



INSIDE INSIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE SULLIVAN COUNTY MANAGER

A BUDGET FOR WHERE WE'RE GOING

BY JOSHUA POTOSEK, COUNTY MANAGER

Sullivan County is rebounding remarkably well from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2022 Adopted County Budget reflects that improved outlook. But as national and world events demonstrate, it's prudent to plan for the inevitable fiscal downturn common to all economies. Here's a snapshot of how we aim to avoid huge tax hikes to cover unexpected (and expected) shortfalls:

- Building up our fund balance (surplus) so that by 2023, the County is steadily maintaining 16% of gross appropriations in reserve
- Paying off all our short-term bonds, avoiding the interest that comes with them
- Undertaking needed road and bridgework without bonding (something we haven't been able to accomplish in years)

The above is possible in part because of increasing sales tax revenues. And approximately \$6 million in ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding coming our way in 2022 is not figured into the County Budget, because a decision has yet to be made on what to do with it.

Our fiscal future looks bright, but it's imperative we get Sullivan County government on firm financial footing. Legislators agree, and together we plan to responsibly and effectively employ your tax dollars in providing programs and services that benefit all of Sullivan County.

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WHERE TO FIND THE 2022 SULLIVAN COUNTY BUDGET

It can be daunting to read through page after page of figures. So if you'd like an easier-to-digest understanding of the 2022 Budget, seek out the Executive Summary at www.sullivanny.us.

Looking to take the deep dive? All 402 pages of the 2022 Budget are available there as well.

Want a paper copy? Call 845-807-0450 to pick one up (supplies are limited).

AN AIRPORT WORTH INVESTING IN

Sullivan County's municipal airport has long been derided as a "white elephant," a relic of the 1960s when fading resorts were desperate to attract new customers who would fly in for a few days. (They didn't.)

Even its name - Sullivan County International Airport - has attracted ridicule, most critics having long forgotten the brief time in the 1970s when you could fly to Canada. (Hey, that is a different country, isn't it?)

But there are two other things that people forget:

- The airport was built with commerce in mind, not solely passenger transport.
- The FAA, not the County, has borne the majority of the cost of maintaining and improving airport infrastructure over its 53-year lifespan.

And now, well into the third decade of the 21st century, we're noticing demand for what no other airport can offer within a similar distance of New



Selling the Airport will cost us far more than investing in it.

The FAA requires us to return years' worth of federal funding should we privatize the facility.

York City:

- A newly repaved runway easily capable of handling business jets
- An Instrument Landing System permitting operations in all kinds of weather
- And perhaps most importantly, plenty of room to build and grow

Comparable airports closer to the city - Teterboro, Westchester, Stewart - are out of room or are much more expensive from which to operate. And when you're flying a plane (even a small propeller-driven one), our airport is only a few minutes farther away. So this Legislature, our Division of Public Works, the County Attorney and other staff are actively investing time in marketing to and attracting the kinds of long-term tenants who will help us realize the dream of the airport's founders.

Their timing may have been off, but they weren't wrong about this facility. In fact:

- Most of our hangars are currently rented, and we're building more.
- We're in talks with a wealthy entrepreneur who's looking to develop a significant portion of currently unused airport property.
- We may even see the legitimacy of that "International" name return when Hatzolah Air hangars its ocean-crossing jets at what they plan to be their world headquarters.

My office and this Legislature have not given up on the airport, and neither should Sullivan County taxpayers. It's an authentic gem that just needs to be shined up. That time has come.

COVID-19 HAS CHANGED US FOR THE BETTER

Seems almost too good to be true - and maybe it is. COVID-19 case numbers are dropping in and out of hospitals, and it appears we're going through a dramatic reduction in the dreaded virus. That's good news, and I hope it stays that way. We've endured so much in the past two years. Like everyone else, I don't want to see a resurgence of coronavirus.

