

SEPTEMBER 14, 2006

9/14/06 2007 Budget Presentation

Attachment 1

GOOD MORNING.

MR. CHAIRMAN, FLOOR LEADERS KRAFT AND RYAN. MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE. DISTINGUISHED GUESTS AND LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I AM PLEASED TO PRESENT THE 2007 ONONDAGA COUNTY BUDGET FOR YOUR REVIEW.

ALTHOUGH THE LOOK AND FORMAT OF THE BUDGET HAS CHANGED, THE IMPORTANT THINGS HAVEN'T.

OUR BUDGET REMAINS BASED ON A COMMITMENT TO FISCAL INTEGRITY...TO HIGH QUALITY SERVICES THAT ADAPT QUICKLY TO COMMUNITY NEEDS...AND TO A RESPECT FOR THE NEEDS AND CONSTRAINTS OF THE AVERAGE TAXPAYER.

THE GOALS WE SET FOR THIS BUDGET REFLECT THOSE PRINCIPLES.

AND AS WE LOOK FORWARD TO 2007, SOLID MANAGEMENT DECISIONS AND PRACTICES HAVE GIVEN US A GREAT DEAL TO BE PROUD OF.

FIRST AND FOREMOST, TO HOLD TAXES AND SPENDING BELOW INFLATION.

THE PROPOSED TAX RATE FOR 2007 IS THE LOWEST TAX RATE IN THE PAST 27 YEARS FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENT.

SECOND, TO KEEP VAN DUYN COUNTY OWNED, ASSURING OUR CITIZENS THAT THERE WILL BE A CARING PLACE FOR THEM, REGARDLESS OF THEIR MEANS.

THIRD, TO MAINTAIN SERVICES THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO OUR QUALITY OF LIFE AND THE HEALTH OF OUR ECONOMY.

AND FINALLY, TO MAKE APPROPRIATE INVESTMENTS IN COUNTY ASSETS AND INFRASTRUCTURE...INVESTING MONEY TODAY TO SAVE MONEY TOMORROW..

THESE FOUR GOALS PROVIDE THE FOUNDATION FOR ALL OUR EFFORTS IN MAINTAINING A STRONGHOLD ON FINANCIAL STABILITY AND DIRECTING LIMITED RESOURCES TO PROVIDING NEEDED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR OUR CITIZENS.

OUR BUDGET IS PRESENTED AT AN IMPORTANT JUNCTURE. PROJECTS OF ENORMOUS CONSEQUENCE TO OUR COMMUNITY, THE FUTURE OF OUR ECONOMY AND THIS GOVERNMENT ARE FINALLY MOVING AHEAD IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

WITH GOVERNMENTAL ROADBLOCKS OUT OF THE WAY, THE DESTINY USA PROJECT SHOULD GET STARTED BY THE END OF THIS YEAR.

SOON AFTER, IN THE SPRING OF 2007, I EXPECT TO JOIN YOU AT THE GROUNDBREAKING FOR THE NEW CONVENTION CENTER HOTEL.

AS WE SPEAK, STATE FUNDING AGENCIES AND THE DEVELOPER ARE BOTH MAKING PROGRESS ON THAT LONG-AWAITED PROJECT.

PRELIMINARY WORK ON THE NEARBY CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IS ALREADY UNDERWAY.

THESE ARE EXCITING PROJECTS THAT WILL MEAN SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOB OPPORTUNITY FOR THIS COMMUNITY.

TOGETHER, THEY CAN SERVE AS A CATALYST FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH THAT IS WIDE AND DEEP, SPARKING GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN EVERY QUADRANT OF THE COUNTY AND SECTOR OF OUR ECONOMY.

BY KEEPING TAXES AND SPENDING WELL BELOW INFLATION, AND SUSTAINING SERVICES THAT ARE ESSENTIAL TO OUR QUALITY OF LIFE AND ECONOMIC HEALTH, OUR 2007 BUDGET CONTRIBUTES TO A BUSINESS CLIMATE THAT CAN RESULT IN FUTURE GROWTH.

CERTAINLY, THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISION MADE IN THIS BUDGET WAS MY PROPOSAL TO KEEP VAN DUYN IN COUNTY HANDS.

I HAVE MADE NO SECRET OF MY INTEREST IN KEEPING VAN DUYN NURSING HOME OPEN AND COMMUNITY-OWNED.

