



State of the County

John M. Becker, Chairman

January 7, 2020

Again, welcome everyone. 2019 was a year of accomplishments, we wrapped up several major projects and laid the ground work for upcoming and current projects. Our County Administrator, Mark Scimone will be giving a much more detailed address going through each department next month, but I would like to go over a few highlights today.

We finalized the purchase of Delphi Falls Park in 2019 and with the help of our Planning Department, secured a \$500,000 dollar grant from the Regional Economic Development Council for park improvements. This past summer we honored Harold and Barbara Jones with a dedication ceremony. Without their very generous donation of \$750,000 dollars to the people of Madison County, the purchase of Delphi Falls Park would not have been possible.

We also, completed the year and a half long renovation of the 110 year old historic Madison County Courthouse. This 18 million dollar renovation not only modernized the building, but we were able to keep

the historical integrity as well. The Courthouse is now 100% ADA accessible, bringing it up to the standards laid out in the 1990 law signed by President George H.W. Bush. The project included the addition of two elevators, a new wing, modernizing court rooms, offices, and jury rooms, and two new statues. All of these changes will meet the needs of our legal community for the generations to come.

The renovations included creating a single point of entry for the Courthouse and our County Office Building. The single point of entry allows for the safety and security of our employees and all who enter. I know it is a bit of an inconvenience, but if we prevent one incident it is well worth it. In the past, we have had people come in looking for Department heads and employees with that person's picture on sheets of paper. Thus sparking the need for greater security. It is not 1969 anymore, when this building was first built, the world is a much different place.

In May, we also held our Board of Supervisors meeting in the Courthouse, the original place of the board meetings after the county seat was moved to Wampsville 110 years ago. Board meetings were there until 1969 when the County office building was built.

Also, in 2019 the Emergency Management Training Facility was completed. When the Board signed the historic agreement with the state and the Oneidas in 2013, the Board dedicated part of the 11 million dollar settlement to our volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel. The Board had a vision to see that the County volunteers, which we are seeing fewer and fewer of, have a facility close by for training. Now that vision has become a reality with the completed training center that houses a state of the art classroom and modern fire training facility.

In Madison County, collaborative efforts and economic development will always continue to be on the front burner. For example, the completion of Phase 1 and beginning of Phase 2 of the

Empire Farms greenhouse project in the City of Oneida has already brought in over 100 jobs and over 100 million dollars in investment to our community. This is a great accomplishment for our IDA and the city of Oneida as well as our County. Another collaborative effort is the Reimagine the Canals project, it is another great score for Madison County as well as the Village of Canastota. We also partnered with the village of Wampsville through former Mayor Clute to complete the Community Park, located in front of or DSS building, that serves as a park for both the Village and our Social Services Department.

Our efforts to bring water to the Town of Lincoln and Lenox by way of the landfill is finally coming to fruition. Over 150 residents will be getting water this year because of the County's investment in those communities. We understood early on that the landfill being sited in Lincoln was not a popular decision. However, over the course of the past 12 years that I have been Chairman, we have sought to offset that decision by investing in Lincoln. First, by creating the Town host

community benefit monies of over \$50,000 per year, when in 2006 that host community benefit was nonexistent. Now, we have invested over 4 Million dollars of State grant monies and County funds to give Lincoln a good footing for future public water projects. By helping Lincoln and all of our communities with investments, grants, as well as the County's technical help, it helps all of us grow and be a better County.

We have set an example here in Madison County, we set aside our differences and come together for the common good. Living in the past and harboring ill will or negative feelings does not do our communities any good. As I said in my first state of the county, 12 years ago, if you don't like change stay home, hide under the bed or move. This Board has been able to adapt and change with the times all for the better, a fact that I am very proud of and the Board of Supervisors should be proud of as well.

The Town of Georgetown is a great example of collaboration between town and County. A few years ago, the County invested in a

health study for the citizens of Georgetown, looking at the air quality before and after the construction of the natural gas compressor station. The compressor station was a big win for Georgetown, adding over 30% to their assessment rates and allowing them to invest in their future, this came to fruition with help from the County as well as some relationship building. Also, the County assisted the Town in landing a \$460,000 grant to help with taking over an abandoned school for their new highway garage and their Town offices. Again, this was accomplished by Town and County working together.

In 2019, we laid the ground work for construction of the new County highway garage in the Town of Eaton. This project involves replacing a 75 year old building that was in desperate need of repair. In 2020 we will see the groundbreaking and construction of this state of the art facility.

Our collaboration with Onondaga County and the Town of Sullivan to bring water to Clear Path for Veterans will continue in 2020. The

investment in public water to Clear Path will bring a new and greater investment to that facility. As Sullivan continues to grow, this gives our County an economic engine to help surrounding communities grow and expand.

This year, I look forward to applying for a \$10 Million dollar grant through the USDA to improve Broadband infrastructure in Madison County. In 2019, the County hired ECC to do a study of where we need to improve the infrastructure for Broadband. We now have a handle on it and are applying for the grant. This will help our small businesses in the southern part of the County as well as many members of our agricultural community that have a need for high speed internet. By doing this, we will improve the quality of life of our residents and make Madison County more appealing to businesses.

Collaborative relationships between governments, organizations, and people all contribute to our success as a County. This coming year, I look forward to working closely with CNY Regional Planning and

Development and David Bottar, the Director of that organization. I admire Dave for his creative and out of the box thinking, which is exactly what this County has done for the past 12 years and will continue to do. David has had some great ideas to compliment the high investment made by the State and Green Empire Farms for the City of Oneida as well as other communities throughout our County.

