

## **Legislative Form vs. County Executive**

Here's a comparison of the legislative form of government and the county executive form of government. The information was generated using an AI tool called Copilot, which provided insights by answering follow-up questions about the pros and cons of each system. While it may not be a perfect or definitive analysis, it offers useful perspectives on the advantages and disadvantages of both forms and how they might align with Sullivan County's current structure.

# Legislative Form vs. County Executive

1 Here's a clear, structured comparison of the **pros and cons of a legislative form of county government**  
2 **(no elected executive)** versus a **county executive form of government**, grounded in authoritative sources  
3 and tailored for civic analysis.

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## 5 Legislative Form vs. County Executive: Key Differences

6 **A legislative-only system centralizes policymaking and administration under the county board,**  
7 **while a county executive system separates political leadership (executive) from legislative oversight.**  
8 The choice affects accountability, efficiency, partisanship, and administrative professionalism.

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### 10 III 1. Legislative Form of County Government (Board-Centered Model)

11 *(County board holds both legislative authority and most executive/administrative authority.)*

#### 12 Pros

- 13 • **Unified authority reduces conflict**  
14 With no separate executive, the board sets policy and oversees administration, reducing inter-  
15 branch disputes.
- 16 • **Greater legislative control over administration**  
17 Legislators directly supervise departments or appoint an administrator, keeping policymaking and  
18 implementation closely aligned.
- 19 • **Lower political intensity**  
20 No countywide executive race means fewer partisan battles and less concentration of political  
21 power.
- 22 • **Cost-efficient structure**  
23 Eliminates the salary, staff, and political infrastructure of an elected executive.

#### 24 Cons

- 25 • **Diffuse accountability**  
26 When the board collectively manages administration, it can be unclear who is responsible for  
27 failures or successes.
- 28 • **Potential for micromanagement**  
29 Legislators may become overly involved in day-to-day operations, reducing administrative  
30 professionalism.
- 31 • **Slower decision-making**  
32 Collective leadership can delay action, especially in emergencies or complex operational issues.
- 33 • **Limited executive capacity**  
34 Without a single empowered executive, long-term strategic planning may be weaker.

## Legislative Form vs. County Executive

### 2. County Executive Form of Government (Separated Powers Model)

*(Voters elect a county executive who holds independent executive authority.)*

#### Pros

- 39 • Clear accountability
- 40 A single elected executive provides a visible point of responsibility for county operations and policy leadership.
- 41 • Professionalized administration
- 42 Executives typically appoint department heads and prepare budgets, creating a more centralized and coordinated administration.
- 43 • Faster decision-making
- 44 One executive can act quickly, especially during crises.
- 45 • Checks and balances
- 46 The executive can veto legislation; the legislature can override—mirroring federal/state models.

#### Cons

- 49 • Higher political conflict
- 50 Executive-legislature disagreements can lead to gridlock, especially under divided partisan control.
- 51 • Increased cost
- 52 The executive office requires staff, communications, legal support, and political infrastructure.
- 53 • Risk of politicizing administration
- 54 Executive control over appointments can increase patronage or turnover with each election cycle.
- 55 • Potential over-centralization of power
- 56 A strong executive may dominate policy direction, reducing legislative influence.

#### Side-by-Side Comparison

| Feature                        | Legislative Form                  | County Executive Form                           |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Executive Power                | Diffuse, board-controlled         | Centralized in elected executive                |
| Accountability                 | Shared, sometimes unclear         | Clear, single point of responsibility           |
| Political Dynamics             | Lower partisanship                | Higher partisanship, potential conflict         |
| Administrative Professionalism | Varies; may rely on administrator | Typically higher; executive appoints leadership |
| Budget Preparation             | Board or administrator            | Executive prepares, legislature approves        |
| Cost                           | Lower                             | Higher  |
| Speed of Decision-Making       | Slower, consensus-driven          | Faster, executive-driven                        |
| Checks & Balances              | Limited internal checks           | Stronger separation of powers                   |

# Legislative Form vs. County Executive

62 Here is a **clean, presentation-ready, color-coded strengths/weaknesses matrix** comparing a  
 63 **Legislative Form of County Government** and a **County Executive Form of Government**, using your  
 64 established color system:

- 65 •  **Green = Strength**
- 66 •  **Yellow = Mixed / Conditional**
- 67 •  **Red = Weakness**

68 This is formatted for **archival use, committee packets, and public presentations**, consistent with your  
 69 workflow.