I BELIEVE VAN DUYN IS A VITAL PART OF THE SAFETY NET THAT PROVIDES COMFORT AND PROTECTION TO A POPULATION THAT HAS EARNED BOTH.

THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE ARE COMPLACENT ABOUT VAN DUYN'S FINANCES --- QUITE TO THE CONTRARY.

WHEN THE FINANCIAL CONDITION OF VAN DUYN ABRUPTLY CHANGED, WE DIDN'T SIMPLY ACCEPT MOUNTING DEFICITS AS A FACT OF LIFE AND THEN MOVE ON, AS SOME OTHER COUNTIES DID.

INSTEAD, THIS LEGISLATURE, VAN DUYN'S EMPLOYEES AND UNION LEADERSHIP AND KEY MEMBERS OF MY ADMINISTRATION SAT DOWN AND WORKED TOGETHER TO UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM AND THEN FIND SOLUTIONS.

WE QUICKLY CONFIRMED THAT MUCH OF VAN DUYN'S PROBLEM WAS CAUSED BY MEDICAID AND PENSION DECISIONS IN ALBANY. WE CAME TOGETHER TO LOBBY ALBANY FOR HELP.

OVER THE COURSE OF A FEW SHORT MONTHS, WE ALMOST SINGLE-HANDEDLY ELEVATED THE CAUSE OF COUNTY-OWNED NURSING HOMES FROM BARELY A BLIP ON ALBANY'S RADAR SCREEN TO A TOP PRIORITY OF STATE LEGISLATIVE LEADERS.

AS A RESULT, THE FINAL STATE BUDGET INCLUDED HIGHER MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENT RATES AND A NEW AID PACKAGE TARGETED TO PUBLICLY OWNED NURSING HOMES.

THE MONEY FROM THESE TWO SOURCES WILL HELP US IN 2007, AND IS SCHEDULED TO INCREASE EVERY YEAR FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS---INCLUDING A SUBSTANTIAL HIKE IN THE FINAL YEAR OF THE RAMP UP.

I'D LIKE TO THANK OUR STATE LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION FOR THEIR STRONG AND ABLE ADVOCACY OF VAN DUYN IN ALBANY --- AND FOR THE STATEWIDE CSEA ORGANIZATION FOR THEIR HELP, TOO.

ALSO THE WORK OF HEALTH CHAIR RAPP AND SPECIAL COMMITTEE CHAIR MULROY.

WE ALSO CHARGED VAN DUYN'S NEW MANAGEMENT TEAM---AND VAN DUYN'S EMPLOYEES AND UNION LEADERS---WITH FINDING WAYS TO SAVE MONEY IN ALL AREAS OF THE OPERATION.

OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS, THESE EFFORTS HAVE STARTED TO PAY OFF---AND HAVE LED TO MY RECOMMENDATION TO KEEP VAN DUYN A COUNTY FACILITY.

AS A RESULT OF BELT-TIGHTENING AND INNOVATIVE THINKING, VAN DUYN'S 2007 BUDGET IS UP BY JUST 1 POINT EIGHT PER CENT OVER THIS YEAR.

THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN LABOR AND MANAGEMENT HAS RESULTED IN MONEY-SAVING CHANGES THAT WILL EXPAND OVER TIME.

INVESTMENTS IN ENERGY SAVINGS, STREAMLINING ACCOUNTING PRACTICES AND OTHER CHANGES WILL PAY OFF IN A POSITIVE WAY.

VAN DUYN'S 2007 BUDGET DEFICIT IS 5.2 MILLION DOLLARS---FAR LESS THAN THE 8 TO 9 MILLION DOLLARS THAT WAS PROJECTED BEFORE THIS SERIES OF INITIATIVES.

CLOSING THAT SHORTFALL WILL REQUIRE A 3.3 MILLION DOLLAR INCREASE IN THE COUNTY'S CURRENT CONTRIBUTION TO VAN DUYN.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I COULD SAY THAT SOCIAL SERVICE MANDATES ARE ACTUALLY A SOURCE OF STABILITY IN THE COUNTY BUDGET.

THE COMBINATION OF THE CAP ON MEDICAID GROWTH, EXCELLENT WORK BY OUR DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES STAFF, AND A STRONG ECONOMY HAS PROVIDED AT LEAST TEMPORARY RESPITE FROM THE SKYROCKETING GROWTH OF UNCONTROLLABLE STATE MANDATES.

