



MADISON COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

John M. Becker, Chairman
Mark Scimone, Administrative Assistant
Cindy L. Urtz, Clerk

138 N. Court St., PO Box 635
Wampsville, NY 13163
Phone: 315/366-2201
Fax: 315/366-2502

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STATE OF THE COUNTY 2010-11

JOHN M. BECKER
CHAIRMAN
MADISON COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

FELLOW SUPERVISORS, EMPLOYEES, CITIZENS, TAXPAYERS:

Welcome. Again it is an honor to bring you the state of our county address. Madison County is not unlike many areas of the United States: rural, fairly conservative and facing many unknown circumstances that will shape our future.

Towns throughout our county will be facing challenges that will threaten their very existence in the next 10 years. If towns do not grow, then taxes must be raised, and people in New York State, as well as our towns and county, cannot take any higher taxes.

I said 3 years ago when the board appointed me chairman that there would be change, and there has been; it's nothing to be scared of. Change needs to be embraced, taken as a challenge, shaped, molded, pondered upon, spit back out and turned into a positive.

It was also said that we would try new things, and we did. Some have worked, some not so hot, but it is – as Teddy Roosevelt said 99 years ago – a greater person to try and fail than to sit and do nothing.

2010 saw a good start on our \$20 million emergency communications system upgrade project. When completed, 95 percent of our county will be covered by the system. It is because of Paul Hartnett, Darrin Ball, and the rest of their team that this project is finally going to culminate in 2011.

The emergency communications project had its first full year of effect on the budget. A total of \$2.4 million in principal and interest payments are due in 2011. Home rule bills were introduced in both the New York State Assembly and Senate that would have provided an estimated \$671,000 in new revenues from increased landline and cell phone surcharges and mortgage recording fees.

Regrettably, these bills were not taken up by either chamber due to the political chaos of the last state legislative budget session in 2010.

Also in 2010, our new Sheriff, Allen Riley, started. Allen has done a superb job, not only straightening out the many complex and tedious personnel problems, but also has raised the bar on professionalism and morale in that department. Allen also has appointed a new undersheriff who is experienced in working with inmates and correctional facilities.

We hope for their continued success as they streamline procedures, working collaboratively with our District Attorney, judges and Probation Department.

MADISON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

* The Pistol Permit section has been updated to serve the public more efficiently. Another person has been added to the staff to decrease the amount of time it takes to process an applicant.

Electronic fingerprinting has been added to speed up the process, and we are in the process of updating to a laminated pistol permit ID card.

* An inside-the-facility work crew was also formed. They are painting the inside of the correctional facility and conducting all janitorial duties. The work crew is also responsible for waxing and cleaning all Madison County fleet cars twice a year.

* A program was developed with the Department of Mental Health to reduce the cost of housing inmates with mental health issues.

Currently, the inmate gets evaluated here by a licensed psychiatrist and the medication is dispensed here, allowing the inmate to stay at our

facility at a fraction of the cost. Previously, the inmate had to be transported to Rochester or Marcy for an evaluation, then admitted for treatment at the cost of \$350 to \$400 per day.

In 2009, the county spent \$81,700 on this type of care for inmates. In 2010, those services cost \$17,450 – a savings of \$64,250.

This savings does not include personnel and transportation costs for the inmate.

PROBATION DEPARTMENT

* In August, 2010, Leandra's Law went into effect, with ignition interlock being a mandated sentence for all offenders being convicted of DWI. The Probation Department has had to adopt various new rules and regulations to be in compliance with this law and has had to provide additional investigations to the various courts and supervisor those defendants sentenced to ignition interlock.

The Probation Department, District Attorney's Office and STOP DWI worked tirelessly in a collaborative effort to develop a county plan to implement this law as required by the state.

* The Probation Department collected \$230,000 in restitution from offenders in 2010 to return to victims of crime.

* The Probation Department continued its electronic monitoring program in 2010. This program recently celebrated its third year, and, in 2010, the department supervised 10 offenders who received and

electronic monitoring sentence. The fiscal implications for the county are immense with this cost-saving alternative to incarceration.

Those 10 offenders cost \$6,500 to supervise throughout their electronic monitoring sentences versus those offenders instead being sentenced to jail at an approximate cost of \$145,000.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

* For the first time ever, 4,000 families were receiving Food Stamps at the end of 2010. This represents an increase of nearly 400 families above the previous year. Despite the enormous strain this increase has placed on DSS, we continue to point out that the program is for nutrition and puts back into our local economy more than \$12 million annually to local supermarkets, farmers' markets and the county's agricultural operations, including Madison Bounty.