But we're prepared in case that does happen. We've stockpiled masks and gloves for months. We've handed out thousands of test kits, with thousands more still available. We've got a plentiful supply of vaccine for all eligible ages, with a team that knows how to efficiently and

effectively deliver it. And, of course, we continue to monitor and study the behaviors of this disease. Also, not everything that's happened because of COVID has been negative. Our Community Assistance Center and our Medical Reserve Corps are two new groups that will remain permanent fixtures of County government.

What's the Community Assistance Center?

It's very possible you've already interacted with our Community Assistance Center (CAC, formerly known as our Emergency Community Assistance Center). You may have called or been called, or you may have stopped by our Transportation Building near the County Airport to pick up masks or test kits. Early on, we discovered that our five employees who run the CAC were a perfect way to refer folks to not

just COVID resources but all the services we and others offer: food, medicine, shelter, financial assistance, childcare, etc.

So it makes sense to keep that incredible lifeline open for anyone who needs it. The CAC operates M-F from 9 to 5, but call them at 845-807-0925 any time - you WILL hear back.

What's the Medical Reserve Corps?

Our Public Health Services team had been planning

We're Sullivan County.
It's up to *all*
of us.

Sullivan
COUNTY CATSKILLS
Mountains of Opportunities

SullivanNY.us 845-513-2268

Ask questions. Get answers.
#VACCINATESULLIVAN

Our Division of Community Resources just launched this new COVID vaccination campaign.

for some time to initiate a federally recognized Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), and the COVID pandemic made that an immediate priority. I'm proud (and amazed) to say that even before we were granted that official recognition in 2021, well over 300 people had signed up to work our vaccination clinics as volunteers.

Now, we have a full-time MRC Coordinator who will ensure these volunteers don't disappear as the pandemic fades. We'll need them for other large-scale emergencies caused by storms, power outages and future disease outbreaks. We'll keep them trained, engaged and ready to help at a moment's notice.

If you'd like to explore being a part of this new team - composed of people of many ages and abilities - call our MRC Coordinator at 845-513-2233.



SEE OUR PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN THE ANNUAL REPORT

As required by the County's charter, I've delivered my 2021 Annual Report to the Legislature. It's a summation of nearly every office, department, unit and division's activities and goals from last year. The cover photo shows a newly paved County road "rounding the bend." It reflects how I feel about our present and future.

The pandemic has taught us much, particularly how resilient we are. Our bounce back from the fearful lows of early 2020 has been nothing short of amazing, and in a number of ways, the County is in better shape than it ever has been.

We're rounding the bend, but the road doesn't end there. We have plenty of challenges to face. What you'll find in the Annual Report is that we're ready and willing to tackle those challenges, and your nearly 1,000 County employees do so every day. The Report is a deep look into how we do that, and it's well worth your time. Check it out at www.sullivanny.us, or give us a call at 845-807-0450 to obtain a printed copy.

WHAT ARE WE DOING WITH ARPA?

You've heard about ARPA - the American Rescue Plan Act, put in place by the Federal government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the municipalities in the nation have gotten a share of those billions of dollars, including us.

In 2021, we were allocated **\$14,651,782** through this program. We've already received half of that amount - **\$7,325,891**. The other half will be given to us later this year.

For 2021, the Legislature authorized funding to be used as follows:

- DPW Highway Program: **\$3,750,000**
- Sullivan County Community College Capital Improvements: **\$3,575,891**

As you probably noted, that covers only the first half of our allotment. The use for the rest has yet to be determined.

That said, I'm fairly certain that another \$1.3 million will be set aside to complete the improvements at SUNY Sullivan - upgrades to the heating and ventilation system that are so necessary that without them, the college would face building closures. About \$6 million will be left to allocate.

Legislators should be talking more about this in the months to come, so stay tuned...

WANT TO REACH OUT?

The Sullivan County Manager's Office is the "nerve center" of County government, so if you have a question or a concern, we can provide answers... or send you to someone who can.

Executive Assistant to the County Manager and FOIL Officer Rosie Savaglio can be reached at rosamarie.savaglio@sullivanny.us, 845-807-0450, or 100 North Street, Monticello, NY.