

FROM THE CHAIR...

A Monthly Roundup of News from the Chair of the Sullivan County Legislature



SPURRING REAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BY ROB DOHERTY, CHAIRMAN
SULLIVAN COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Maybe, like me, you've been wondering when the promised benefits of "full" employment would arrive in Sullivan County.

After all, we're at our lowest unemployment rate in 30 years. We have huge companies employing thousands of people. We've even been called "the new Hamptons," after the wealthy towns on eastern Long Island's southern shore. But the sad reality is that despite all this supposedly "good" news, most Sullivan County residents have hardly seen their paychecks budge from the dark days of the Great Recession.

Our poverty rate is basically the same as it was a decade ago. County services for the poor and needy are just as in demand as they were then. And the gulf between those struggling to make ends meet vs.

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those who have few financial worries has only widened.

Why? If Sullivan County leads all of New York State in job growth, why aren't we doing better as working people?

This is what drove me to run for office last year, and this is what continues to be pushing me forward as both District 1 Legislator and Chairman.

We HAVE to bring middle-class jobs here. We have to STOP handing out tax breaks to anyone who wants them, simply because they're "eligible." We must FOCUS on providing opportunities to those who want to work, who want to better themselves, who want to pay their fair share without having their wallets cleaned out.

I've already offended some who think we've been headed in the right direction, that we need to "wait just a little longer," that we shouldn't make disruptive change now.

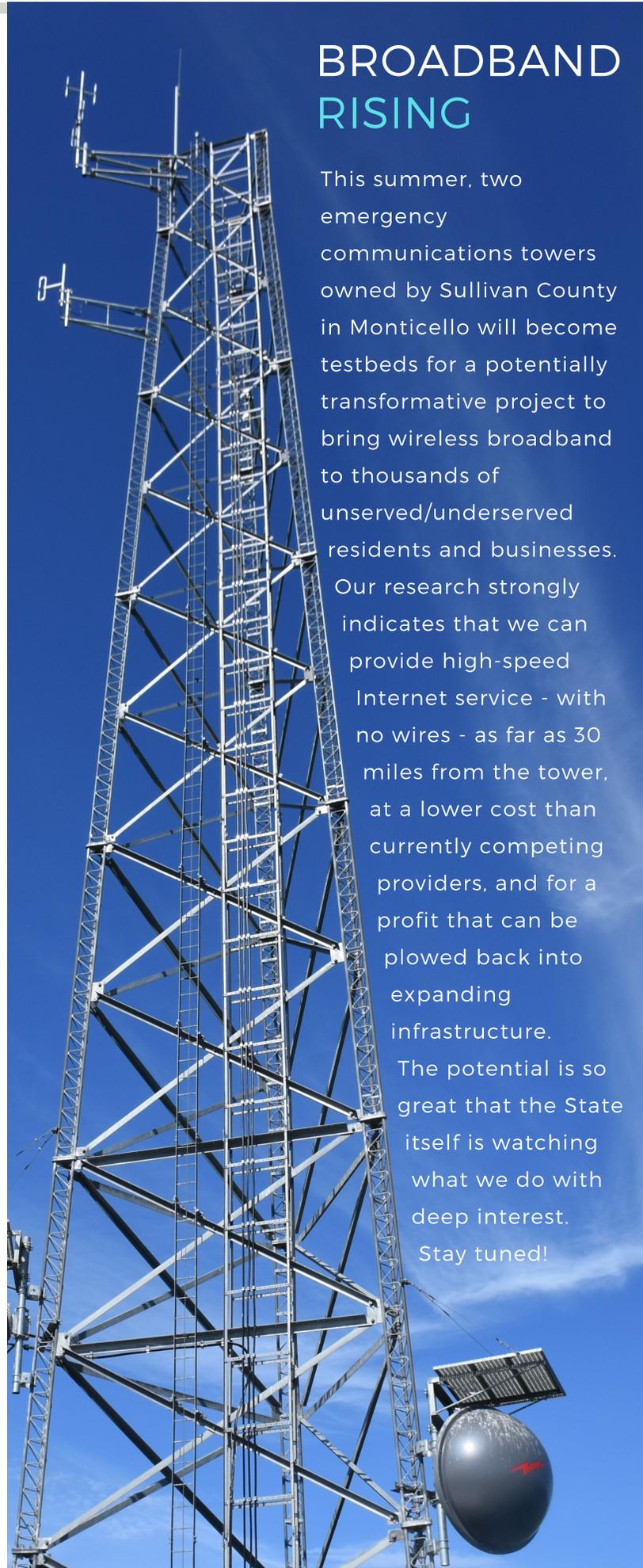
WE HAVE TO BRING MIDDLE-CLASS JOBS HERE.

