

March 23, 2010

Comptroller Maragos: Special Districts and Villages should be Judged on Merit by their Local Communities

New law that empowers residents to consolidate or dissolve special districts took effect March 21st

Nassau County Comptroller George Maragos announced today a new policy regarding consolidation of special districts to coincide with a new state law which took effect on March 21, 2010.

"The Comptroller's Office will not be advocating broad consolidation or dissolution of special districts," said Comptroller Maragos. "I have not seen any credible formal analysis that would support the wholesale consolidation of special districts and villages in Nassau County."

The Government Reorganization and Citizens Empowerment Act simplifies the process for local government consolidation and dissolution.

Special districts in Nassau County provide vital local services such as sanitation, water and fire protection, to the residents of Nassau County. Most special districts provide the services at a great value to their residents and are responsive to the communities they serve.

Were these special districts to be eliminated, their functions would still have to be performed by another governmental unit. Many Nassau residents favor local control and in many cases, there is no evidence that consolidation would provide significant economic benefit to the taxpayer.

Comptroller Maragos added, "My office understands that a few special districts have been unresponsive to the community and others have experienced abuses by employees and commissioners. Those practices will no doubt result in a justified second look by the residents who favor dissolution and consolidation."

The New York State Legislation, signed into law in June 2009, simplifies the process for citizens and local officials to consolidate or dissolve special districts, towns and villages. The legislation, effective on March 21, 2010, provides that consolidation or dissolution of a special district may be initiated in one of three ways:

- By resolution of the special districts' governing bodies.
- By petition of the voters residing in the district(s), signed by ten percent of the registered voters, or 5000 registered voters, whichever is less.
- By vote of the Nassau County legislature.

Before a district is consolidated or dissolved, the proposal must be presented to the voters at a general or special election and approved by a majority. "Each local community or special district needs to decide on the merits of consolidation on a case-by-case basis," Comptroller Maragos concluded.