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Sullivan County Manager's Monthly News

SULLIVAN COUNTY CREATES "HOME GROWN ARTISTS" EXHIBITION PROGRAM AND SEEKS INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS TO SIT ON THE SULLIVAN COUNTY ARTWORK EXHIBIT REVIEW PANEL

The Sullivan County Legislature has created a "Home Grown Artists" exhibition program to allow local residents and artists to have their artwork displayed in and around the County Government Center in Monticello, NY. Artwork is to reflect various points of interest for residents of the County and is meant to demonstrate the depth and breadth of creative skills of those who call Sullivan County home. Examples of artwork may include the nature of the community, seasons of the year, current events, social movements, influential cultural or historical leaders and related topics.

An Artwork Exhibit Review Panel will solicit, review, and select artwork to be displayed. The Artwork Exhibit Review Panel will have up to five members consisting of residents from throughout the County of Sullivan who lead, are involved, are employed or volunteer in the Sullivan County arts community. Interested persons should send a letter of interest and statement of qualifications to Joshua Potosek, County Manager, Sullivan County Government Center, 100 North Street, PO Box 5012, Monticello, NY 12701 by January 27, 2016.



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Home Grown Artists Program Initiated

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY ASSESSED CLEAN ENERGY (C-PACE) AUTHORIZED BY COUNTY LEGISLATURE

The Sullivan County Legislature recently passed legislation that would enable the County to participate in Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE), an innovative financing solution that helps commercial and not-for-profit building owners reduce energy waste and save money by undertaking energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements. The program will give responsible Sullivan County business owners and not-for-profit entities access to capital for building improvements in the form of loans. Those loans would then be repaid on the individual property's tax bill based upon operational savings achieved as part of the project. In following up on the approval of the required local law, the Legislature has also authorized the execution of a contract with the Energy Improvement Corporation for the administration of the program.

Working with our economic development partners the County Manager intends to structure a program that best fits the needs of Sullivan County and its business community. Not only will this program provide access to capital for business owners seeking to improve their building stock, it will also create opportunities for others to perform the necessary repairs and upgrades.

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON NEW SULLIVAN COUNTY JAIL AND SHERIFF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

The County has broken ground on the new Sullivan County Jail and administrative office for the Sheriff's Department.

Located on Old Route 17 in the Town of Thompson, the new facility is anticipated to begin operations in 2019. The design of the building will allow for future expansion, if warranted, without the need for costly renovations to the existing structure. It will also provide for more efficient and cost effective operations.

NEW COUNTY DIVISION CREATED WITH 2017 BUDGET

The 2017 Budget creates a new Division of Environmental Sustainability, Beautification and Recreation. This division will include the Office of Sustainable Energy (OSE) and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Beautification.

The County has maintained a strong focus on energy efficiency and renewable energy resources for several years. Two renewable energy projects, a 2 megawatt solar project in Liberty, NY and a 2 megawatt hydroelectric project in upstate NY will provide Sullivan County with approximately 70% of its electricity usage. The County anticipates annual operational savings of approximately \$250,000 per year in reduced electricity costs once these facilities are fully operational and grid connected. These projects have also helped the County to meet and/or exceed several of its goals in the Climate Action Plan by avoiding over 4,500 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent emissions.

OSE will be tasked with identifying and prioritizing projects for the County's operations as well as performing community outreach and working with local entities on sustainability initiatives that will benefit the residents and businesses of Sullivan County as a whole.

The inclusion of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Beautification in the newly created division stems from the synergy that exists between the preservation of our environment and the development of the County's parkland. Our parks not only provide an outlet for recreation but also present an opportunity to promote the importance of our environment in creating a thriving and healthy County. This department must draw resources from multiple divisions in order to reach its full potential, and reporting directly through the County Manager's Office is the most efficient means of doing so.

SULLIVAN COUNTY LAND BANK APPLICATION APPROVED

NYS Empire State Development has approved Sullivan County's application requesting a Sullivan County Land bank. The Legislature has committed \$100,000 in each of the first two years of the land bank's existence, and thus the 2017 proposed budget includes \$100,000 for this purpose.

