

Budgetary Ebola  
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“An Exchange of Ulster County Letters” from the October 16 edition of the *Shawangunk Journal* contained an extraordinary quote from the Ulster County Executive. “My estimates of the loss in Sales Tax revenue has been confirmed and documented in reports from both the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance, and the Office of State Comptroller”.

On October 21<sup>st</sup>, I had time to conduct a fact checking operation by phone with both the Department of Taxation and Finance and Office of State Comptroller. I found exactly what I expected.

My first contact was a woman from the Comptroller’s Office in the Local Government and School Accountability headquarters that worked in monitoring and analysis. She did not have any data or reports related to the 1% sales tax decrease in Ulster County from December 2013 – January 2014, and referred me to the Newburgh Regional Office of Local Government and School Accountability located in New Windsor. My next point of contact in the New Windsor office said she would look for any data or reports that were related to the 1% reduction in Ulster County sales tax over the period December 2013 – January 2014 and get back to me. She promptly returned my call, notifying me that such data and reports did not exist and directed me to the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance. My contact in the Accounting division of NYS Taxation and Finance, flat out told me that data and reports on the subject of the 1% decrease in the Ulster County sales tax causing a \$5.4 million decrease in year-over-year revenue did not exist.

If the County Executive is unable to produce the reports from both the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance, and the Office of State Comptroller in which his estimates of the loss in sales tax revenue are confirmed and documented, I am afraid the County Executive will have been figuratively infected with budgetary Ebola. If this turns out to be the case, the chief budgetary officer of Ulster County, the County Executive should be quarantined and isolated from the budgetary process. Chairman Parete along with the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Ways and Means Committee ought to be developing a protocol to contain such an outbreak, and make sure it is confined to the Executive Office.

In my conversations with members of the Comptroller’s Office and Department of Taxation in Finance, they each made clear that the amount of sales tax revenue lost due to the 1% decrease during the December 2013 – January 2014 time period was unquantifiable and no data or reports exist to quantify it.