

Good Morning,

As I began writing this year's State of the County address, I couldn't help but think about how fortunate we all are to live in such a great County, the great Madison County, New York. Our County work force is our bread and butter, working diligently daily for the residents, providing top notch services and implementing programs and procedures that are ahead of other counties in New York State. We all should be grateful for that, I know I am.

2022 began with many COVID-19 restrictions still in place, slowly our communities started to come back together and rebuild and navigate a new post-pandemic world. We know that things will never be the same. In fact, I said in my very first State of the County address, and many other countless times, if you don't like change, go home and hide under the bed. We can either lead and adjust, or we can hide and pretend that the rest of the world doesn't exist and act like when we get done hiding, things will be ok.

I'm here to tell you, people of action and leaders, embrace the change and make our lives better, make bad situations better, and face reality. That is what we do here in Madison County, we are leaders, we use a common sense approach to situations and adjust to change. Our employees have consistently been voted to be heads of their state and national associations, whether it's Department of Social Services, Sheriff's Office, Probation, Highway, IT, board members and many more, we lead. It is ALL about leadership.

As we go into 2023, we are a financially healthy County, our employees are paid well and they have first class equipment and facilities to provide services to our residents. But to continue that financial health, 2023 will be a year of advocacy and very hard decisions.

The creation of the Madison County wide Emergency Medical Service initiative is going to help fill any current and future holes in coverage or need by our EMS Agencies. Our local providers are not immune to issues that other agencies across the state and nation are facing. These issues existed prior to the pandemic and have only been exasperated by it.

EMS agencies are facing staffing issues, low to no health insurance reimbursement rates, and long wait times at hospitals that tie them up with patients before they can get back in service. The demand on our local EMS agencies has increased over the past few years and that is going to continue. For these reasons Madison County is looking to change the way EMS looks in our county, to help our current agencies and provide more efficient services to our residents. Change is not always bad, EMS of tomorrow may not be the EMS of yesterday, and that is ok. What we need to focus on is not what we want, but how do we fill the need of our residents. Pre pandemic, (just 2 years ago) there were over 1,200 EMS agencies in New York State, today there are only 1,000. Strong advocacy in Albany to bolster what is left will only slow the bleeding. What we need is more than a temporary tourniquet.

Seven years ago, Madison County spent County tax dollars to fund a study on EMS. Despite the findings and the predictions, if EMS service continued as status quo, the Board chose to do nothing. Now everything that the study predicted has come true, we've lost a volunteer ambulance service and we've lost a lot of volunteers throughout the county. A lot of agencies are unable to sustain themselves without financial support from their municipalities. So now we do what we do best here in Madison County, we have a problem, we see the problem and we have to fix it. Years from now, we will see that our efforts today will create an EMS system that is the most efficient for our tax payers and effective for our residents.

Another hurdle that we face this year is the future of the Madison County Landfill, when we were running on all 8 cylinders at the landfill just 10 years ago, recycling revenues came closer to covering costs and machines only cost a fraction of what they do today. Then, beginning in 2017, recycling markets crashed with China's National Sword policy and in 2020, the pandemic hit. As we pulled into 2022, the recycling program was operating at a major deficit; out of \$900,000 in recycling costs here at the County, we only recovered \$400,000. Last year, we spent about 1 million dollars in ARPA money on new equipment at the Landfill. We are a very small municipal landfill, and in the landfill business, we are simply not achieving economies of scale that allow us to keep costs affordable.

So what do we do? We have all heard the rumors circulating. We understand folks are concerned about transfer stations closing and about the landfill being sold outright. But let me make one thing clear, the landfill is not closing.

In 2023, we will be evaluating options for a private/public partnership for operations of the landfill that may allow the County to offer the same level of services at a much more reasonable cost. Under a partnership model, Our County will hold the permit, and still own the land of the landfill. In 2023, we will be assessing the benefits of such a public private partnership and we ask for your patience as we move through this process.

Also, in 2023, we will be breaking ground on the largest project that Madison County has ever done. Our broadband fiber network will connect thousands of households to low cost, high speed internet, many of which currently do not have any access. Not only will this provide a necessary utility, but also our partner, Empire Access, will provide this service at a competitive cost, giving our taxpayers a choice on who they want for internet service. This project alone is \$16 million with \$10.1 million in grant funding.