* 92.5 percent of our \$28.9 million tax levy is necessary to cover state-mandated costs. Medicaid is the largest mandated cost; it accounts for \$10.6 million of the levy: 37 percent of our tax levy.

* The Medicaid program has had unsustainable growth for a number of years, and this past year was no exception, with one in seven county residents in receipt of Medicaid at the end of 2010. It is no longer tied to the other Social Services programs where it started and is the single largest health insurance provider in New York State.

Statewide, the program pays for 75 percent of all nursing home costs and 50 percent of all births. This coming year will be a challenge with 1) the pending loss of Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (which means the loss of \$1 million in annual revenue); 2. the state intending to take over Medicaid administration; and 3. the raging federal health care reform debate.

* The Home Energy Assistance Program ended in May 2010 and will long be remembered as one of the smoothest program years in recent memory, both in the number of citizens assisted (more than 5,000 families) and the efficiency (most applicants were able to mail information to DSS without unnecessary travel to Wampsville).

This is in stark contrast to the program that opened in November 2010, when it was determined in late October that many who were able to mail applications last year must now trek to Wampsville this year combined with the pending loss of almost half the funding from the previous year.

This loss of money had predictions that the program would not make it through December without closing; fortunately, continuing resolutions by our federal officials will keep the program open into early 2011, but this fiscal reality will surely play itself out in the future and funding will once again be limited.

* The Public Assistance program showed slight slowing in growth over the course of the last year; this suggests that times might be getting better for those county residents with the least resources; however, there were 814 households – 4,545 individuals – presenting as homeless or pending eviction last year: 2,704 adults and 1,841 children.

* With a record number of people in receipt of assistance, it should be no surprise that more people than ever were assigned to activities leading to employment. The cornerstone remains the Mobile Work Crew, the members of which completed more than 14,000 hours of work that benefited municipalities and non-profit agencies.

We will continue to insist that those who can work, do so;

that those who may not be able to work, get the help they need to get back to work;

and that those who are permanently disabled get the treatment and support they need and a more stable income provided by Social Security benefits.

We are implementing Family Assistance Response in Madison County, a new response that encourages families to address deficiencies instead of DSS mandating it. The approach is being successfully used in other counties and in other states across the U.S. and lessens trauma to families faced with a traditional CPS report.

* Foster Care placements remained steady in 2010 compared to 2009. We continue to see this leveling-off of the placement rate, having the intended consequence of returning three-quarters of our children to caring, safe adults within 18 months. The average length of stay in Foster Care has been reduced to less than nine months, and the rate of

placement is slightly more than one child per every 1,000 – down from three children per 1,000 two years ago.

Keeping children safely with their parents has resulted in more preventive cases and services to work with these families. These services are a proven strategy and cost-effective means to put an end to child abuse and neglect.

One-quarter of Madison County residents are on some form of Public Assistance.

PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

In Public Health, a very large change came in the divestiture of our home health services. While no one wanted this to happen, it became a reality of the times. As for the union's claim it was done in the dark of night, it was not night for the preceding six months where no policy changes came forth from leadership and leadership of the unions actually walked away from the table.

The CSEA claims that there was a "secretive and unannounced vote" surrounding the intent to sell the CHHA. There was no secretive and unannounced vote as the rules of annual session were followed. A resolution of intent to sell the CHHA was presented and approved at the public health meeting on Dec. 27, which was open to the public. The approved resolution was presented to the Board of Supervisors at its last meeting of annual session on Dec. 28.

The decision to sell the CHHA is not a decision that needs to be discussed with the CSEA. The Board of Supervisors are elected to make

difficult and complex decision for the benefit of the citizens of Madison County; however, in May 2010, I as chairman of the board, along with other leaders of Madison County, reached out to employees and their union leadership. At this meeting, we discussed problems within the CHHA and what could be done to turn this program around.

Despite our efforts in implementing a variety of strategies, interventions and changes in the programs based on statistical data, no significant improvements were achieved. When comparing this to proposals for the purchase of the CHHA, it became clear that it was in the best interest of the residents of Madison County to sell the CHHA to an agency that could provide the best possible care while reducing costs to county taxpayers. The county leadership has done its due diligence and despite best efforts to make this work, the best decision was to sell our CHHA to the best private agency that can provide the services our residents deserve.

It is becoming clear that home care is a business that county government can no longer operate efficiently as demonstrated by 25 counties in New York state that are in the process of decertifying their home care agencies or no longer provide home care services through their local government. That list is likely to grow based upon discussions at recent county administrator meetings.