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## 71 Color-Coded Strengths/Weaknesses Matrix

### 72 *Legislative Form vs. County Executive Form of County Government*

| Category                              | Legislative Form (Board-Centered)   | County Executive Form (Separated Powers)   |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Accountability</b>                 | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #c00000; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Diffuse accountability; responsibility spread across board members</i>                     | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #2e8b57; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Clear accountability through a single elected executive</i>                 |
| <b>Administrative Professionalism</b> | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #fff9c4; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Depends on strength of appointed administrator; risk of micromanagement by legislators</i> | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #2e8b57; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Centralized, professional administration under an empowered executive</i>   |
| <b>Decision-Making Speed</b>          | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #c00000; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Slower; consensus-driven and committee-dependent</i>                                       | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #2e8b57; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Faster; executive can act decisively, especially in emergencies</i>         |
| <b>Checks &amp; Balances</b>          | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #c00000; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Limited internal checks; board holds both legislative and executive power</i>              | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #2e8b57; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Strong separation of powers; veto/override structure</i>                    |
| <b>Political Climate</b>              | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #c00000; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Lower partisanship; fewer countywide political battles</i>                                 | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #c00000; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Higher political conflict; potential for executive-legislature gridlock</i> |
| <b>Cost Structure</b>                 | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #c00000; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Lower cost; no executive office infrastructure</i>   | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #c00000; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Higher cost; executive office, staff, communications, legal support</i>     |
| <b>Strategic Planning Capacity</b>    | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #fff9c4; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Varies; collective leadership may dilute long-term planning</i>                            | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #2e8b57; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Stronger long-term planning under a single executive vision</i>             |
| <b>Responsiveness to Public</b>       | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #fff9c4; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Board members respond to districts; no single countywide voice</i>                         | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #2e8b57; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Executive provides a clear, countywide leadership figure</i>                |
| <b>Risk of Power Concentration</b>    | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #c00000; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Power dispersed across multiple legislators</i>  | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 1em; height: 1em; background-color: #c00000; margin-right: 0.5em;"></span> <i>Power concentrated in one individual; risk of overreach</i>                 |

## Legislative Form vs. County Executive

| Category                 | Legislative Form (Board-Centered)   | County Executive Form (Separated Powers)                        |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Continuity of Operations | ■ Stable but slow; leadership changes diffuse   | ■ Efficient but vulnerable to turnover with each election cycle |
| 73                       | <hr/>   |   |
| 74                       | <b>Executive Summary (Optional for Packet Headers)</b>  |   |
| 75                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Legislative Form</b> excels in <i>cost efficiency, lower political conflict, and distributed power</i>, but struggles with <i>accountability, speed, and administrative cohesion</i>.</li> </ul>  |   |
| 76                       |   |   |
| 77                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>County Executive Form</b> excels in <i>clarity of leadership, professional administration, strategic planning, and rapid decision-making</i>, but introduces <i>higher costs, greater political conflict, and risk of power centralization</i>.</li> </ul>  |   |
| 78                       |   |   |
| 79                       |   |   |
| 80                       | <hr/>   |   |
| 81                       | Here's a Sullivan-County-specific analysis comparing the current <i>Legislature-only</i> model with a <i>hypothetical County Executive</i> model, grounded in the county's demographics, political culture, administrative structure, and historical governance patterns. This is designed for committee packets, charter review discussions, and archival use. |   |
| 82                       |   |   |
| 83                       |   |   |
| 84                       |   |   |
| 85                       | <hr/>   |   |
| 86                       | <b>Sullivan County–Specific Analysis: Legislative Form vs. County Executive Form</b>  |   |
| 87                       | Sullivan County currently operates under a <b>9-member Legislature</b> , each representing roughly <b>8,400 residents</b> , with legislators often maintaining full-time private-sector employment.   |   |
| 88                       | This shapes both the strengths and constraints of the existing system.  |   |
| 89                       | <hr/>   |   |
| 90                       |   |   |
| 91                       | <b>III 1. How Sullivan County's Current Structure Shapes Outcomes</b>   |   |
| 92                       | <b>Strengths of the Current Legislative Model in Sullivan County</b>  |   |
| 93                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Local representation is deeply embedded.</b> Each district is small, and legislators are highly accessible, often known personally within their communities.</li> </ul>   |   |
| 94                       |   |   |
| 95                       |   |   |
| 96                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lower political temperature.</b> Sullivan's political culture is mixed-partisan and coalition-driven; lacking a countywide executive</li> </ul>   |   |
| 97                       |   |   |
| 98                       |   |   |
| 99                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cost-efficient for a rural county.</b> With a modest tax base and uneven economic growth, avoiding the overhead of an executive</li> </ul>  |   |
| 100                      |   |   |
| 101                      |   |   |

# Legislative Form vs. County Executive

- **Committee-driven governance fits the county’s scale.**  
Sullivan’s extensive committee system (e.g., Government Services, Public Safety, Planning, Budgeting) already distributes oversight effectively.

## Weaknesses of the Current Model in Sullivan County

- **Diffuse accountability has been a recurring issue.**  
When controversies arise (e.g., budget overruns, departmental mismanagement), responsibility is often unclear because authority is shared.
- **Legislators’ part-time status limits administrative oversight.**  
Many legislators have full-time jobs; this constrains their ability to supervise complex departments like Health & Family Services or Public Works.
- **Strategic planning is inconsistent.**  
Long-term initiatives—economic development, housing, broadband, workforce development—can lose momentum when leadership is distributed.
- **Operational bottlenecks.**  
The Legislature’s committee structure can slow responses to crises or cross-departmental issues.