ONONDAGA COUNTY WAS THE FIRST AND LOUDEST IN THE LONG FIGHT TO CAP MEDICAID — AND WE ARE NOW SEEING THE FRUITS OF OUR LABORS.

THE MEDICAID CAP TIES FUTURE MEDICAID COSTS TO HOW MUCH A COUNTY SPENT IN 2005. IN 2007, FOR EXAMPLE, OUR MEDICAID BILL WILL BE EXACTLY SIX AND THREE QUARTERS PERCENT MORE THAN OUR 2005 COSTS.

BECAUSE ALL FUTURE MEDICAID PAYMENTS ARE BASED ON 2005 SPENDING LEVELS, 2005 WAS OBVIOUSLY A VERY IMPORTANT YEAR.

WE JOINED TOGETHER TO PROVIDE RESOURCES TO DSS TO FOCUS ON MEDICAID COSTS AND CASELOAD REDUCTIONS DURING THAT CRITICAL PERIOD.

WHAT A SMART INVESTMENT THAT WAS. WE WILL REALIZE RETURNS FOR AS LONG AS OUR MEDICAID CONTRIBUTION IS TIED TO THE 2005 SPENDING LEVEL. WE REMAIN CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC.

BUT WE PLEDGE TO KEEP A VIGIL AND MAINTAIN OUR COMMITMENT TO ROOT OUT FRAUD AND WASTE IN THE SYSTEM AND PROTECT OUR COUNTY TAXPAYERS.

AND ONE OF THOSE WAYS IS USING SPECIALLY DESIGNED TECHNOLOGY.

YOU HAVE BEEN BRIEFED OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS BY COMMISSIONER SUTKOWY AND HIS STAFF ON THE RESULTS SO FAR OF POWERFUL COMPUTER SOFTWARE WITH A PROVEN POTENTIAL FOR IDENTIFYING HIGH COSTS THAT CAN BE REDUCED WITH SKILLED CASE MANAGEMENT AS WELL AS CLIENTS AND VENDORS WHO MAY BE ENGAGED IN FRAUD AND ABUSE.

IN ONE OF THE SALIENT SYSTEM'S FIRST TESTS, WE WERE ABLE TO DETECT SIGNS OF A PRESCRIPTION DRUG SCAM, WHICH THEN HELPED TO IDENTIFY AND APPREHEND A MEDICAID CLIENT WHO WAS SECURING LARGE VOLUMES OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS WITH FORGED SCRIPTS AND PURCHASED WITH MEDICAID DOLLARS.

ON SEPTEMBER 7TH, I TESTIFIED BEFORE A NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY TASK FORCE ON MEDICAID FRAUD AND ABUSE AND DISCUSSED THESE EFFORTS AND POINTED OUT AREAS THE STATE NEEDS TO CHANGE IN THIS "OUT OF CONTROL" MEDICAID PROGRAM.

LET'S HOPE WE ARE SUCCESSFUL.

WE HAVE ALSO HAD SOME SUCCESS IN REDUCING DEPENDENCY ON TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

IN MY STATE OF THE COUNTY MESSAGE THIS YEAR, I NOTED THAT CASELOADS WERE AT RECORD LOW LEVELS. TODAY, THEY ARE EVEN LOWER.

LAST MONTH, OUR WELFARE CASELOAD DROPPED TO 4,390.

LAST YEAR, THE NUMBER WAS 4,900.

LET'S COMPARE THAT TO TEN YEARS AGO.

IN 1997, THERE WERE 10,058 TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE CASES BEING SUPPORTED BY THE TAXPAYERS OF ONONDAGA COUNTY!

HAD THE NUMBER REMAINED AT THAT LEVEL, OUR WELFARE COSTS WOULD HAVE BEEN 36 MILLION DOLLARS MORE TODAY THAN IS NOW PROJECTED—AND 9.3

MILLION DOLLARS OF THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN PAID WITH LOCAL PROPERTY TAX DOLLARS.

THIS ACCOMPLISHMENT HAPPENED BECAUSE OUR CAPABLE DSS LEADERSHIP AND STAFF HAS COMMITTED ITSELF TO A "WORK FIRST" PHILOSOPHY THAT REVIEWS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES WITH EVERY APPLICANT AND SCRUTINIZES EVERY CASE TO ENSURE BENEFITS ARE PROVIDED ONLY TO THOSE TRULY IN NEED.

