



Robert E. Antonacci II, CPA
Comptroller

COUNTY OF ONONDAGA

Office of the
County Comptroller

John H. Mulroy Civic Center, 14th Floor
421 Montgomery Street
Syracuse, New York 13202-2998
(315) 435-2130 • Fax (315) 435-2250
www.ongov.net

James V. Maturo
Deputy Comptroller/Accounting

Philip M. Britt
Deputy Comptroller/Audit

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: August 3, 2015

Ethics Board Refuses Audit Oversight of County Comptroller

**Board says through attorney there is nothing to see
here, and even if there was you can't look**

Onondaga County Comptroller Robert E. Antonacci II, CPA, released his report criticizing the Onondaga County Board of Ethics for failing to agree to audit oversight of the board. Also, Mr. Antonacci says the attempt by the County Attorney to define an "audit" is wrong on the merits and will be shown to be wrong in the Court of Public Opinion.

"In this heightened era of public scrutiny it is indefensible a county administrative unit would refuse an audit by the Office of County Comptroller. The County Board of Ethics was created by local law passed by the Onondaga County Legislature, its members are appointed by the County Executive, the director is Ann Rooney a Deputy County Executive and the advice being given to the board is coming from the County Attorney, yet, get this, the County Comptroller allegedly has no audit role or oversight of this very important board" Antonacci stated today.

Mr. Antonacci plainly and simply disagrees with the opinion of the County Attorney.

In a memo addressing the audit request, the County Attorney essentially says there is nothing to audit but even if there was the County Comptroller would not have authority.

-more-

"First, on the admission of the board's attorney it appears the ethics board is merely collecting disclosure statements and nothing else which is troubling in this environment. Second, for the County Attorney to attempt to restrict the definition of an audit is not something the taxpayers of Onondaga County can afford to let happen" Mr. Antonacci added.

This report (link below) addresses what appears to be gaps in the County Ethics Law and Board of Ethics performance. The Ethics Law requires County officials and employees to file annual disclosure statements. But then, based on the opinion of the County Attorney, does not require or even allow County officials in their official capacity, including the Comptroller, to see them or evaluate them for potential conflicts of interest or ethical violations. The Comptroller will be asking the Legislature to strengthen the law and will also be evaluating legal action to compel the audit.

The report shows the Board of Ethics appears to be non-functioning at this time as there is only one known member and no written record of membership, meetings, or responses to inquiries. The Board also does not have any written by-laws, policies, procedures, or even formal guidelines.

Comptroller Antonacci concluded with the release of this report "The taxpayers of Onondaga County expect and deserve accountability from its officials and employees. This accountability includes assurances decisions by officials and employees when conducting county business will be free from outside influence and focused on the best interests of the public they represent, as required by NY State and County law. As County Comptroller, I am elected by the people to be the independent watchdog and voice of the people. I am responsible for monitoring the County activities to help insure independence on behalf of the taxpayers. And I will strive do just that even if means seeking judicial intervention."

Mr. Antonacci would like to note throughout this process the Office of County Comptroller has communicated with Lori Tarolli, long time attorney in the office of the County Attorney. Ms. Tarolli has been very professional and the Office of County Comptroller has nothing but the utmost respect and admiration for her body of work. However, we strongly disagree with her opinions on this matter.

View the report along with the response from the County Attorney at <http://www.ongov.net/comptroller/documents/EthicsFinal.pdf>.

For further information please contact Robert Antonacci II, CPA, at 435-2130.