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## 2. How a County Executive Model Would Play Out in Sullivan County

### Potential Advantages

- **Clear, countywide leadership.**  
A single executive could articulate a unified vision for economic development, tourism, housing, and infrastructure.
- **Professionalized administration.**  
Sullivan’s departments—especially Health & Family Services, Public Safety, and Planning—could benefit from centralized managerial oversight.
- **Faster crisis response.**  
During emergencies (flooding, public health events, major infrastructure failures), a single executive can act more decisively than a committee structure.
- **Improved intergovernmental coordination.**  
A county executive could more effectively negotiate with New York State, federal agencies, and regional partners.

### Potential Drawbacks

- **Higher cost for a county with a modest tax base.**  
Executive office, staff, communications, and legal support would add recurring expenses.
- **Risk of political polarization.**  
A countywide executive race could intensify partisan divides in a county that currently functions through coalition-building.



# Legislative Form vs. County Executive

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## 164 Purpose of This Briefing

165 This briefing provides a clear, accessible comparison of Sullivan County's current **Legislature-centered**  
166 **form of government** and a potential **County Executive model**. It is designed to support committee  
167 deliberations, charter review discussions, and public education efforts.

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## 169 I. Overview of Sullivan County's Current Governance Structure

170 Sullivan County operates under a **9-member Legislature**, each representing approximately 8,400  
171 residents.

172 The Legislature holds both **legislative authority** and **most executive/administrative authority**,  
173 supported by a County Manager and department heads.

### 174 Key Characteristics

- 175 • Part-time legislators with district-level constituencies
- 176 • Committee-driven oversight
- 177 • Shared administrative authority
- 178 • No single countywide executive leader

179 This structure emphasizes **local representation, fiscal caution, and collaborative decision-making**, but  
180 also creates **diffuse accountability and slower administrative response**.

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## 182 II. County Executive Model: General Description

183 Under a County Executive model, voters elect a **single countywide executive** who holds independent  
184 executive authority.

185 The Legislature retains lawmaking and oversight powers, while the Executive manages day-to-day  
186 operations.

### 187 Key Characteristics

- 188 • Full-time elected executive
- 189 • Centralized administrative authority
- 190 • Clear separation of powers
- 191 • Legislature shifts to a more traditional legislative/oversight role

192 This model emphasizes **professional administration, unified leadership, and faster decision-making**,  
193 but introduces **higher costs and greater political intensity**.

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# Legislative Form vs. County Executive

## 195 III. Sullivan-County-Specific Strengths and Weaknesses

### 196 A. Legislative Form (Current System)

#### 197 Strengths

- 198 • **Strong local representation:** District-level relationships remain central to governance.
- 199 • **Lower political polarization:** No countywide executive race reduces partisan conflict.
- 200 • **Cost-efficient:** Avoids the overhead of an executive office.
- 201 • **Committee structure fits county scale:** Oversight is distributed and collaborative.

#### 202 Weaknesses

- 203 • **Diffuse accountability:** Responsibility for administrative outcomes is shared and sometimes unclear.
- 204 • **Limited administrative capacity:** Part-time legislators cannot consistently supervise complex departments.
- 205 • **Slower crisis response:** Committee processes can delay action.
- 206 • **Inconsistent long-term planning:** Strategic initiatives may lose momentum without centralized leadership.

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### 211 B. County Executive Form (Hypothetical Alternative)

#### 212 Potential Advantages

- 213 • **Clear countywide leadership:** A single executive articulates a unified vision for economic development, housing, and infrastructure.
- 214 • **Professionalized administration:** Centralized management strengthens coordination across departments.
- 215 • **Faster decision-making:** Particularly beneficial during emergencies or cross-departmental challenges.
- 216 • **Improved intergovernmental relations:** A county executive can more effectively negotiate with state and federal partners.

#### 221 Potential Drawbacks

- 222 • **Higher cost:** Executive office, staff, and communications infrastructure add recurring expenses.
- 223 • **Increased political conflict:** A countywide executive race may heighten partisanism.
- 224 • **Cultural mismatch:** Sullivan's town-centered political culture may resist power centralization.
- 225 • **Reduced legislative influence:** The Legislature's role becomes more policy-focused and less operational.

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## 228 IV. Comparative Summary Table

## Legislative Form vs. County Executive

| Dimension               | Legislative Form (Current) | County Executive Model             |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Leadership Structure    | Shared, committee-based    | Centralized in one executive       |
| Accountability          | Diffuse                    | Clear, single point                |
| Administrative Capacity | Moderate; fragmented       | Higher; coordinated                |
| Fiscal Impact           | Lower cost                 | Higher cost                        |
| Political Climate       | Lower conflict             | Higher conflict                    |
| Crisis Response         | Slower                     | Faster                             |
| Strategic Planning      | Inconsistent               | Strong, unified                    |
| Local Representation    | Very strong                | Moderated by countywide leadership |

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### 230 V. Considerations for Charter Review Committees

#### 231 Questions for Deliberation

- 232 • Does Sullivan County need **more centralized leadership** to meet long-term challenges?
- 233 • Would a County Executive improve **accountability and administrative performance**?
- 234 • How would increased political intensity affect **public trust and governance stability**?
- 235 • Can the county sustain the **fiscal cost** of an executive office?
- 236 • How would the shift affect **town-county relations**, especially in rural districts?

