget, and that Suffolk County should establish a procedure for enacting a Contingency Budget should a vote on the County Executive's proposed Executive Budget fail; and, be it further

4th RESOLVED, that the Suffolk County Legislature's budget review process should be subjected to Open Meetings Law, and that the legislature should recognize an independent Citizen Budget Commission to review and report on the County Executive's proposed Executive Budget at least three (3) days in advance of the final Public Hearing in the budget process; and, be it further

5th RESOLVED, that the Suffolk County Legislature should require video recording and live streaming of Legislative Committee meetings; and, be it further

6th RESOLVED, that the Suffolk County Legislature should be required to hold a Public Hearing, subject to all noticing requirements, prior to taking a vote to approve any collective bargaining agreements.

7th RESOLVED, that Suffolk County should prohibit the practice of leasing property in whole that it has previously sold; and, be it further

8th **RESOLVED**, that Suffolk County should immediately eliminate its Public Campaign Financing program; and, be it further

9th **RESOLVED**, that the Budget Review Director should issue a monthly report to the Suffolk County Legislature that reports on a department's current and projected spending relative to the adopted budget for the fiscal year if in the opinion of the Budget Review Director a department's spending projection exceeds budget; and, be it further

10th **RESOLVED**, that the Suffolk County Legislature's Budget & Finance Committee should be required annually to publish a comprehensive schedule of all line-item or grant spending derived from the Hotel/Motel Tax, sorted by Legislative District, which should be conspicuously published on the Suffolk County Legislature's website at least three (3) days in advance of the final Public Hearing in the budget process; and, be it further

11th **RESOLVED**, that the Suffolk County Legislature's Budget & Finance Committee should be required annually to publish a comprehensive fee schedule for the county that identifies each fee charged by the county, the service afforded by the fee, the projected direct annual cost of providing the service, and the projected annual revenue collected from the fee; and, be it further

12th **RESOLVED**, that Suffolk County should adopt a five-year deficit reduction plan that eliminates county operating debt and stabilizes and replenishes fund balances, and that such plan shall be prepared by the County Executive and subject to legislative approval; and, be it further

13th **RESOLVED**, that the Suffolk County Executive should require each county department to complete a 10-year strategic financial plan, incorporating all common components of a business plan, and that such plans shall be subject to legislative approval; and, be it further

14th **RESOLVED**, that Suffolk County should invest in the county's information technology infrastructure and software, allowing the Information Technology Services department to develop efficiency programs, including paperless applications and workflow, and for county departments to easily share data and resources while

establishing secure firewalls that prevent access of confidential information between departments where necessary; and, be it further

15th RESOLVED, that the Suffolk County legislature shall request Home Rule approval of the New York State legislature to further incentivize all school districts and boards of cooperative educational services within the county to participate in Shared Service programs that benefit all components of Suffolk County taxpayer's property tax bills; and, be it further

16th RESOLVED, that Suffolk County should work with local municipalities to adopt uniform permitting and licensing requirements for businesses to operate under simple and predictable conditions; and, be it further

17th RESOLVED, that Suffolk County should audit its utility bills, telephone bills, cell tower leases, franchise fees, asset recovery and subrogation for the purposes of maximizing efficiency and ensuring taxpayers are receiving the most fair value for their money; and, be it further

18th RESOLVED, that Suffolk County should audit its fleet for the purpose of limiting take-home vehicles, excluding emergency vehicles; and, be it further

19th RESOLVED, that Suffolk County should create a Department of Human Resources, and that Human Resources personnel throughout the county, including the Civil Service department, should be re-assigned to the Department of Human Resources; and, be it further

20th RESOLVED, that Suffolk County should re-assign all Information Technology personnel to the existing Information Technology Services department, excluding the few specialized personnel necessary for maintaining confidential law enforcement databases, except that first Suffolk County should invest in necessary Information Technology infrastructure to facilitate personnel re-assignment as recommended within this document; and, be it further

21st RESOLVED, that Suffolk County should consolidate the Real Property Tax Service as a division of the Clerk's Office; and, be it further

22nd RESOLVED, that Suffolk County should competitively rebid every contract upon expiration, to the exclusion of any offering of an extension; and, be it further,

23rd RESOLVED, that the membership of the Suffolk County Waiver Committee should be expanded to include an appointee recommended by the Minority Leader of the Suffolk County Legislature.

DATED: April 16, 2019