

Consider big and small options for community solution to deficit



**HARRY
BRONSON**
GUEST
ESSAYIST

“Increasing Monroe County’s sales tax could have a devastating impact on the local economy.”

If further proof were needed that the community is not on board with Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks’ self-proclaimed “community solution,” it came recently from the Rochester Business Alliance, which declared its opposition to Brooks’ proposed sales tax increase. The RBA offered to sit down with the county executive and other elected officials to work out a real solution to the county’s fiscal problems, but the county executive was resistant, claiming her tax increase is the only solution.

By balking at the opportunity to come to the table, the administration is demonstrating an unwillingness to engage in a meaningful policy discussion. This is regrettable because a solution

that does not include the input of the business community, state legislators, municipalities and schools is certainly not a community solution.

Business owners have legitimate concerns about the proposed sales tax increase that would leave Monroe County tied for the second highest sales tax rate in New York state, and with a significantly higher sales tax rate than neighboring Ontario County. Increasing Monroe County’s sales tax could have a devastating impact on the local economy. County residents deserve nothing less than a thorough, honest discussion of all options before such a measure is adopted.

Time and again, the administration has declared a willing-

ness to listen to broad-based community input, but sadly, this has not led to a constructive discussion of county fiscal policy. Instead of investigating how the county can change the way it does business, the administration has opted to correct the deficit by simply asking taxpayers to pay more. Every option should be on the table, no matter how small or how big. Savings of even a small dollar amount can help the county’s situation. We should be looking at short- and long-term solutions to the county’s fiscal problems. Changing the way the county has been doing business is the key to a real community solution.

Where is the county executive’s unilateral, “full steam

ahead” approach leading us? Instead of moving forward toward a mutually agreeable, long-term solution to our problems, it looks as though we are poised to take a large step backward to a point where discord among community members will make genuine cooperation impossible.

How can the Republican administration refuse to discuss a “community solution” that so clearly dissatisfies a substantial segment of the community — the business community, other elected officials, municipalities, schools and citizens who say no more taxes?

The administration recently gloated over the outcome of the controversial Medicaid intercept lawsuit. If the administration’s idea of intergovernmental cooperation is taking its sharing partners to court, what hope can we ever have of a real community solution? □

Bronson, D-Rochester, is assistant Democratic leader, Monroe County Legislature.