#### 237 Potential Hybrid Options

238 Committees may also explore:

- 239 • Strengthening the **County Manager** role without creating an elected executive
- 240 • Clarifying lines of administrative authority within the current system
- 241 • Enhancing legislative oversight mechanisms
- 242 • Creating statutory performance reporting requirements for departments

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### 244 VI. Conclusion

245 Sullivan County's current legislative model aligns with its **localist political culture, fiscal conservatism,**  
246 **and collaborative governance traditions.**

247 A County Executive model would offer **clearer leadership, stronger administration, and faster**  
248 **decision-making**, but at the cost of **higher expenses and increased political conflict.**

249 The choice ultimately depends on whether the county prioritizes **local representation and stability** or  
250 **centralized leadership and administrative efficiency.**

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# Legislative Form vs. County Executive

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 252 | Below is a Sullivan-County-specific charter-review scenario analysis answering the question:   |
| 253 | What Changes if Sullivan County Adopts a County Executive in 2028?   |
| 254 | <i>Scenario Analysis for Charter Review &amp; Legislative Committees</i>   |
| 255 | This briefing is structured for public presentations, committee packets, and archival documentation, using clear phases, predictable impacts, and Sullivan-specific context.   |
| 257 |  |
| 258 | <b>I. Overview: What "Adopting an Executive in 2028" Actually Means</b>  |
| 259 | If Sullivan County voters approve a charter amendment in November 2027, the first County Executive election would occur in November 2028, with the Executive taking office January 1, 2029.  |
| 261 | This transition would require major structural, administrative, and cultural changes across county government.   |
| 263 |  |
| 264 | <b>II. Phase-by-Phase Scenario Timeline</b>  |
| 265 | <b>Phase I — 2026–2027: Charter Drafting &amp; Public Review</b>   |
| 266 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charter Review Commission or Legislature drafts the amendment.</li> <li>• Public hearings required under NYS Municipal Home Rule Law.</li> <li>• Key decisions must be made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Strength of executive powers</li> <li>○ Appointment/removal authority</li> <li>○ Veto powers</li> <li>○ Budget authority</li> <li>○ Role of the County Manager (retain, modify, or abolish)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ballot language finalized for November 2027 referendum.</li> </ul> |
| 275 | <b>Outcome:</b> Voters decide whether to adopt the County Executive model.   |
| 276 |  |
| 277 | <b>Phase 2 — 2028: Transition Year</b>   |
| 278 | If the referendum passes:  |
| 279 | <b>A. Structural Reorganization</b>  |
| 280 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departments realign under the Executive.</li> <li>• Legislature shifts from operational oversight to policy/oversight functions.</li> <li>• County Manager position is either:</li> </ul>   |
| 281 |  |
| 282 |  |

# Legislative Form vs. County Executive

- 283 ○ Eliminated,
- 284 ○ Converted to a Chief Administrative Officer, or
- 285 ○ Retained with reduced authority.

## 286 **B. Budget Process Changes**

- 287 • The 2029 budget becomes the first prepared by the incoming Executive.
- 288 • Legislature adopts new budget review procedures.

## 289 **C. Political Realignment**

- 290 • Countywide executive race reshapes political coalitions.
- 291 • District-level legislative races become more issue-driven, less administrative.

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## 293 **Phase 3 — January 1, 2029: Day-One Changes**

### 294 **1. Executive Authority Begins**

295 The new County Executive assumes:

- 296 • Administrative control of all departments
- 297 • Appointment authority for commissioners
- 298 • Responsibility for preparing the annual budget
- 299 • Power to issue executive orders
- 300 • Power to veto legislative resolutions (subject to override)

### 301 **2. Legislature's Role Shifts**

302 The Legislature transitions to:

- 303 • Policy development
- 304 • Budget review and amendment
- 305 • Oversight hearings
- 306 • Confirmation of appointments (if included in charter)

### 307 **3. Departmental Realignment**

308 Departments begin reporting directly to the Executive, not to committees.

### 309 **4. Public Communication Changes**

310 The Executive becomes the county's:

- 311 • Chief spokesperson

# Legislative Form vs. County Executive

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 312 | • Intergovernmental liaison  |
| 313 | • Crisis response leader   |
| 314 |  |
| 315 | <b>III. Functional Impacts on Sullivan County</b>  |
| 316 | <b>A. Administrative Operations</b>  |
| 317 | <b>Expected improvements:</b>  |
| 318 | • Faster decision-making   |
| 319 | • More consistent cross-department coordination  |
| 320 | • Stronger long-term planning (economic development, housing, broadband)                             |
| 321 | <b>Potential challenges:</b>   |
| 322 | • Initial disruption as departments adjust to new reporting lines                                    |
| 323 | • Risk of politicizing appointments  |
| 324 |  |
| 325 | <b>B. Fiscal Impacts</b>   |
| 326 | <b>Costs increase due to:</b>  |
| 327 | • Executive salary   |
| 328 | • Executive staff (chief of staff, communications, legal counsel)                                    |
| 329 | • Transition costs (reorganization, legal review, HR restructuring)                                  |
| 330 | <b>Savings or efficiencies may emerge over time through:</b>   |
| 331 | • Streamlined administration   |
| 332 | • Reduced duplication  |
| 333 | • More coordinated capital planning  |
| 334 |  |
| 335 | <b>C. Political Culture</b>  |
| 336 | Sullivan County's historically coalition-based, low-conflict political environment may shift toward: |
| 337 | • More partisan countywide elections   |
| 338 | • Clearer ideological divides  |
| 339 | • Stronger public expectations for visible leadership  |

