

News Alert

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Democratic Legislators Question GOP \$3 Million No Bid Lease Agreement

Troy—Democratic Legislators have been looking for answers about a GOP resolution coming before the Legislature this Tuesday to authorize the lease renewal for 30,050 square feet in the Raddock Building. The renewal will cost county taxpayers in excess of \$3 million over the next 5 years when tax increases and utility costs are included.

The current contract with Albany Management sets the annual rent for 2008 at \$387,738, with utilities and tax increases paid by the county in addition to that figure. That puts the base cost for the space at \$12.90 per square foot—certainly no bargain for a building with few amenities (no public bathroom on the second floor, for example), and with a leaky roof and poor maintenance according to a number of county employees.

And that rate will go up each year of the contract, either on the basis of the Consumer Price Index or with an annual cap of 5%. For example, the resolution proposed by the Majority places the estimate for 2009 at \$525,000.

Commercial realtors who offered estimates for the going rates in Troy quoted \$8-\$10 per square foot as the norm. The Verizon Building was cited as a comparably sized space (32,000+ square feet) that's been available for considerably less.

Minority Leader Ginny O'Brien remarked, "It is our duty as County Legislators to provide oversight, to question expenditures and look for ways to save taxpayer dollars. We in the Democratic Minority cannot set the agenda, but we can raise a flag and ask important questions. In this instance, why were there no bids put out to find out about alternative spaces to lease? Where is the 'due diligence' we expect when hundreds of thousands of dollars are being spent?"

"The bidding process is a standard practice of good government that protects taxpayers and is recommended by the NYS Comptroller's office. The fact that we're providing a five-year lease without having looked at any other options demonstrates a lack of planning and "business as usual" by the Republican Majority."

"If we really want to cut the cost of government, we need to change our way of doing business, said Legislator Keith Hammond. "The only time you wouldn't go out to bid is to direct money into someone's pocket. Once again taxpayers are being forced to foot the bill."