

STATE OF THE COUNTY

2015-16



JOHN M. BECKER
MADISON COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
CHAIRMAN

INTRO

Good afternoon, everyone. As I write this year's State of the County, I can't help but look back at what a busy year it has been. Much has been accomplished, but nothing could have been done without our dedicated workforce of Madison County employees.

COUNTY ATTORNEY

The greatest accomplishment remains the ability to avoid staff turnover and maintain a cohesive, professional staff available and responsive to the Board and Departments, able to provide timely, quality legal advice and services.

The department again secured significant grants supportive of the defense of the indigent. Our County Attorney completed his one-year tenure as President of the County Attorneys Association of the State of New York and, although part of the leadership at the National Association of Counties for many years at the subcommittee level, he was promoted to Vice-Chairman of the national Finance, Pensions and Intergovernmental Affairs Committee.

COUNTY CLERK

Despite state DMV initiatives, the County Clerk's office increased the amount of monies kept in Madison County by 4.5 percent as of early December. The Clerk's office also launched electronic document recording services in 2015. In minutes, recordings are received, reviewed, stamped, recorded and returned to the customer electronically – saving time and money.

E911 COMMUNICATIONS

911 went live with Text-to-911; providing the hearing impaired and general public with the ability to send a text message to reach 911 emergency call-takers from their mobile phone or device.

The state Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Services awarded Madison County \$3.5 million under the Round 4 Statewide Interoperable Communications Grant. To date, our county has been awarded \$9.94 million through this program, the highest in the state.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The Emergency Management Department was formed in 2015. With a director, fire coordinator, and EM planner in place, all phases of EM will be able to be managed to the highest level. With this staffing, the areas of EM preparation, mitigation, training and exercises, response, and recovery will be covered, and an emergency operations center will be operational.

In 2016, EM will develop and exercise emergency plans and will support the daily operations of the fire and EMS agencies across the County. In addition, a county-wide study of EMS services was initiated and will provide valuable insight on the present and future of EMS in the County.

Several state Department of Homeland Security grants were successfully secured. These included \$92,000 for ongoing operations, \$62,000 for special operations/technical rescue, \$32,000 to augment staffing costs, and \$24,000 for volunteer firefighter recruitment. The NY Rising program also was funded in 2015, with \$2.7 million coming to Madison County for Mitigation Activities related to the 2013 floods, well short of what was promised by New York state.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

The Madison County Highway Department identified the need to replace the North Court Street Bridge in October 2008. After several years of trying to obtain funding and coordinate with CSX railroad, it was closed June 14, 2015. The department stated that it would be closed for approximately six months. Following the closing, there were more delays. The actual work began August 31 and, with remarkable speed, the bridge was completed and opened to traffic December 11, five months, three weeks, and four days from the initial closing in June.

Madison County Highway Department provided technical and design assistance, labor and equipment to assist the Village of Chittenango in completing a roadway realignment and construction of Tuscarora Road. The village had been trying to obtain funding to complete the project for many years and, with assistance from the Madison County Highway department and the Town of Sullivan, it was a great collaboration of resources.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Madison County Information Technology Department continued to increase the security of the county network through 2015. The department was also responsible for the implementation of a new VOIP phone system, which included replacing all of the network switches, modernizing a 30-year-old, end-of-life phone system. The new system allows for enhanced E-911 locator information, which increases the safety and security of the county complex. In addition, it allows for consolidation of services by allowing other municipalities to utilize the county system, saving local tax dollars. The Town of DeRuyter is using the phone system, and others are anticipated to do so in 2016.

MAINTENANCE

The Maintenance Department oversaw replacement of nearly all sidewalks, curbing and a large portion of the parking lots this summer, which included sealing recently paved areas and reapplying striping to be ADA compliant. In addition, crews coordinated renovations at the Department of Social Services and Sheriff's Patrol Building, completed roofing projects at DSS and over the DMV portion of the County Office Building, undertook an extensive energy audit to further conserve energy, kicked off renovations at the County Office Building, began preparing for overhaul of the Court House, began working to bring facilities up to ADA standards and oversaw skylight repair in the Office Building while carrying out normal departmental preventive maintenance and repairs.