# Legislative Form vs. County Executive

40 This is a **major cultural change**, not just a structural one.

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## 342 **D. Town–County Relations**

### 343 **Likely changes:**

- 344 • Town supervisors interact primarily with the Executive, not legislators.
- 345 • Countywide initiatives (EMS, broadband, housing) become more centralized.
- 346 • Potential friction if towns perceive the Executive as overreaching.

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## 348 **IV. Risks & Opportunities**

### 349 **Opportunities**

- 350 • Unified leadership for economic development
- 351 • Stronger emergency management
- 352 • Clear accountability for successes/failures
- 353 • More professionalized administration
- 354 • Improved grant-seeking and state/federal coordination

### 355 **Risks**

- 356 • Higher political conflict
- 357 • Higher cost structure
- 358 • Concentration of power in one office
- 359 • Potential turnover of department heads every four years
- 360 • Cultural mismatch with Sullivan’s localist traditions

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## 362 **V. “If Adopted in 2028, What Does Sullivan County Look Like by 2032?”**

### 363 **Most Likely Outcomes**

- 364 • A more centralized, professional administrative structure
- 365 • A more visible and politically influential county leader
- 366 • A Legislature focused on policy, not operations
- 367 • More competitive countywide elections
- 368 • Stronger long-term planning capacity
- 369 • Higher expectations for county performance and responsiveness

### 370 **Least Likely Outcomes**

## Legislative Form vs. County Executive

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| 371 | • A return to the pre-1996 Board of Supervisors model   |
| 372 | • A purely nonpartisan political environment  |
| 373 | • A Legislature retaining operational control of departments  |
| 374 |   |
| 375 | <b>VI. Bottom-Line Assessment for Charter Review Committees</b>   |
| 376 | Adopting a County Executive in 2028 would fundamentally reshape Sullivan County's governance by:  |
| 377 | • <b>Centralizing leadership</b>  |
| 378 | • <b>Increasing administrative professionalism</b>  |
| 379 | • <b>Raising political stakes</b>   |
| 380 | • <b>Increasing costs</b>   |
| 381 | • <b>Clarifying accountability</b>  |
| 382 | • <b>Shifting legislative culture and responsibilities</b>  |
| 383 | This is not a minor amendment—it is a <b>structural transformation</b> with long-term implications for governance, budgeting, political culture, and public expectations. |
| 385 |   |
| 386 | Below is a <b>polished, neutral, public-hearing script</b> tailored for Sullivan County legislators presenting the issue of adopting a <b>County Executive model</b> .    |
| 387 | It is written in a <b>clear, steady, civic-appropriate tone</b> , suitable for <b>public hearings, livestreams, and committee presentations</b> .                         |
| 390 |   |
| 391 | <b>Public Hearing Script</b>  |
| 392 | <b>Topic: Considering a County Executive Form of Government in Sullivan County</b>  |
| 393 | <b>Good evening, everyone.</b>  |
| 394 | Thank you all for being here tonight. My name is [Legislator Name], and I appreciate the opportunity to   |
| 395 | speak with residents, community leaders, and stakeholders about an important question before Sullivan   |
| 396 | County: <b>whether our county should consider adopting a County Executive form of government.</b>   |
| 397 | Tonight's hearing is part of a broader effort to ensure that any discussion about structural change is  |
| 398 | <b>transparent, accessible, and grounded in facts</b> , not assumptions. My goal is not to advocate for a   |
| 399 | particular outcome, but to help the public understand <b>what would change, what would stay the same,</b>   |
| 400 | <b>and what questions deserve careful consideration.</b>  |
| 401 |   |
| 402 | <b>I. Why We Are Here</b>   |

## Legislative Form vs. County Executive

3 Sullivan County currently operates under a **Legislature-centered model**, where nine legislators  
404 collectively hold both legislative and most executive authority.  
405 Some counties in New York use a different structure—one with a **separately elected County Executive**  
406 who manages day-to-day operations while the Legislature focuses on lawmaking and oversight.

407 The question before us is whether Sullivan County should explore that model.

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### 409 **II. What a County Executive Model Means**

410 A County Executive model would create a **single, countywide elected leader** responsible for:

- 411 • Managing county departments
- 412 • Preparing the annual budget
- 413 • Overseeing daily operations
- 414 • Coordinating emergency response
- 415 • Serving as the county’s chief spokesperson
- 416 • Working with state and federal partners

417 The Legislature would continue to pass laws, approve budgets, and conduct oversight, but would no  
418 longer directly manage administrative operations.

