

**LONG ISLAND / POLITICS****Nassau, Suffolk sales tax revenue grew in 2018**

In Suffolk, collections exceeded budgeted amounts by 20.2 percent, and in Nassau, revenue were \$18.2 million over budget.



Shoppers fill the halls of the Roosevelt Field Shopping Mall in Garden City to take advantage of Black Friday sales on Nov. 24, 2017. Photo Credit: Howard Schnapp

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Sales tax revenues in both Suffolk and Nassau last year exceeded county budgets by millions of dollars, reflecting a strong Long Island economy, officials reported Wednesday.

After Suffolk received its final check from the state for 2018 sales taxes, collections were \$20.23 million over budget — a growth rate of 4.46 percent over 2017, according to Jason Elan, a spokesman for Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone.

In Nassau, sales tax revenues were \$18.2 million over budget for 2018, and were up by 3.3 percent over 2017, according to the County Legislature's office of budget review.

Due to accounting restrictions, Nassau must defer \$7 million of the surplus until 2020, leaving \$11.2 million available to spend this year, budget review director Maurice Chalmers wrote in a memo to lawmakers.

Despite the final tallies for both counties, sales tax growth actually slowed in the last quarter as the stock market dipped at the end of the year.

Suffolk in its 2019 budget had projected collecting more than \$26 million by the end of 2018. Until growth slowed to 2.37 percent in the last quarter, Suffolk sales taxes revenues were increasing by more than 5 percent year over year.

Nassau also saw collections weaken in the last quarter after increasing by more than 4 percent earlier in the year.

However, both counties reported that spending started out strong this year.

“Current economic indicators and projections support a continues positive Economic growth throughout FY19,” Chalmers wrote.

However, he predicted “the economic momentum will diminish in speed as the year progresses.”

Economist Martin Cantor, director of the Long Island Center for socio-economic policy, agreed. He said revenues were up in 2018 because more Long Islanders were working and spending.

“A lot has to do with how good you feel,” said Cantor, a former Suffolk County economic development commissioner. “When you’re working, you’re feeling good.”

But, he said, “It’s going to slow down. There’s no way you’re going to continue to get that kind of growth . . . If the stock market starts to slow down because we are in the raggedy end of a bull market, people are going to stop feeling so happy and spending will probably go down.”

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