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February 18, 2021

To: Town of Ulster Town Board  
From: Regis Obijiski (Vice-Chair of ToUC.org), 170 Ledge Road,  
Town of Ulster [regis.m.obijiski@gmail.com](mailto:regis.m.obijiski@gmail.com)  
Re: Public Hearing on Creating a Comptroller Position

Good evening.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Town Board's intent to establish an office of the comptroller in the Town of Ulster. We assume that this new role is not intended to be an elected position, similar to a State or County Comptroller, but rather an additional administrative position. When we heard about the possibility of expanded financial services, we were delighted. However, we are not convinced that adding a full-time comptroller is the most effective and efficient answer to what and who comes next, because we have not seen the Board's homework and due diligence involved in this matter.

In the past, we offered comments regarding the over-reliance on one person leading the Town and, at the same time, managing all the finances of the Town. There are very few people as talented and energetic as Mr. Quigley who can skillfully and ethically manage the dual roles of CEO and CFO. Both are distinct and demanding skill sets. The current broad expectations for our Town Supervisor coupled with the position's artificially low salary may suit the current office holder, but this combination is unappealing and unrealistic to future candidates for the position. For the good of the Town, we believe this is an appropriate time to make reasonable systemic adjustments to the position of Town Supervisor.

Although we are aware that the State allows a town supervisor to act as both CEO and CFO<sup>1</sup>, we recommended some time ago contracting with a CPA firm skilled in Government Accounting Standards, Department of State rules and State Comptroller's

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.dos.ny.gov/lg/publications/Local\\_Government\\_Handbook.pdf](https://www.dos.ny.gov/lg/publications/Local_Government_Handbook.pdf). Section 7.3.3.1

laws for municipalities, such as conflicts of interest.<sup>2</sup> Typically, these CPA firms are armed with the latest software applications that meet financial reporting requirements. They also have the back-up people to ensure that the work gets done no matter what. They can create technical reports to the state comptroller and reports readable to ordinary citizens.

We are certain that our Town Board has done its homework in lining up the kind of financial service goals that would be an improvement to our current system and would also serve the Town's future personnel changes that individual career decisions and elections bring. It is not at all clear to us what the Board's thinking is on nature of those goals and fleshing them out with certain practices of effectiveness and cost efficiencies. What do these goals look like and what will they cost? What are the academic and experience qualifications for a comptroller to meet the Town's goals and needs? Will the outcomes of the comptroller be dependent on systems or on personality? What are that person's duties and to whom would this person report? What is the full compensation package (salary and benefits) for this comptroller? What will a comptroller's tools-of-the-trade cost? It would be helpful if the Board reveals these details before a decision of this level of importance is made. In fact, it would have been even more appropriate to have made this proposal when creating the 2021 budget three months ago.

Again, the wisdom of re-shaping our Town's financial accounting is not a new issue, and we certainly agree with pursuing a solution. A comptroller might be the best solution, and it might not. A re-tooling of the management of the Town's financial accountability is a big deal, and it should have been presented during November's budget development three months ago. Because the public is going to be paying for whatever solution is voted on by the Board, we strongly recommend that the Town Board present as transparently as possible their thinking, their plan and comparative cost structures of the alternatives before voting on a new office of the comptroller.

Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/files/local-government/publications/pdf/gmlposter.pdf>