

NEWS

RENSSELAER COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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Rensselaer County Democratic Legislators Call for Review of Capital Fund

Troy— A resolution considered at the Rensselaer County Legislature's March meeting again highlighted the propriety of spending by the Republican majority from a capital fund account. The capital fund was established in 1999 to repair the County's legislative chambers. Now 10 years later, little work has been done to renovate the chamber and the fund has accumulated a balance of over \$800,000. Democrats are now asking that either a plan be developed to use the funds or that the funds be returned to the County's overburdened taxpayers.

A resolution introduced for the March meeting proposed to use funds from the County Legislative Chamber Repair and Improvement Fund for the purchase of a defibrillator. Democrats supported the purchase of the defibrillator, but proposed that the purchase be funded from an equipment expense account. Democrats opposed spending funds from the capital fund because proper budgeting policy prohibits using capital accounts for small routine purchases that can be handled in the regular budget. Democrats were joined by some Republicans at the Legislature's February meeting to successfully block a similar resolution that would have used money from the capital fund to purchase office equipment, in addition to the defibrillator.

"We are fully supportive of the purchase of the defibrillator, but again we question the propriety of financial management by the Republican Majority," stated Minority Leader Ginny O'Brien. "According to the County Budget, what the Republicans are proposing is not appropriate," added Deputy Minority Leader Keith Hammond, a member of the Budget and Finance Committee.

Democrats have long protested the hoarding of taxpayer dollars in the Chamber Repair fund and have proposed that these funds be used to reduce taxes for property owners. "This fund is being managed as a slush fund to dole out money to pet projects at election time," observed Poestenkill Legislator Kevin Harrington. "Legislators need clarification as to the statutory requirements of this fund and plan to seek assistance from the State Comptroller's Office," added Sand Lake Legislator Flora Fasoldt.

Democrats will introduce a resolution at next month's meeting of the Legislature requiring that either a plan to use of the funds as originally intended be established or that the funds be returned to taxpayers.