

Legislator Debra Mulé

Nassau County Legislative District 5

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County Committees

Ranking:

Veterans, Senior Affairs & Aircraft Noise

Abatement

Member:

Public Safety, Minority Affairs,
Economic & Community Development, and
Towns, Villages & Cities

April 19, 2022

Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman
1550 Franklin Avenue
Mineola, N.Y. 11501

Re: The status of the Assessor and the "reassessment" plan

Dear County Executive Blakeman:

I write concerning the fact that Robin Laveman's term as Acting County Assessor expired on April 11, 2022 - a matter which, unless promptly addressed, threatens to disrupt Nassau County's assessment system and deprive aggrieved taxpayers of refunds.

Pursuant to Section 601 of the Nassau County Charter, "[n]o individual shall serve as acting assessor for a period longer than six months without confirmation by the County Legislature...[h]owever, upon approval of the County Legislature, this six-month period may be extended by one additional six-month period." As the County Legislature has not approved an additional six-month term for Ms. Laveman, your administration is in direct violation of the County Charter and Ms. Laveman cannot continue to serve as Acting Assessor.

Additionally, any administrative decision made by Ms. Laveman or her deputies may not be considered legal; for she no longer has the authority to serve as Acting Assessor and direct her deputies accordingly. Failure to immediately correct this lapse will specifically jeopardize the County's ability to correct assessment errors and deliver refunds to taxpayers who have been over-assessed.

Since Ms. Laveman's term has expired, we are also concerned that the administration has not revealed the identity or qualifications of the incoming assessor or acting assessor. Moreover, the administration has failed to provide the County Legislature or the constituents it serves with details of the reassessment plan you mentioned in your State of the County address on April 11, 2022 - coincidentally, the same date that Ms. Laveman's six-month term expired.

This lack of transparency is troubling and continues to have long-term negative impacts upon residents. Despite repeated requests, the administration failed to provide even the most basic details of the LIPA settlement to members of the Minority Caucus or impacted entities like the North Shore, Island Park, and Oceanside school districts until the 11th hour. Former U.S. Senator Alfonse D'Amato joined members of the Minority Caucus at the Finance and Rules committee meetings held on April 11, 2022 in decrying the level of opacity that has been maintained related to such a crucial matter.

Most disturbingly of all, as the administration continues to hide its intentions regarding the assessor and the “reassessment” plan, a crucial portion of the assessment calendar is fast approaching. The Small Claims Assessment Review (SCAR) hearing period will begin on May 1, and yet the administration has still not appointed an assessor. How can the Department of Assessment address SCARs if there is no assessor to enact policy? How can the Department’s representatives appear in court without a legal or valuation strategy? The lack of transparency, leadership, and policy will ultimately impact the residents of this County and the civil servants who serve them.

Before this situation degrades any further, we urge you to “right the ship” before it is too late and the taxpayers we are all entrusted with serving are harmed. Accordingly, we urge you to immediately put forth your plan regarding the assessor and the “reassessment” plan. Until this occurs, we will continue to fight for the residents of this County and the transparency they deserve.

Sincerely,



Debra Mulé
Nassau County Legislator
Fifth Legislative District

CC: *Presiding Officer Richard Nicoletto, Nassau County Legislature*
Minority Leader Kevan Abrahams, Nassau County Legislature

Nassau County's 5th Legislative District includes:

Baldwin, Baldwin Harbor, Freeport, South Hempstead and parts of Merrick, Oceanside, and Rockville Centre