I am disappointed, but not surprised by the unprofessional personal attacks made by the CSEA's leadership against myself and other leaders of Madison County. I have, and will likely continue to have, an ineffective relationship with the CSEA's local leadership because of these and similar actions. It is unfortunate that the hardworking employees and members of the CSEA have to be caught in the middle of our strained relationship. I value the hard work and services that Madison County employees provide to our residents and would like to work cooperatively with CSEA leadership, but not this leadership, but I fear that is not possible at this time.

The union, and the Board of Supervisors, both knew this was a possibility; government cannot run this complex an operation with guidelines and reimbursements undergoing almost constant change.

Two years ago, we added seven new positions with the hope the number of daily visits would rise from three to five or six. After substantial investment, we were still at three visits a day, and the state was becoming increasingly critical of how we operated. One supervisor brought in an article from the local newspaper from more than 10 years ago, and it is virtually the same situation as today.

MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT

* This year – 2011 marks the 45th anniversary of the Mental Health Department in Madison County.

*By implementing changes identified through a business process analysis, the department successfully eliminated the six- to eight-week waiting time for clients seeking treatment through the outpatient mental health clinic. Clients are seen the same week they make contact or the next week, depending on the schedule of the client.

* The Mental Health Department, along with the Madison-Oneida BOCES began the application process for a multi-million dollar, multi-year grant through the Safe Schools/Healthy Children initiative.

* Dr. James Yonai was appointed to the Commissioner's Advisory Council for the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities.

*2010 marks the first full year of successfully outsourcing the operation of the Cedar House continuing day treatment program to Consumer Services of Madison County, Inc.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

* The Planning Department, under the leadership of Scott Ingmire, completed a Coordinated Transportation Plan for Madison County that will lead to improvements in the Madison Transit System, minimize route duplications, and share transit resources to reduce overall costs and provide better service to Madison County residents.

Implementation of this plan continues into 2011.

* Working closely with Colgate University Upstate Institute Field Fellow Michael Palmer, we created the first comprehensive natural gas lease map for Madison County, showing that more than 84,000 acres – 20 percent of the county’s total land area – has been leased in Madison County since the mid-1990s.

Also, a newly formed task group led by Nelson Supervisor Roger Bradstreet is researching the challenges and opportunities associated with natural gas development.

* We began the process of consolidating our 13 Agricultural Districts into four larger districts, thereby reducing confusion and creating conformity with our municipal boundaries.

The process will be completed by 2013.

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

* 2010 was a busy year for Employment and Training staff at the Career Center in Oneida. In conjunction with their partner agency staff members, they had 17,791 jobseeker visits, averaging 72 people per day in the center. The unemployment rate in Madison County was at its highest since 1992 at 9.7 percent in January and 7.9 percent in November.

Using Federal and State funds, 73 county residents received funding to upgrade their occupational skills to ease re-entry into the workforce.

* Recognizing that basic computer skills are a must in anyone's job search today, Employment and Training partnered with Utica School of Commerce and Mohawk Valley Community College to provide that training at the Career Center to 132 jobseekers.

MVCC will continue to provide that training during 2011 at the Center under a new federal grant they received.

* The close working relationship between Employment and Training and the Madison County Industrial Development Agency continued to grow during 2010. Federal and state money available for employment and training provided wage subsidies to 15 Madison County employers as they worked to hire and train new employees.

Increasing that number is a priority for the department for 2011.

* Through the support of Career Center staff, 2,453 area residents entered employment at some level, even during a rough economy.

The Employment and Training Department, in collaboration with the Department of Social Services, has developed two new programs for 2011 targeted to people applying for or receiving Public Assistance. Employment and Training staff will provide dedicated, intensive services to those referred, which we believe will result in cost savings for Social Services and increased employment opportunities for participants.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

* 2010 was a continuation of the last three years of doing more with less in the Madison County Highway Department. Efficiencies and cost savings continued in every budget line item. Although salaries, pension costs, materials, equipment and utility costs have all increased in the last three years, Highway Department appropriations have decreased 14 percent over the same time period. At the same time, services – including highway and bridge construction and maintenance – have improved.

* The county maintains 438.43 miles of county highway with 130 bridges and 134 culverts. The estimated value of the bridges and culverts is \$105 million; highways are more than \$220 million.

In 2010, the department worked on 13 road rehabilitation projects, with a total of 14.17 miles; in 2009 it was six projects totaling 13.4 miles; and in 2008, eight projects totaled 12 miles.