I WOULD LIKE TO PUBLICLY COMMEND COMMISSIONER SUTKOWY, DIRECTOR OF TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE SEIFRITZ, AND THE DSS STAFF—WORKING IN TANDEM WITH OUR JOBSPLUS! PROGRAM-- FOR THEIR CLOSE SCRUTINY OF THESE PROGRAMS AND THE SAVINGS TO OUR LOCAL TAXPAYERS.

OUR DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES IS ALSO WORKING WITH THE CITY, CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT, SYRACUSE 20/20, OTHER COUNTY DEPARTMENTS AND SEVERAL COMMUNITY AGENCIES ON THE "WEST SIDE STRATEGY."

THIS INITIATIVE IS INTENDED TO HELP KIDS BREAK THE CYCLE OF DEPENDENCE THROUGH ACADEMIC SUCCESS.

IT IS A SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAM THAT WORKS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES TO SOLVE PROBLEMS THAT CAN IMPAIR CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE.

THE PROPOSED BUDGET INCLUDES ONE MILLION DOLLARS IN FUNDING FOR THE PROGRAM.

650,000 DOLLARS WILL COME FROM THE STATE. THE REMAINING 350,000 DOLLARS WILL COME FROM THE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT - A CONTRIBUTION YOU AUTHORIZED EARLIER THIS MONTH.

TO PROVIDE MORE COORDINATION OF THE MANY PROGRAMS INVOLVING MOTHERS AND CHILDREN, I AM RECOMMENDING A NO COST INTERNAL REORGANIZATION IN THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT FORMING A NEW DIVISION OF MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH.

THE DIVISION WILL OPERATE SUCH SERVICES AS WIC, HEALTHY START, AND THE PRE-K AND EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS. OUR PRE-K PROGRAM IS STRUGGLING WITH TREMENDOUS COSTS AND HIGHER CASE LOADS WHICH COUNTIES HAVE LITTLE OR CONTROL.

CAPPING THE COST OF THIS UNFUNDED STATE MANDATE WILL CONTINUE TO BE ON THE COUNTY'S LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM FOR REFORM BY THE STATE LEGISLATURE.

OUR HEALTH DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN FULLY INVOLVED IN EDUCATING AND PREPARING THE COMMUNITY FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC.

THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF DR. MORROW AND HER STAFF, OUR COUNTY IS FAR AHEAD OF MOST OTHER COMMUNITIES IN PREPARING FOR SUCH A CRISIS.

PREPARING OUR COMMUNITY AND SUPPORTING OUR FIRE, EMS, AND LAW ENFORCEMENT IS A TOP PRIORITY.

THE MODERNIZATION OF EQUIPMENT AT THE 911 CENTER CONTINUES, WITH THE 3.5 MILLION DOLLAR COMPUTER AIDED DISPATCH (CAD) SYSTEM AND FIRE/EMS RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM SCHEDULED FOR INSTALLATION IN 2007.

UPGRADES TO THE MOBILE DATA AND COMPUTER INFRASTRUCTURE SERVING EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE VEHICLES AS WELL AS POLICE AND FIRE UNITS WILL GREATLY ENHANCE THE SPEED AND QUALITY OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO OUR FIRST RESPONDERS.

THREE YEARS AGO, SHERIFF WALSH PRESENTED A LONG-TERM STRATEGIC PLAN FOR HIS DEPARTMENT THAT CALLED FOR A SHARPENED FOCUS ON THEIR CORE PUBLIC SAFETY MISSION.

HIS MULTI-YEAR PLAN WAS DESIGNED TO TRANSFER NON-CORE OPERATIONS TO OTHER COUNTY DEPARTMENTS WITH A SHARED MISSION, TO SAVE TAXPAYER DOLLARS AND ELIMINATE THE INEFFICIENCIES OF OVERLAPPING OPERATIONS.

SINCE THEN, THE SHERIFF HAS NOT ONLY IMPLEMENTED THE PLAN, BUT EXPANDED IT.

MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, THE CHANGES DID NOT DETRACT FROM THE CORE MISSION OF ENSURING PUBLIC SAFETY AND PROTECTION.

I APPRECIATE WHAT SHERIFF WALSH AND HIS STAFF HAVE ACCOMPLISHED.