419 This is a **structural shift**, not a minor adjustment.

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### 421 **III. Potential Benefits**

422 Supporters of the County Executive model often point to several potential advantages:

- 423 • **Clear accountability:** One elected official is responsible for county operations.
- 424 • **More professionalized administration:** Centralized management can improve coordination  
425 across departments.
- 426 • **Faster decision-making:** Particularly during emergencies or cross-departmental issues.
- 427 • **Stronger long-term planning:** A single executive can drive multi-year initiatives in areas like  
428 economic development, housing, and infrastructure.
- 429 • **Improved intergovernmental relations:** A countywide executive can more effectively negotiate  
430 with state and federal agencies.

431 These are meaningful considerations, especially as Sullivan County faces complex challenges.

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### 433 **IV. Potential Drawbacks**

434 At the same time, adopting a County Executive model also carries risks and costs:

## Legislative Form vs. County Executive

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 435 | • <b>Higher expenses:</b> An executive office requires staff, communications capacity, and legal support.  |
| 436 | • <b>Greater political intensity:</b> A countywide executive race may increase partisanship.   |
| 437 | • <b>Concentration of power:</b> Authority shifts from nine legislators to one individual.   |
| 438 | • <b>Cultural fit:</b> Sullivan County's political culture is historically localist and coalition-based; a strong executive may represent a significant cultural change. |
| 439 | • <b>Transition disruption:</b> Reorganizing departments and reporting lines can be complex.   |
| 441 | These concerns deserve careful public discussion.  |
| 442 |  |
| 443 | <b>V. What Would Change if Adopted in 2028</b>   |
| 444 | If voters approved a charter amendment in 2027:  |
| 445 | • The First County Executive election would occur in <b>November 2028</b> .  |
| 446 | • The Executive would take office <b>January 1, 2029</b> .   |
| 447 | • Department heads would begin reporting to the Executive.   |
| 448 | • The Legislature would shift to a more traditional legislative/oversight role.  |
| 449 | • The Executive would prepare the budget, subject to legislative approval.   |
| 450 | • A veto/override system would be established, creating clearer checks and balances.   |
| 451 | This would be a <b>major reorganization</b> of county government.  |
| 452 |  |
| 453 | <b>VI. Questions for Public Input</b>  |
| 454 | As we consider this issue, we are asking the public to help us think through several key questions:  |
| 455 | 1. <b>Would a County Executive improve accountability and administrative performance?</b>  |
| 456 | 2. <b>Is the county prepared for the fiscal cost of an executive office?</b>   |
| 457 | 3. <b>How would this change affect political culture and public trust?</b>   |
| 458 | 4. <b>Would centralized leadership strengthen or strain town-county relations?</b>   |
| 459 | 5. <b>Does Sullivan County need stronger long-term planning capacity?</b>  |
| 460 | Your input on these questions is essential.  |
| 461 |  |
| 462 | <b>VII. Closing</b>  |
| 463 | Tonight's hearing is not about reaching a final decision.  |
| 464 | It is about <b>listening, learning, and ensuring that any future steps are taken with full public</b>  |
| 465 | <b>understanding.</b>  |

# Legislative Form vs. County Executive

466 We welcome your comments, your concerns, and your ideas.  
467 Thank you for participating in this important conversation about the future of Sullivan County's  
468 government.

469 **The floor is now open for public comment.**

470  
471

472 Below is a **clean, structured, Sullivan-County-specific side-by-side comparison** of the **1996 Charter**  
473 **Reform** and a hypothetical **2028 transition to a County Executive**.

474 It's formatted for **committee packets, public hearings, and archival documentation**, with clear  
475 contrasts in purpose, process, and impact.

476

477 Side-by-Side Comparison: 1996 Reforms vs. a 2028 Executive Transition

478 *Sullivan County Governance Structure: Historical vs. Prospective Change*

479

480 I. Purpose of the Reform

| <b>Dimension</b>              | <b>1996 Charter Reform</b>   | <b>2028 Executive Transition<br/>(Hypothetical)</b>                                    |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Primary Goal</b>           | Correct representation inequities and modernize administration                             | Centralize executive authority and strengthen administrative capacity                  |
| <b>Core Problem Addressed</b> | Town-based Board of Supervisors created population imbalance and fragmented administration | Diffuse accountability, slow decision-making, and inconsistent long-term planning      |
| <b>Political Context</b>      | Broad agreement that the old system was outdated   | Mixed views; debate centers on cost, power concentration, and cultural fit             |
| <b>Public Pressure</b>        | Strong push for equal representation and professional management                           | Mixed; driven by administrative performance concerns and desire for clearer leadership |