Cooperative working relationships with the Highway Department and DSS Work Crew were pivotal in the tremendous amount of work accomplished this year.

In 2016, work will continue on the ADA compliance, Court House, County Office Building, energy efficiency and Patrol Building projects. In

addition, the Veterans Memorial Building elevator will be upgraded, additional areas of the campus will be paved, and a number of building modifications are being proposed.

MENTAL HEALTH

The clinic was chosen as a recipient of the Office of Mental Health Vital Access Provider Award. We will be completing a project which will provide more immediate access to psychiatry, improving care for clients.

Clinic continues to see new clients in Same Day Access, meaning they do not have to wait for intake appointments, and clients can get services when they need them most.

PERSONNEL

Personnel successfully negotiated successor Agreements with three bargaining units in 2015 – CSEA White Collar Unit, Teamsters Local 294 and New York State Nurses Association; they also implemented an online training program that is now used to administer the majority of our required employee trainings in a more efficient manner.

PLANNING/CAREER CENTER

Working Solutions Career Center

With a great deal of assistance from many people and departments here at the County, the Career Center successfully moved from its office in the old Sears Plaza in Oneida, to its new home in the Madison County DSS building here at the Office Complex in Wampsville, saving the County \$100,000 per year on lease payments. Construction of the space was completed within budget and ahead of schedule, and clients and staff are extremely happy with the new space.

Planning Department

In collaboration with the Health Department, we were proud to finally receive the Smart Growth Audit tool through a cooperative technical assistance grant through the EPA. A “first of its kind” Rural Smart Growth Audit tool was developed here in Madison County and will be used locally and nationally as a model for municipalities looking to implement smart growth in rural communities.

The Planning Department also worked very closely with the Solid Waste Department and the Madison County Public Utility Service Committee to get approved the first large-scale solar power facility in Madison County. This 2MW array (to be completed in 2016) will be sited in the ARE Park and will supply clean, green, renewable energy to the County Office Complex for the next 25-plus years at an estimated savings of nearly \$150,000/year.

PROBATION

The probation department completed 475 investigations and reports for various courts throughout the county to assist judges in sentencing decisions.

The department also collected more than \$100,000 in restitution from offenders, which was, in turn, disbursed to victims of crimes.

PUBLIC HEALTH

A core function of county government is to ensure that the conditions exist in our communities to keep our residents healthy. Madison County is the healthiest county in the Central New York region, and we have done this by responding to the health needs of our residents and being proactive in addressing those needs. This conviction to our residents' health was exemplified in two health department initiatives in 2015: the gas compressor health assessment and the individual water system project. Both will continue in 2016.

REAL PROPERTY

The Real Property Tax Department has instituted a new software called GovPilot. Once the software is configured to Madison County's specifications, it will be a tool that departments, towns and villages would be able to use. We have forged a relationship between GovPilot and Pictometry and the GovPilot is going to tread new waters in allowing our Pictometry flyovers to be incorporated into the software instead of Google Earth. This is an exciting venture.

For the first time during 2015, the Real Property Tax Services Department utilized the services of Onondaga County's real property tax director. The Real Property Department staff effectively performed their duties while saving taxpayers thousands of dollars by not employing a full-time director with fringe benefits. Due to the recent success of this staffing arrangement, we will continue to use this model as we move into the 2016 fiscal year.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Post-Release Program

In 2014, this Office was faced with three occurrences that were seen as an urgent need to provide services to inmates being released upon completion of their incarceration.

The Correction Division command staff was directed to put together a system whereby inmates who are getting close to their release date begin preparing with various service providers, ensuring essential services and needs are identified and in place upon their release.