In 2010, the department covered 40.6 miles of road with surface treatments, compared to 49.5 in 2009 and 42.6 in 2008.

In-house staff designed and installed three box culverts and replaced another large culvert, eliminating a dip in the road and improving sight distance and safety.

* In 2010, the department eliminated a management position at the Morrisville shop and created a single operations manager position, merging staff and equipment between the Morrisville and Wampsville shops. The result was increased cooperation on road maintenance and construction projects, with improved quality and consistency of work.

* The department also gained efficiencies in the engineering department that allowed quicker surveying, design and implementation of projects, even with a 50-percent reduction in staff from 2007. Also, a comprehensive database of road conditions and project information was developed to improve future project selection and quality.

* Efficiencies and cost savings were gained by expanding one-person plowing from 10 out of 21 to 19 out of 19 routes, and once the agreement with the CSEA is complete, the addition of an afternoon shift will further those gains for 2011.

Efficiencies in plow routes and the use of multi-use dump boxes help maintain the truck fleet; five new 10-wheel dump trucks have been purchased within the last three years.

* County-town partnerships will allow for cost-effective winter road maintenance, with two of the 13 agreements with the towns being no-cost arrangements.

* The highlight project of 2010 was Oxbow Road. With an unusually high number of fatal motor vehicle accidents in 2008 and 2009 along a particularly dangerous section in the town of Lincoln, the Highway Department quickly took action to temporarily improve safety by restriping and eliminating a passing lane.

The section of road was surveyed and analyzed by in-house engineering staff to determine what improvements could be made. A total redesign of that particular section was completed and reconstructed within just a few months' time. The result was improved geometry, increased sight distance, and a better guiderail system to improve motorist safety.

The work was completed using a combination of departmental staff and contractors.

* The Highway Department continues to assist local municipalities with various projects. In conjunction with the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District and the village of DeRuyter, 250 feet of the Tioughnioga [TIE-OFF-KNEE-OH-GUH] Creek bank was stabilized in adverse conditions resulting in the preservation and protection of property for residents in the area.

SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING

* Madison County has been a leader in New York State's recycling efforts since the first plastic bottle was accepted for recycling in July, 1990. Since that time – 20 years ago – the list of items that are now recyclable has grown to include televisions, computer monitors, mercury and products containing mercury, plastic bags, license plates, pizza boxes and more.

ARC and the county celebrated a 20-year partnership in May of last year.

The management and staff of the Department of Solid Waste and Sanitation take pride in the fact that Madison County is on the cutting edge when it comes to new recycling initiatives and programs that save energy and protect the planet.

* **Methane Gas:** In a public-private partnership with Waste Management, Inc., methane gas is being turned into electricity at the

gas-to-energy facility and sold on the grid. A small portion of the excess heat produced by the CAT generator/engine is providing free heat to the ARC Recycling Center, the ARC Break/Training building and the Scale House & Education Center.

In December, the county received a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy in the amount of \$990,000 to cover the remaining capital costs of the project.

The Solid Waste and Recycling Committee is contemplating the establishment of a business park – Agriculture and Renewable Energy (ARE) Park at the landfill site. Businesses that choose to relocate will be encouraged to take advantage of the low-cost excess heat produced by the gas utilization generator.

***Solar Panels:** Madison County received a grant for the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to allow the Department of Solid Waste to install 11 solar panels on the south-facing slope of the closed west side landfill cell. These solar

panels will produce electricity that will be utilized by the ARC Recycling Center. The power will be net metered: any power not used by the ARC will go back into the grid.

The Madison County landfill is the first municipal landfill in the United States to utilize solar technology on a flexible landfill cap. Work was started on this project in fall 2010 and should be completed by July.

* Saving the Planet: The county instituted mandatory recycling of computer monitors and televisions in September 2004. These units contain mercury, cadmium, lead and other toxic chemicals that are now being kept out of our landfill.

To date, 418 tons of electronic items have been safely recycled in Madison County.

MADISON COUNTY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Our IDA, headed by Kipp Hicks, is finally running at full steam. Five years ago, we set it up as a one-stop shop for economic development, and with his leadership, it is finally at a point where we can say it truly is.

Among the IDA's credits this year are:

- 1) \$33 million in refinancing for Colgate University bonds;
- 2) \$300,000 in financing was provided through revolving loan funds, netting 50 jobs in the county;
- 3) Securing \$200,000 in micro-enterprise grants; and
- 4) Securing \$750,000 in loan funds for a beef processing facility for our farmers.