The creation of a Land Bank will be an important tool to support our efforts in rebuilding an area that has suffered from decades of business closures, job loss, disinvestment and speculative real estate transactions.

The goals of the Sullivan County Land Bank Corporation would be to:

- Bring additional attention and resources to the problem of blighted properties
- Take control of and rehabilitate vacant and abandoned properties to where they can be returned to active use and better serve the public interest
- Correct market conditions by absorbing the gap between the value of a blighted property and the cost to rehabilitate it
- Support neighborhood stabilization and revitalization
- Remove barriers to economic development
- Improve the quality of life for those living and working in the vicinity of vacant and abandoned properties

The mission of the Sullivan County Land Bank Corporation will be to strategically acquire tax delinquent, foreclosed, vacant and abandoned properties, eliminate barriers to their redevelopment, and sell rehabilitated properties to new, responsible owners in a transparent manner that results in outcomes consistent with County and local land use goals and priorities. Land Bank activities will support related community revitalization efforts including, but not limited to, zoning amendments, code enforcement, comprehensive plan updates, community health initiatives, and small business and workforce housing development.

The Sullivan County Land Bank Corporation will operate county-wide but initially focus on the villages of Monticello and Liberty where the need, and concentration of blighted property, is greatest.

I would like to thank both the Village of Monticello and Village of Liberty for their partnership in this endeavor, as well as Sullivan Renaissance for advocacy in this area and for their assistance with the application.

2017 BUDGET ALLOCATES RESOURCES TO IMPROVE COUNTY HEALTH RANKING

It is widely understood that Sullivan County ranks poorly in regards to health outcomes. Many entities such as the Sullivan County Legislature, the Sullivan County Public Health Department, Sullivan Renaissance, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Catskill Regional Medical Center and far too many others to name, have all made improving the health of the County a priority.

Improving the County's overall health is a top priority in the 2017 Budget. The creation of a Deputy Public Health Director is included for the Public Health Department in order to increase the organization capacity and to provide more resources to tackle this issue. Additionally, there are investments and a renewed focus in environmental sustainability, county beautification, recreational opportunities, and employee wellness.

An employee wellness committee, comprised of management staff and Union representation, has been meeting for several months to discuss the various ways in which to improve the health and well-being of our employees. A primary recommendation has been to implement a comprehensive employee wellness program. It is proven that such a program can improve the productivity of staff while at the same time reducing the indirect costs of absenteeism and low productivity.

WISHING A HAPPY, HEALTHY AND SAFE HOLIDAY TO ALL FROM COUNTY MANAGER JOSHUA POTOSEK

County Manager Joshua Potosek wishes to extend his most sincere wishes for a Happy Holiday to all of Sullivan County.

As the end of 2016 approaches, please remember to enjoy your holidays responsibly and to stay safe, whether you are travelling a long distance to see your loved ones or remaining close to home to enjoy a get together at a friend's house.

It is time to look forward to a brand new year and all of the exciting possibilities that come with it!

DOOR DÉCOR COMPETITION DECKS THE HALLS OF SULLIVAN COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The County Manager wishes to thank all of the departments that participated in the 6th annual holiday door decorating contest. There were a total of 35 offices that participated, including the Government Center, Department of Family Services, Community Services and Public Health Services.

The Liberty High School Orchestra judged the contest after they performed at the Government Center on Wednesday, December 14, 2016. The Maternal Child Health of Public Health Services received the most votes and was selected as the winner of the 2016 Holiday Door Decorating contest.



The second place winner was the County Clerk's Office and the Personnel Office and Board of Elections tied as the third place winners. Congratulations to all!

Finally, thank you to all of the participants for making our government offices and buildings much more festive for the holidays.



The County Manager is the full time Chief Executive and Administrative Head of the County of Sullivan. He and his dedicated staff are prepared to answer your questions and to hear your comments.

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