

## Fuss Budgeting

Phil Reisman  
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Earlier today, Rob Astorino had a meeting with Bill “Boss” Ryan, the powerful chairman of the Board of Legislators. I know it happened because I’ve seen the pictures, which resemble those strained diplomatic photo-ops you normally associate with chats with figures like Karzai and the little kook from North Korea.

Ryan and the county executive-elect held a summit to discuss the 2010 budget that was proposed by Andy Spano which calls for a 4.89 percent tax increase. Spano called the spending plan an “austerity” budget, but don’t tell that to the fiscal hawks who think that \$1.8 billion and change is hardly austere. A zero tax increase or less is more to their liking.

Ryan did the right thing by meeting with Astorino, but it’s anybody’s guess whether he’s going to really follow any of his suggestions. The pressure is on the board, however, to answer the voters call for tax relief.

Meanwhile, the Boss seems to have given the boot to the Westchester County Association’s team of independent accountants—a band of green eye-shade wearing specialist—who were poised to go after the budget like hungry wolverines on a slab of raw meat.

Ryan said he didn’t think the WCA accountants were capable of looking at the budget with the proper “qualitative thinking.”

WCA president Bill Mooney fired off a statement today, saying that “once again Chairman Ryan is totally missing the mark and making erroneous assumptions with respect to our review of the budget and overall county government spending. That statement alone clearly shows how far removed he is from the realities of the business world.”

Mooney said Ryan should be asking the question why county government is so large. He said the Boss refuses to listen to the voters.

“Rather, he is choosing to play the intimidation game by stating that the WCA’s approach will be to cut services to the public, especially the poor.,” Mooney said. “Again, that could not be further from the truth.”

Keep in mind that Ryan and Mooney have a history. When Ryan was caught trying to sneak a substantial pay raise for himself, he reacted to the public outcry by appointing a volunteer compensation advisory commission, which Mooney chaired.

The idea backfired on Ryan because in the end Mooney, in effect, scolded the chairman and other board leaders for engineering a pay grab when so many county residents were suffering economic hardships caused by the recession.