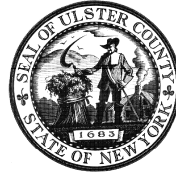




COMPTROLLER ELLIOTT AUERBACH

COUNTY OF ULSTER
PO BOX 1800
KINGSTON, NEW YORK 12402



ILL HEALTH

Politicized Permitting Practices and Administrative Obstructions Contaminate Health Dept.

KINGSTON, NY (November 20, 2009)...After five months of extensive research and review Ulster County Comptroller Elliott Auerbach released a report evaluating the Department of Health, its former Director, his administrative assistant and the Environmental Sanitation Division. The forty-five (45) page report talks about the violation of public trust, safety and health issues, questionable payroll practices and a culture of incompetence.

Auerbach's investigation came on the heels of a June 2009 dismissal of Director Dean Palen and the discovery of \$32,000.00 of un-cashed checks and unissued permits found in a locked safe behind the desk of Palen's wife, who was his administrative assistant. Upon further investigation the Comptroller's staff discovered piles of sanitary sewer applications, public reports and employee grievances that indicated both ineffective internal management and a lack of meaningful external oversight.

"The Palen era was riddled with questionable leadership and a 'general lack of timely enforcement of the Public Health Law and State Sanitary Code'. The only saving grace was the dedication and commitment of the staffs of the Environmental Sanitation and Public Nursing Divisions. Without them the county would have been in jeopardy."

The report can be found on the Comptroller's Page at <http://www.ulstercountyny.gov/resources/comptroller.html>

Office of the Comptroller (845) 340-3525 Email- eaue@co.ulster.ny.us

The mission of the Ulster County Comptroller's Office is to serve as an independent agency of the people and to protect the public interest by monitoring County government and to assess and report on the degree to which its operation is economical, efficient and its financial condition sound.