I don't work for them. I work for you, the taxpaying citizen who's fed up with watching the affluent take advantage of them, who's tired of working hard but not getting ahead, who's wishing they could earn a living wage here in Sullivan County instead of downstate or even out of state.

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BROADBAND RISING

This summer, two emergency communications towers owned by Sullivan County in Monticello will become testbeds for a potentially transformative project to bring wireless broadband to thousands of unserved/underserved residents and businesses. Our research strongly indicates that we can provide high-speed Internet service - with no wires - as far as 30 miles from the tower, at a lower cost than currently competing providers, and for a profit that can be plowed back into expanding infrastructure. The potential is so great that the State itself is watching what we do with deep interest. Stay tuned!



SAVING MONEY WHERE WE CAN

Within its first month in office, the new Sullivan County Legislature saved taxpayers several million dollars. An ill-advised decision by the prior Legislature to construct a nearly \$4 million Visitors Center in Rock Hill (for which the County would have forever been charged with maintaining) was shelved. The Sullivan County Visitors Association has since announced it's moving its offices from a cramped Ferndale building to the spacious and newly renovated Liberty Mall (the former Sullivan's) right off Route 17's Exit 100.

Legislators also reduced our share of the Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development's annual funding from \$125,000 to \$100,000, with the Industrial Development Agency poised to make up the difference.

Why is this important? Why deal with the unavoidable controversy? Because we can't and shouldn't spend money where we don't need to. We need to be careful and wise on how we use your money. The Visitors Center would have been sited in the middle of a swamp and been an ongoing maintenance headache for us. The IDA is flush with money, unlike the County, and will now contribute the same to the Partnership as we do.

While we didn't do this to upset good relations with any of these organizations, our first priority and primary responsibility is to you, the taxpayer, and this Legislature is going to keep that in mind every step forward.

We owe you - not the other way around.



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It's a new day, a new year in Sullivan County, with a new Legislature at the helm, and we're going to be focusing on bringing real economic development to the County - jobs that offer competitive wages, opportunities for advancement, and the restoration of a healthy middle class. This and future newsletters from me will shine a light on the initiatives I and my colleagues have in mind - and just as importantly, our success in realizing them. It's time for Sullivan County to move beyond the empty promises which we've all gotten so used to. I intend to keep my promises. Get ready - we've got work to do.

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

- **Looking for Rob? 845-807-0435 or Robert.Doherty@co.sullivan.ny.us**
- **General question? 845-794-3000**
- **Need a specific name or number? www.sullivan.ny.us/countydirectory**



WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

Can't make the Legislature meetings to see what we're doing firsthand? I get it - you're working hard. So let us fill you in on our latest activities...

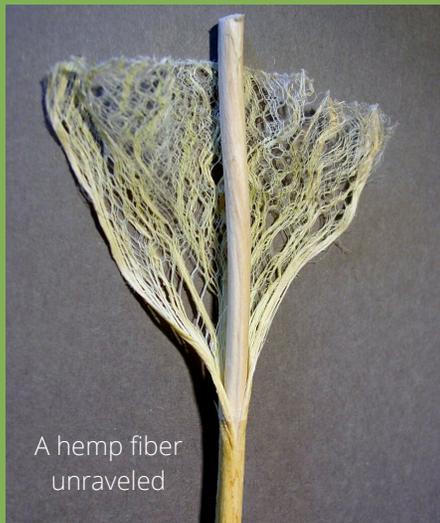
- **We appointed** a new County Attorney on February 27 - Mike McGuire, who will step down as County Court Judge to become our trusted legal counsel on April 20. Thanks, too, to Cheryl McCausland for remaining on board with us as County Attorney until then!
- **We issued** a request for proposals - and got six interested replies back - to study the operations and future of the 911 Center. Like you, we want it to be the best service it can be.
- **We asked** for a half-percent sales tax increase not to burden our residents further, but to firmly tell State leaders we have no intention of paying for their mandated programs by once again raising property taxes. Our hope, actually, is not that the sales tax is raised but that the State fulfills its financial obligations to us. (Yes, don't hold your breath, but it's worth demanding.)

THE FUTURE'S IN HEMP

You'll soon be hearing more about our plans to stimulate hemp development in Sullivan County. No, it's not about growing marijuana. It's about cashing in on a market that is, pardon the pun, already mushrooming beyond expectations.

You can build with it, bake with it, write with it, purify with it, fuel with it, even wear it.

Considering the decline of longtime dairy farms in the County, agricultural production of hemp holds great promise in keeping our fields green, open and producing.



A hemp fiber unraveled