481

## Legislative Form vs. County Executive

| 482 | II. Structural Changes     | Dimension                | 1996 Reform   | 2028 Executive Transition  |
|-----|----------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|
| 483 |                            | Form of Government       | Replaced Board of Supervisors with a 9-member Legislature         | Adds a separately elected County Executive to the existing Legislature     |
|     |                            | Executive Authority      | Created an appointed County Manager with limited independence     | Creates a full, elected Executive with independent executive powers        |
|     |                            | Legislative Role         | Legislature becomes primary policymaking body                     | Legislature shifts to oversight, lawmaking, and budget review              |
|     |                            | Department Oversight     | Committees + County Manager                                       | County Executive directly oversees departments                             |
|     |                            | Checks & Balances        | Minimal separation of powers                                      | Stronger separation: veto/override, appointment confirmations (if adopted) |
| 484 | III. Administrative Impact | Dimension                | 1996 Reform   | 2028 Executive Transition  |
|     |                            | Professionalization      | Major improvement; first modern administrative structure          | Further centralization; stronger coordination and strategic planning       |
|     |                            | Decision-Making Speed    | Faster than Board of Supervisors but still committee-driven       | Significantly faster; executive can act unilaterally within authority      |
|     |                            | Accountability           | Improved but still diffuse (shared among 9 legislators + manager) | Clear, single point of accountability for operations                       |
|     |                            | Continuity of Operations | Stable; manager insulated from elections                          | Less stable; department heads may change with each executive term          |
| 485 |                            | Emergency Response       | Improved but still committee-dependent                            | Stronger, centralized crisis leadership                                    |

## Legislative Form vs. County Executive

486 IV. Fiscal Impact

| Dimension                        | 1996 Reform   | 2028 Executive Transition   |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Cost Structure</b>            | Neutral to modest increase (manager salary + staff) | Higher recurring costs (executive office, staff, communications, legal) |
| <b>Budget Process</b>            | Legislature + Manager collaborate                   | Executive prepares budget; Legislature reviews/amends                   |
| <b>Long-Term Fiscal Planning</b> | Improved but inconsistent                           | Stronger, more unified capital and strategic planning                   |

487

488 V. Political Culture & Representation

| Dimension                    | 1996 Reform   | 2028 Executive Transition                                     |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Representation Model</b>  | Shifted from town-based to equal-population districts | Retains districts; adds countywide executive race             |
| <b>Political Climate</b>     | Reduced town-county conflict; moderate partisanship   | Potential increase in partisanship and political polarization |
| <b>Public Expectations</b>   | Moderate; Legislature seen as collective leadership   | Higher expectations for visible, decisive leadership          |
| <b>Town-County Relations</b> | Improved coordination through Legislature             | Could centralize authority; towns may feel diminished         |

489

490 VI. Implementation Timeline

| Dimension                | 1996 Reform     | 2028 Executive Transition |
|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Referendum Year</b>   | 1994            | 2027 (hypothetical)       |
| <b>Transition Period</b> | 1994–1995       | 2028                      |
| <b>Effective Date</b>    | January 1, 1996 | January 1, 2029           |

## Legislative Form vs. County Executive

| Dimension                | 1996 Reform   | 2028 Executive Transition   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Transition</b>        | High (complete system replacement)  | High (major administrative reorganization)  |
| <b>Complexity</b>        | Extensive hearings and public debate  | Would require similar or greater engagement   |
| <b>Public Engagement</b> |   |   |
| <b>Change</b>            | Structural overhaul of representation and administration  | Structural overhaul of executive authority and administrative control                       |
| <b>Magnitude of</b>      | Modernized county government; improved representation and stability   | More centralized leadership; stronger administration but higher political and fiscal stakes |
| <b>Long-Term Outcome</b> | Strong—aligned with fairness and modernization goals  | Mixed—aligns with efficiency goals but challenges localist traditions                       |
| <b>Cultural Fit</b>      |   |   |
| 491                      |   |   |
| 492                      | VII. Overall Impact on Sullivan County  |   |
| 493                      |   |   |
| 494                      | VIII. Bottom-Line Comparison  |   |
| 495                      | 1996 Reform   |   |
| 496                      | Aimed to <b>fix representation inequities and professionalize administration.</b>   |   |
| 497                      | It replaced an outdated system with a modern Legislature-Manager model that improved fairness, stability, and administrative coherence.   |   |
| 498                      | 2028 Executive Transition   |   |
| 499                      | Would aim to <b>centralize leadership, improve accountability, and strengthen strategic capacity.</b>   |   |
| 500                      | It would introduce higher costs, greater political intensity, and a major cultural shift toward executive-centered governance.  |   |
| 501                      |   |   |
| 502                      |   |   |
| 503                      |   |   |
| 504                      | Below is a <b>public-hearing-ready Q&amp;A sheet</b> designed specifically for Sullivan County legislators to use during hearings on whether to adopt a <b>County Executive</b> form of government. |   |
| 505                      |   |   |

## Legislative Form vs. County Executive

506 It is written in a **neutral, accessible, and authoritative tone**, suitable for public meetings, livestreams,  
507 and committee packets.