Delphi Falls, what an absolute gem in our County, rivaling anything that a state park has and more. Again, because of our dedicated staff working tirelessly and thinking outside of the box, this once hidden gem is open to the public and will soon be better than ever. Grants, along with a generous donation from Harold Jones, helped pay to purchase the park and now grants, and a donation from the Allen Family, are paying for the new trails, parking lot, and bridge. Funding has also been set aside for 2023 and 2024 to pay for the new building that will sit where the house is now. Delphi Falls will truly be the envy of other Counties and will be a must see destination. Thanks to the forward thinking of this Board and previous Boards, this truly beautiful park is being brought to its full potential.

Our rebranding of Buy Madison County in 2022 is seeing success. Buy Madison County is a one-stop website that highlights our local farms and connects them with buyers. It also takes the work off of the shoulders of our farmers and gives them a free way to market their goods. I recently heard a person that watched one of our ads, say they were glad that we are helping our farms compete and sell locally against two urban counties to either side of us. Buy Madison County is more than just a website; it is a way of life. We want you to know when you see the Buy Madison County logo, that those products and services came from our great community. We will continue to the Buy Madison initiative for the foreseeable future to help our agriculture producers, as well as our other local businesses. We have some exciting announcements coming, so stay tuned.

In 2022, the Treasurer's Office continued to provide services to the community while expanding the use of technology. The delinquent tax area has continued to transition away from paper copies to digital storage, improving efficiency and saving money. They held a very

successful land sale in 2022, which was conducted entirely on-line. The real property area recently completed a software upgrade to convert the County's tax maps and GIS data, and this vital information is now in the desired format for the new 911 CAD System that will be going live in the first quarter of 2023. The Treasurer's Office has also worked closely with the Finance Office to maximize its return on investments. Because of their efforts in 2022, the County will be on pace to achieve record investment earnings in 2023. The Treasurer's Office provides budgetary support for all County departments. Whether a \$50 donation or \$13 million in ARPA funds, the Treasurer works with every department to help ensure the County budget is modified appropriately. In addition the Treasurer presented the Board a 2023 budget that fell under the tax cap, even in a challenging budgetary year. Thank you for your work.

In 2022, the County Clerk was selected as the New York State Clerk of the Year.

The Clerk's Office commenced a new domestic partnership registry, expanding the available options and benefits for couples in financially independent relationships. In the recording office, the participation in electronic submission of records has continued to increase, resulting in greater efficiencies.

Records Retention County wide has become more efficient by adhering to the New York State Retention schedule, and consolidating paper records into a new state of the art storage system. The Historian's office continued to document Madison County History, and published his first book, "Honoring World War Casualties of Madison County, New York".

Last year was a banner year in the DMV, aided by expanding hours to the public, the total revenue increased 61% over pre-pandemic level and the retention to Madison County increased 11% to \$1.38 Million. Both are the highest numbers our DMV has ever produced

outside of the pandemic years. As a result of taking advantage of the opportunities created by the pandemic, the DMV has also been seeing more transactions from fleet management companies. .

The year ahead has a great deal of financial and economic uncertainty, which will certainly affect the operations in the DMV and Clerk's Office in 2023, but there is no doubt Madison County has the right people in the right positions to lead and serve through the rough waters ahead.

In 2022, the Sheriff's Office did an excellent job in receiving nearly \$1.5 Million in grant funding. This funding helped to cover the costs for our Substance Abuse medical treatment Program, Threat Assessment Management, Body Cameras, Bullet Proof Vests, Traffic Safety, STOP DWI program and more.

The Special Resource Officer Program continues to grow and be successful. In 2022, the Sheriff's Office added 3 SROs and now has SROs in 13 schools across Madison County and more to come. These officers help to keep our children and school staff safe all while fostering positive relationships with our youth.

The Madison County Sheriff's Office also initiated the Madison Threat Advisory Council (MTAC) which is a Threat Assessment and Management (TAM) team. TAM teams are multi-disciplinary groups that help identify, assess, and mitigate potential threats, to include threats of domestic terrorism and/or other acts of targeted violence. The teams work collaboratively to share information to better understand relevant risk factors, and what resources might be available to address individuals displaying concerning behavior.

In 2022, the Corrections Division received their 5th consecutive approval for re-accreditation, which lasts for the next five years. Madison County Sheriff's Office continues to be a tri-accredited agency.

This past year, the road patrol was equipped with body cameras, which will be a useful tool used to generate trust between civilians and deputies. Cameras will add transparency, provide accountability, and give a point-of-view perspective to every police contact.