Speaking of the City of Oneida, in 2020, I look forward to working with the new Mayor, Helen Acker (who is here today) to bring more economic development to the City, as well as bring the City back to its former greatness. The new mayor is bringing a fresh attitude of collaboration with our County and she has an understanding that we are all in the same boat, working toward the same goal, a great County. Things we are currently working on are more businesses, sewers to the County complex, and possibly to the village of Wampsville.

In 2020, we will continue to work and collaborate with our neighbors and community members, the Oneida Nation. Our

relationship has come a long way since 2014 and I look forward to continue to vanquishing the nay sayers and negative attitudes that had brought years of strife and lawsuits, to a complete end. We have a great working relationship with the Oneidas and look forward to continuing that relationship long into the future.

Also, in 2020, we will again lobby the State of New York on our host community monies for the Yellow Brick Road and Point Place Casinos. It is a matter of fairness, the Vice Chairman and I both witnessed the sickening polarizing political charade called the New York State Assembly lead by Carl Hastie and his Assembly Council. The phrase that is used in Albany to describe the legislature is “the billion dollar legislature.”

The success of Madison County is also due to the dedication and hard work of our other elected officials. A few highlights from 2019 include our County Clerk’s office which has transformed greatly over the past few years. Revenues are up over 11% since 2018, with the

ability to do electronic payments, selling of EZ Passes, selling of maps and new this year, the selling of advertisements on the big screen at the DMV. It is the ability of our County Clerk, Mike Keville, and his employees to be able to think outside of the box, that has made Madison County's DMV one of the best, if not the best in New York State. The Clerk was also selected by his peers to serve as treasurer of the New York State Association of County Clerks. And since has also pointed out problems with the New York State greenlight law. Once again, our State legislature passed legislation without thinking it through.

Our Sheriff's Office run by our Sheriff Todd Hood, has also seen great changes and transformations in 2019. The Sheriff's Office Criminal Division earned accreditation from New York State in 2019. Another big change for all of our schools in Madison County in 2019 was the addition of our school resource officers. The Board of Supervisors allocates half of the salary of those officers from the host community

monies to assist in placing an officer in every school. This program is one of the best community programs we have ever done and has paid big dividends throughout the school year. A partnership with the school districts, the Sheriff's Office and Madison County is a combination that sets the standards for others to follow. Also, in early spring, the Sheriff's Office joined Oneida County with their drug task force working collaboratively to rid our streets of dangerous substances.

Our District Attorney's Office has been through a very large transformation under the direction of District Attorney Bill Gabor. First, central arraignment, it has taken over a year to come up with a plan and then submit it to the State, we aim to see this implemented in 2020. Thank you to those who have worked countless hours to develop this plan and get it to this point. And now onto another challenge, brought to you by Albany, bail reform. The Friday before Christmas, 17 people were let out of jail for various offenses from drugs to a known gang member from New York City. All whom under the legislation, our

judges had no choice but to let them out. Across our State there has been protests from Law Enforcement, as well as District Attorney's Offices to repeal or hold this law until our law makers fully understood the implications of what this meant. However, as always, our Law Enforcement, Judges, and District Attorney will work together within the Law to make sure that our residents are as safe as they can be.

Our County Treasurer, Cindy Edick and her office has done a great job this year getting the taxes out on time and where they need to be. We continuously remain below the tax cap, Thank you Cindy. Despite the increases due to State mandates, Cindy, the County Administrator and the departments worked hard to keep the County under the cap, allowing us to receive the \$800,000 in aid for Raise the Age.

With new faces around the horseshoe and the stepping down of our Vice Chairman, Dan Degear, 2020 begins a new chapter for the Board. I will be choosing Supervisor Cliff Moses of Eaton to step in and become my new Vice Chairman. Supervisor Moses has the Board's

respect and I will rely heavily on his guidance and others throughout the next two years.

Your committee assignments have been put together with the best knowledge of how you as Supervisors, fit best with the skill sets you possess. The next two years will not only be the best for Madison County, they will be unprecedented and historic.

In 2020, 3 out of 9 committees are going to be chaired by the Women Supervisors of our Board. Supervisor Mary Cavanaugh of Oneida will head the largest and most active committee, Government Operations. It is Supervisor Cavanaugh's demeanor and ability to listen, that I have the respect and confidence in putting her in that roll. Second, Supervisor Yvonne Nirelli of Lincoln will Chair the Finance Ways and Means Committee here in Madison County. It is with Supervisor Nirelli's Leadership ability that not only I but others have suggested that she would be a good fit for the Chair of Finance, succeeding Supervisor John Reinhardt, whom retired this past year. Third, Supervisor Eve Ann

Schwartz of Hamilton will be staying on as Chair of the Public Utility Service Committee. It is certainly not our ability to get along, but her leadership, and ability to wrangle and see the Broadband project through that will help our County economically. I believe that Supervisor Schwartz will position that committee so that the Board's initiatives will be realized such as the 10 Million Dollar Broadband grant.

The other 6 committee chairs are not any less important or thought of differently. It is also your ability to lead and reflect the way the Chair and Madison County move forward, which is why you have each been chosen to be the Chair of a committee.

In closing, let's make 2020 better than ever, keeping Madison County on the cutting edge. A lot of our colleagues throughout the State look to Madison County for advice and the way we do things, not too bad for a rural County in upstate NY.

And to our residents, look around, we live in a great County with much to offer. To our Employees, keep up the good work in making our government and Madison County the best in New York State. Thank you for all that you do.