

Projected \$30 Million Surplus discussed in Westchester County Government between County Executive who makes the Projection and the County Board who Praises the Good News

WHITE PLAINS Even a projected \$30 million budget surplus isn't enough to soothe the bristling relationship between the Democratic-controlled county Board of Legislators and the Republican county executive.

Board Chairman Ken Jenkins, D-Yonkers, released a statement Friday touting a new forecast that said the county was on track to reap a \$30 million windfall through spending cuts and cost savings as well as potential tax contingencies. "I think it's good news," Jenkins said in a statement. "It shows that the 2010 budget adopted by the county board was fiscally conservative and with monitoring and hard work, efficiencies can be achieved."

But County Executive Robert Astorino's senior adviser, Ned McCormack, said the county was actually still running a \$37 million structural deficit because the board had borrowed \$67 million from nonrenewable "rainy day" funds to balance the budget. "It's erroneous to claim that we're at a \$30 million surplus," he said.

Jenkins denied the charge, saying Astorino's own budget director, Lawrence Soule, and Finance Commissioner Ann Marie Berg presented the forecast to the board detailing the surplus. Jenkins said the board appropriated nearly \$67 million from the annual rollover fund balance, as it has done in past years.

Jenkins and Astorino's administration have been locked in an increasingly heated battle over the budget in the wake of Astorino's \$16 million in midyear cuts, including \$1.5 million from day-care programs. The day-care cuts have led to a court battle between Astorino and two Mount Vernon women denied day-care benefits because of the cuts.

Jenkins and the county board have also sued Astorino over the day-care cuts. Last week in an electronic newsletter, Jenkins accused Astorino of breaking the law. McCormack said, "What's particularly ironic is that the board has sued the county executive claiming he had no right to save money in areas like day care, and now they're using those same savings to claim there's a surplus."