The overall success of this program is best captured by these facts:

In 2013, there were a total of 997 bookings into the facility, of which 583 had been previously incarcerated. This cost the County nearly \$3.2 million to house those who were previously incarcerated. In 2015, there have been 875 bookings into the facility, of which 540 had been previously incarcerated, costing the County just under \$3 million to house those who were previously incarcerated. In our first full year of the re-entry program, the net savings that have been realized is \$211,772 local dollars. This

continuing trend is expected to carry into 2016, further supporting the numerous success stories since inception. As this program continues to grow, specific data will be gathered by each participating program agency detailing the total numbers of released inmates served and the level or type of assistance provided to them.

Sheriff's Patrol Building

With support of the Board of Supervisors, the former Wampsville Fireman's Building was acquired for use as the new Sheriff's Office Criminal Division, achieving the goal of bringing together all facets of criminal division operations including road patrol, criminal investigations, criminal records, training and staff development.

With the collaborative efforts of several county departments, work began on this project, converting an antiquated open-bay building into a modern office building to accommodate the growing need for the Sheriff's Office to provide the highest degree of public safety to our residents and businesses.

This project is nearing completion and is being done in the most cost-effective means through collaboration between the Maintenance Department, Information Technology Department, Department of Social Services mobile work crew, Highway Department and the Sheriff's Correctional facility.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The Department of Social Services had several highlights this past year, including surviving building renovations and implementing one of the major policy shifts in recent years.

Throughout the summer and into fall, building renovations took place within the DSS building to accommodate the Career Center, Youth Bureau and Department of Labor representatives' relocation. Some early work was conducted after hours to allow the DSS staff to continue to meet the needs of the residents of the county. Staff was often relocated several times in order to allow areas to be deconstructed and then reconstructed.

Throughout the process, DSS staff always had good attitudes and kept the end goal of delivering better services their focus. Having now successfully moved the Career Center into the renovated space, we are seeing the benefits by having a close collaborative relationship with Employment & Training staff, Department of Labor and other contractors. The collaboration between the Maintenance Department, the Employment &

Training Staff and DSS, in particular, the mobile work crew leaders, were key in completing the project.

In the past year, the state agencies that oversee the DSS operations issued more than 115 separate policy notices, regulatory updates and other instructions. This number was double what is issued in a “normal” year. This number of issuances was certainly difficult to manage, but the more important problem was that many directives were complicated and changed a great number of practices. Perhaps the largest issue was the “Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families” act, a piece of federal legislation that required the state to issue six separate administrative directives. The directives included such topics as a Bill of Rights for foster children, successful transition to adulthood, transition planning for foster children, case planning for children 14 and older in foster care, applying a reasonable and prudent standard for foster parents and identify, document, report and provide services to child sex trafficking victims. All DSS casework staff had to be trained on how to properly assess and provide services for victims of sex trafficking within a very short

timeframe. This required dedicated time to meet and receive this training and to monitor the implementation. Time, unfortunately, that was distracted by the other 109 issuances.

In 2016, DSS will continue to meet the necessities of families who, due to unforeseen circumstances or through acts of commission or omission, are unable to address their own needs.

TREASURER'S OFFICE

In 2015, the Treasurer's Office took the lead role in our county-wide conversion to a new financial and payroll software program. Not only was this a massive system upgrade, it also necessitated changes in processes and procedures throughout all County departments. Although the conversion was challenging for every department, the Treasurer's Office was most directly impacted with virtually all functions being affected in some way. The Treasurer's Office staff persevered, and they are looking forward to facilitating further systems and procedural improvements in the year ahead.

YOUTH BUREAU

In spring 2015, the Youth Bureau released the 2014 TAP Survey Report, which highlighted the results of the 140 question TAP Survey that was administered to 2,388 students in grades 7-12 in nine Madison County school districts. The survey gathered data regarding youth behaviors, concerns, and opinions on a wide variety of topics and provided a valuable supplement to other countywide assessments by providing the teen perspective on important issues. The Youth Bureau administers this survey every four years; its results are widely used for program planning and development and for grant writing purposes.