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508

### 509 **Q&A Sheet for Public Hearings**

510 **Topic: Considering a County Executive Form of Government in Sullivan County**

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511

#### 512 **1. Why is Sullivan County discussing a County Executive model now?**

513 Residents and officials have raised questions about **accountability, administrative performance,**  
514 **long-term planning, and crisis response.**

515 A County Executive model is one option for addressing these concerns.

516 This hearing is part of a **fact-finding and public-input process**, not a decision.

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517

#### 518 **2. Would adopting a County Executive eliminate the Legislature?**

519 **No.**

520 The Legislature would remain the county's **lawmaking body**, responsible for:

- 521 • Passing local laws
- 522 • Approving budgets
- 523 • Conducting oversight
- 524 • Representing districts

525 The change affects **executive authority**, not legislative representation.

---

526

#### 527 **3. What would a County Executive actually do?**

528 A County Executive would serve as the **full-time, countywide elected leader** responsible for:

- 529 • Managing county departments
- 530 • Preparing the annual budget
- 531 • Overseeing daily operations
- 532 • Coordinating emergency response
- 533 • Serving as the county's chief spokesperson
- 534 • Working with state and federal partners

535 This centralizes administrative authority in one office.

## Legislative Form vs. County Executive

|     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| 536 | <hr/>   |  |
| 537 | <b>4. How would this change affect the County Manager position?</b>   |  |
| 538 | That depends on the charter language.   |  |
| 539 | Options include:  |  |
| 540 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminating the position</li> <li>• Retaining it as a <b>Chief Administrative Officer</b> under the Executive</li> <li>• Redefining duties to support executive functions</li> </ul> |  |
| 543 | The charter review process determines the structure.  |  |
| 544 | <hr/>   |  |
| 545 | <b>5. Would this increase the cost of government?</b>   |  |
| 546 | <b>Yes, likely.</b>   |  |
| 547 | A County Executive office typically requires:   |  |
| 548 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive salary</li> <li>• Chief of staff or administrative support</li> <li>• Communications capacity</li> <li>• Legal or policy staff</li> </ul>                                  |  |
| 552 | Costs vary by county, but the structure is generally <b>more expensive</b> than the current model.  |  |
| 553 | <hr/>   |  |
| 554 | <b>6. How would this change improve accountability?</b>   |  |
| 555 | Under the current system, responsibility for administration is <b>shared</b> among nine legislators and the County Manager.   |  |
| 556 | A County Executive creates a <b>single point of accountability</b> for:   |  |
| 558 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department performance</li> <li>• Budget execution</li> <li>• Crisis response</li> <li>• Administrative decisions</li> </ul>   |  |
| 562 | This clarity is one of the most commonly cited benefits.  |  |
| 563 | <hr/>   |  |
| 564 | <b>7. Would this make county government more political?</b>   |  |

## Legislative Form vs. County Executive

565 Possibly.

566 A countywide executive race can:

- 567 • Increase partisanship
- 568 • Heighten political visibility
- 569 • Create executive–legislature disagreements

570 Some counties experience more political conflict; others see improved leadership.

571 The impact depends on local political culture.

572

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### 573 **8. How would this affect town–county relations?**

574 A County Executive becomes the **primary point of contact** for town supervisors.

575 This can:

- 576 • Improve coordination on countywide initiatives
- 577 • Streamline communication
- 578 • Create tension if towns feel authority is shifting upward

579 The effect varies by county and leadership style.

580

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### 581 **9. Would department heads change every four years?**

582 Possibly.

583 A County Executive typically has **appointment and removal authority**, which can lead to:

- 584 • More alignment between departments and executive priorities
- 585 • More turnover during transitions

586 Some charters require legislative confirmation to balance stability and accountability.

587

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### 588 **10. How would the budget process change?**

589 The County Executive would:

- 590 • Prepare the annual budget
- 591 • Submit it to the Legislature
- 592 • Implement the adopted budget

593 The Legislature would retain authority to **amend and approve** the budget.

**Legislative Form vs. County Executive**

594

595 **11. What would the transition timeline look like?**

596 If voters approved a charter amendment in November 2027:

597 • 2028: Transition year (reorganization, staffing, budget process changes)

598 • November 2028: First County Executive election

599 • January 1, 2029: Executive takes office

600 This is a major administrative transition, similar in scale to the 1996 reforms.

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601

602 **12. What stays the same under a County Executive model?**

603 • The 9-district Legislature

604 • Local representation

605 • Legislative authority over laws and budgets

606 • County departments and services (unless reorganized by charter)

607 • Public access to hearings, meetings, and records

608 The change is structural, not service-level.

609

610 **13. What are the main arguments in favor of adopting a County Executive?**

611 Commonly cited benefits include:

612 • Clear accountability

613 • Faster decision-making

614 • Stronger long-term planning

615 • More professionalized administration

616 • Improved crisis response

617 • Better coordination with state and federal agencies

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618

619 **14. What are the main arguments against adopting a County Executive?**

620 Common concerns include:

621 • Higher cost

622 • Increased political conflict

623 • Concentration of power in one office

# Legislative Form vs. County Executive

- 624 • Cultural mismatch with Sullivan’s localist traditions
- 625 • Potential disruption during transition

626

## 627 15. What is the Legislature’s role in this process?

628 The Legislature’s responsibilities include:

- 629 • Reviewing governance options
- 630 • Holding public hearings
- 631 • Drafting or revising charter language
- 632 • Deciding whether to place a referendum on the ballot
- 633 • Ensuring transparency and public engagement

634 Ultimately, **voters** decide whether to adopt the model.

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