Farmers will also benefit from:

1) Expansion of Madison Bounty, which is now a completely free-standing entity – something that was merely concept three short years ago. More than 50 local farmers provide produce, meats and value-added products for the program; and

2) USDA crop insurance for soybeans, a feather in our cap as a Board, along with help from our lobbyists, Park Strategies. This will help not only Madison County's crop farmers, but also struggling dairy farmers as they transition to crop production.

CONCLUSION

The Madison County Board of Supervisors presented a ZERO-increase tax levy this year, despite significant increase in state-mandated programs, such as a 41-percent increase in state retirement from \$3 million to \$4.26 million.

In 2000, our state retirement costs were \$31,000. Retirement costs made up \$14.7 percent of our tax levy in 2011.

In 2005, a house assessed at 100 percent paid \$10.14 per \$1,000 of assessed value; in 2011, despite our challenging environment, the adopted county levy was \$7.47 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

Clearly, and I MEAN CLEARLY, this Board is doing its job. Despite the challenges facing us this year, I do not see an increase for 2012.

People cannot depend on government for everything. The roads will not get plowed as much; you will need to slow down. Services will not be on the spot; you will have to be patient.

Looking forward to 2011, it will certainly be more challenging than the previous year, with unfunded mandates like Medicaid and our state retirement system, which is expected to top out at 25 percent of payroll – up significantly from previous years.

We also expect that even greater pressure will be put on the Department of Social Services as the economy worsens. New ways of doing business outside of the box will have to be done – perhaps a three- or four-year maximum on Public Assistance benefits, then you can no longer collect.

I am part of the Madison County Literacy Program and know that if a person cannot read at the fourth-grade level, they are eligible for benefits. The Literacy Program should be a mandatory program, not

only to help the person read more proficiently, but also to get them off the public dole, as well.

In Public Health, the divestiture should be nearly complete, with more efficiency to the ill and recovering.

Also in 2011, we will take a closer look at consolidating Public Health, the Department of Social Services and Mental Health into one Department of Health and Human Services – an initiative that Brookfield Supervisor John Salka has been researching and hoping to get underway in the year ahead.

I want to take the time to thank the Stockbridge Munsee Tribe for being a true partner with the county this year in reaching an historical settlement. The Stockbridge Munsees have a long history in Central New York.

The partnership forged with the state, county and town of Stockbridge should be a template for all tribes across our great state.

Opponents say they are an out-of-state tribe; the answer is yes, and by negotiating in good faith they took no land in our county into trust and will forever share the wealth of the profits from their enterprises with New York State, Sullivan County and the town.

That is way more than our neighboring tribe has ever offered.

To our neighboring tribe, the Oneidas, thanks for nothing; nothing but a dribble of propaganda of which only a Third World dictator would be envious.

Quit your harping on spending taxpayer dollars when we the people of Oneida and Madison counties continue to subsidize, yes, subsidize, your enterprises to the tune of \$65 million a year. If we offered any major corporation a 66-percent subsidy on payroll, there is no doubt they would move all operations here.

The money that we spend on Park Strategies is a mere drop in the bucket, compared to what the Oneidas spend. One other effective example is how we have been able to make many friends across the

United States to help defeat the quick Carcieri Fix. If you don't understand Carcieri, then you don't understand why we need help like Park Strategies.

An excerpt from a recent press statement by the Oneidas reads, "...the people of Madison County deserve better leadership than that."

We have lead by example, by defending our county from a hostile foe. Five governors, four chairmen, three federal mediators and a state mediator and only one thing was constant: Oneida leadership.

This leads us to believe maybe the Oneida people – all Oneida people – deserve better leadership.

To the Nation leadership, if you truly want to negotiate, send me a letter or call and tell me or our attorneys what you want to negotiate, and we will see. I'll bet this offer generates no responses, or there will be some smart-ass remark about how our offer isn't genuine.

A 1665 quote from Vol. I, Chapter III, “The Documentary History of the State of New York:

“It must be premised that the Iroquois are composed of five Nations, of which the nearest to the Dutch, is that of the Mohawk consisting of two or three villages containing about three to four hundred men capable of bearing arms. These have always been at war with us, though they sometimes pretend to sue for peace.”

In closing, I want to thank County Attorney John Campanie for his many hours of work on many different fronts here at the county.

I also want to thank the many, many Madison County employees – union and non-union – who come to work every day, stay quiet, mind their own business and just do their jobs and want to provide for their families, as most of us do.

Finally, I want to thank Sen. Chuck Schumer and his staff, though our politics don’t always agree, on his hard behind-the-scenes work on

getting our farmers soybean insurance and all of his hard work on Indian issues that pertain to our county.