

# Sen. Roy McDonald welcomes local leaders to budget roundtable in discussion of impact on local government and health care services

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ALBANY — State Sen. Roy McDonald, R-Saratoga, held the first of six scheduled roundtable discussions at the Capitol with local government and health care officials Thursday on how the state budget could affect government and health services.

Several municipal and county officials attended the nearly three-hour meeting, including Deputy Saratoga County Administrator Ryan Moore, Saratoga Springs Mayor Scott Johnson, Troy Mayor Harry Tutunjian, Schaghticoke Supervisor Jean Carlson and Mechanicville Supervisor Thomas Richardson.

After the meeting, McDonald said he heard from officials on a number of issues, most notably the rising cost of state pension contributions, health care costs and cuts to nursing homes.

"It was time for me to work with them and listen," he said of the meeting, adding that he was proud to be the only local legislator to hold public meetings on the budget.

McDonald said reviving discussions with BOCES to provide administrative and technical assistance to those municipalities that might benefit was one idea mentioned at the meeting.

"If you're a smaller town, this may be right up your alley," he said, identifying consolidation of services between municipalities as another "hot issue" at the meeting, due in part to a \$75 million consolidation incentive fund proposed in Gov. Andrew Cuomo's executive budget.

On the health end, McDonald said clarification of Cuomo's proposed cuts to state-run disability centers was needed and that officials advocated for a return to a model that encourages home care.

"In New York City, home care has become a fraud business," he said, citing Cuomo's record as attorney general. "We really don't have that problem up here."

"Economic development can hopefully make a difference," Supervisor Tom Richardson said, citing the building of residential and retail space on

11 acres in Mechanicville as one topic discussed from his agenda. "If we can do things like that, it certainly helps offset."

"I think he has a pretty good handle on what all of the communities are going through right now," he said of McDonald.

Mayor Johnson said he brought forward a discussion of the preservation and promotion of thoroughbred horseracing

both in Saratoga Springs and statewide.

He also cited discussion of amending the collective bargaining power of municipal unions, specifically the reduction or elimination of binding arbitration provisions and the repeal of the 1982 "Triborough Amendment" that allows union employees to receive "step" based on expired contracts.

"There's less incentive for labor to come to an agreement," he said of the amendment.

McDonald's second roundtable, focused on education and transportation, is scheduled for March 24.