In addition to providing funding to seven community-based organizations that provided programs and services to more than 300 Madison County children and youth in 2015, the Youth Bureau also expanded its own direct service programming. As a result, 25 high school students participated in job shadowing opportunities in Madison County departments, 37 students participated in the Youth Bureau's school-based Civic Engagement/Leadership Development program, and 12 students

participated in the Local Government Internship program that the Youth Bureau facilitates in cooperation with Cornell Cooperative Extension.

[YOUR VOICE CONTINUES HERE]

As I have read through the narratives submitted by our department heads, one thing is clear: No matter what or when or how, our employees understand that teamwork – whether it's with our partners in the private sector or departments working together – Madison County's first priority is to provide the best services to Madison County residents.

I want to personally thank the Personnel Department, along with our partners in the three out of five bargaining units, for balancing the needs of our County with the needs of our employees. Thank you for working together to come to resolutions that set the bar high for others to meet.

Two departments that stood out for 2015 were Maintenance for all the projects that have been done or are in process at the County. We undertook an accessibility overhaul to be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, which was mandated by the U.S. Department of Justice. This led to the replacement of sidewalks and parking lots to eliminate as much as possible trip and fall hazards with ramps that have a slope of less than 6 percent.

The ongoing County Office Building construction will allow the Board of Elections to move to the first floor and Real Property to the second floor, freeing up much-needed space in the basement for Emergency Management and Information Technologies.

Maintenance also worked to move the Career Center to the Department of Social Services building and is coordinating the renovation of the old Wampsville Fireman's Park Building for the Sheriff's Office road patrol, all while carrying out the day-to-day responsibilities of facilities and mechanical periodic and unscheduled maintenance, as well as repair.

In 2016, the pace will continue to be full steam ahead. Finishing Elections, the road patrol building and beginning the historic renovation of our Court House are among things on the docket for Maintenance.

Another department that stood out was our Treasurer's Office, working on Saturdays, many longer hours at night, to implement the much-hated MUNIS system. I am sorry, but we knew it was going to be a struggle, and it has been; now that it has been about a year since implementation, we can fine-tune it and fully work out the inefficiencies. Thank you to all our

employees for their patience and hard work with this software program transition; it hasn't gone unnoticed. While taking on the MUNIS changeover, the Treasurer's Office oversaw changes in our health care program and merged Real Property into the department.

CONCLUSION

For 2016, the year ahead, we have much work to do. I would like to move forward several initiatives:

I am proposing that we increase road patrol deputies by 10 positions over the next three years to better cover the southern part of our County, and I think we need multiple simultaneous road blocks to do a better job catching some of the drugs and money, as well as other criminal activity, moving through our County. While the Board has allocated funds to the Sheriff's Office to combat the heroin epidemic and other drugs in our County, more resources are needed. I am proposing the addition of four new road patrol members in 2016, three more in 2017 and three more in 2018.

We are also falling short on investment in infrastructure. We should be investing more in roads, water systems and sewer systems to spur economic development in our County. Therefore, I will be proposing that for every dollar we spend on not-for-profits in the County, we match dollar-for-dollar in infrastructure funding.

The largest undertaking in 2016 will be our commitment to making the Court House 100-percent ADA-compliant. This project will rival the cost of our communications system. This investment will end all lawsuits by ADA advocates, and it will get our Family Court out of the basement, ending our unceasing moisture problems in that area.

This project will likely take two to three years, with completion in the late-2018 timeframe.

I will be asking the Public Safety Committee to look at arming our probation officers in 2016, with guidance and training by the Sheriff's Department.

I also will be asking the sheriff to take a look at a deputization agreement with the Oneida Indian Nation to see if a mutually beneficial relationship can be forged there.

I also want to work closely with Kipp Hicks and the IDA to bring the inland port from Syracuse, where it has met opposition, to Madison County.

2016 will also bring challenges from Albany, such as the 2-percent tax cap, increasingly rigid gun control and stricter regulations from the Department of Environmental Conservation.

I want to thank the committee chairs for the excellent job they have done for the past two years, and I look forward to a productive 2016.

[DAN DEGEAR WILL BE VICE CHAIRMAN.]