Also in 2022, The Sheriff's Office established a full time DWI Patrol in Mid -April to help combat impaired driving whether it be alcohol or drug related. Since April, the DWI Patrol has made 29 DWI arrests, 3 DWAI arrests and issued over 700 traffic tickets.

This past year, the Children's Advocacy Center served over 179 families. New windows and fencing were also installed at the facility. The CAC also did a great job in receiving roughly \$300,000 in grant funding from New York State Office of Victims Services and the Office of Children and Family Services.

Thank you all again for your hard work.

It has been almost 10 years since our historic settlement with the Oneida Nation and New York State. We look forward to continuing to strengthen our partnership with the Oneida Nation, as they expand and bring a renewed economic future to our area.

As I mentioned before, these programs and services you provide our residents are top notch. Our employees are always looking at ways to bring in revenue or grant funds to offset property taxes. However, at the rate inflation is going and the mandates coming from Albany, we need to do more. We need to reevaluate how the County is going to continue to pay a competitive wage and afford new equipment and machinery; especially under the State's new

Climate Law. At the same time, working to provide our outstanding services that our residents are used to. If we continue down the path we are currently on, no one is going to be able to afford their taxes, that is why some time in the next quarter, I will be creating a Madison County 2030 working group. Bringing local business leaders, tax payers, as well as elected officials onto a panel that will look at our future as a County. This panel will take a look at the trends, efficiencies, draw backs, cost, and more, on how we do currently do business and conduct government, and what that may look like beyond 2030.

After listening to the Governor's State of the State, locally we will have to work hard to protect Home Rule from being taken over. Home Rule was adopted in 1963, in New York and it allows Counties, Towns and Villages zoning power. New York State's own report on Home Rule, says that Home Rule's general purpose is for the specific power to regulate the quality of life in Communities. Home Rule is also part of the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution, ratified in 1868.

So, how can Governor Hochul say that New York State, under Home Rule, can overrule all Local zoning, codes, and assessment to site an electrical power plant either near or in a residential neighborhood? Or first and foremost, on one of our State's most precious resources, Agriculturally zoned farm land. That is just the siting of Electrical Power Plants, the process of siting housing is next. Our Governor has proposed usurping Home Rule again by placing housing wherever the State would like in the name of equity. So in the name of equity, New York State infringe on one person's rights to balance out another, there has to be a better way.

New York State Climate Action Bill Law is only half thought through. I have always been a proponent of New York City because they are part of our state as a big economic engine. But most of Upstate New York is carbon neutral, New York City is only 10% carbon free. This

seems that again, this decision is one sided. New York State is covering vast swaths of farmland with renewable energy sources, to only meet New York City's goals.

Back to equity, infringing on upstate for downstate power. There are two New Yorks, with two very different lifestyles, rural and urban. The urban community needs to figure out their power problems without infringing on the rest of us. There are many, many questions that come out of the CLCPA, acronym for the Climate Law, here in New York State. John Howard, former head of the Public Service Commission, said "who will pay?" It will be you, the electric rate payers, and all municipalities, so don't think that your taxes will not to go up. This is all in the name of green energy.

This will be the fight, this is the hill, New York State vs. the people.

Any new home or garage must have an electric car charger in it. Any new home built after 2028, has to be fossil fuel free, no gas, no propane, no fuel oil. The plan calls for prohibiting replacement of residential equipment that uses combustion of fossil fuels for heating and cooling and hot water after 2030. Commercial equipment follows soon after that and by 2035 replacement of fossil fuel appliances are prohibited. After 2035, which will be upon us very quickly, there will be no more fuel burning cars, pickup trucks or SUVs sold in New York State.

People froze to death on the prairies in the 1800's looking for a better life. Just a few weeks ago in Buffalo, a storm of massive proportion froze everything in its path. Cars were stuck on highways, power outages took days to fix, and many people were left without heat. People froze to death. What happens when we are all on the power grid, there are no gas

generators or alternative heat sources? What happens when you are stuck on the highway in your electric vehicle and it dies? People will die.

We need to come up with a better solution that not only addresses reduction of greenhouse gas, but addresses cost and the protection of our land and people.

In conclusion, we need to keep up the never ending work and keep up the fight here in Madison County for all of our citizens.

In the words of President Abraham Lincoln, “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” And President John F. Kennedy once said, “Every accomplishment starts with a decision to try!” Thank you, God Bless Madison County.