THIS YEAR, THE SHERIFF HAS REQUESTED FUNDS TO EQUIP ALL OF HIS SWORN PERSONNEL WITH STUN GUNS, OR TASERS, PROVIDING AN ALTERNATIVE TO MORE LETHAL FORCE.

I BELIEVE THIS REQUEST IS WORTHY OF FURTHER CONSIDERATION AND HAVE INCLUDED 225,000 DOLLARS IN THE BUDGET TO SUPPORT THE COST OF THESE DEVICES.

THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE IS CONTINUALLY DEALING WITH POPULATION CHALLENGES THAT ARE STRETCHING THE JUSTICE CENTER TO ITS LIMITS.

AS I DISCUSSED LAST YEAR, THE JUSTICE CENTER POPULATION IS APPROACHING CAPACITY NOT BECAUSE MORE PEOPLE ARE BEING ARRESTED.

OUR PROBLEM IS CAUSED BY FEWER PEOPLE SPENDING FAR LONGER IN JAIL, ALMOST REGARDLESS OF THE CHARGE.

I APPRECIATE THE COOPERATION OF CORRECTION COMMISSIONER COWIN, FORMER CHIEF CALLISTO AND CHIEF CARBERY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE RISING JAIL POPULATION.

THE BUDGET INCLUDES SEVERAL INTERIM RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY MY INMATE POPULATION TASK FORCE THAT IS HEADED BY FORMER HILLBROOK DIRECTOR CHUCK HARMON AND INCLUDES AMONG ITS MEMBERS LEGISLATORS MULROY AND MEYER. THE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE INTENDED TO RELIEVE SOME OF THE PRESSURE AT THE JUSTICE CENTER.

THE GROUP'S WORK WILL CONTINUE FOR ANOTHER SIX MONTHS.

THE PHASED RENOVATION OF THE 32-BED HILLBROOK DETENTION CENTER IS ON-SCHEDULE, ON BUDGET, AND EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED BY NEXT SUMMER.

THE 6 MILLION DOLLAR PROJECT—HALF OF WHICH IS BEING PAID BY THE STATE--WILL IMPROVE BOTH THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF THE FACILITY.

IN THE PROCESS WE ARE IDENTIFYING NEW APPROACHES TO SERVICES AND POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT COST SAVING POSSIBILITIES CONCERNING WAYS TO PERMANENTLY MINIMIZE THE COSTLY DETENTION OF YOUTH AND HELP GET YOUNG PEOPLE BACK ON THE RIGHT TRACK.

OUR COMMITMENT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RUNS DEEP.

WE CONTINUE TO PROVIDE COMPETENT AND EFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE TO WEALTH-GENERATING PROJECTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY.

AND OUR MARKETING PROGRAM IS THE AREA'S PRIMARY VEHICLE FOR BUSINESS ATTRACTION.

BEYOND OUR GENERAL MISSION TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WE ALSO HAVE A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON TOURISM AND CONVENTION PROMOTION.

MY GOAL IS TO MAKE SURE THE BENEFITS OF THE NEW HOTEL ARE REALIZED FROM THE TIME ITS DOORS OPEN.

I HAVE ASKED THE CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU UNDER THE DIRECTION OF ITS NEW PRESIDENT DAVID HOLDER, TO LAUNCH AN AGGRESSIVE AND CONVENTION-FOCUSED MARKETING CAMPAIGN NEXT YEAR, TRIGGERED BY THE START OF THE HOTEL PROJECT.

I AM INCLUDING IN THE BUDGET 100,000 DOLLARS TO SUPPLEMENT THE CVB'S ANNUAL APPROPRIATION THAT IS EARMARKED EXCLUSIVELY FOR THIS PURPOSE AND FUNDED WITH ROOM OCCUPANCY TAX DOLLARS.

AND AS A PART OF OUR MISSION TO PROMOTE TOURISM, I HAVE PROPOSED A 100,000 DOLLAR ANNUAL INCREASE IN OUR SUPPORT FOR THE BEAUTIFUL LANDMARK THEATER, ALSO FUNDED WITH ROOM OCCUPANCY TAX REVENUE.

THE ALLOCATION IS INTENDED TO AID THE THEATER'S EFFORTS TO EXPAND ITS RANGE OF USES TO INCLUDE LIVE THEATER AND MAJOR PRODUCTIONS.

2007 WILL MARK THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPENING OF THIS HISTORIC ONONDAGA COUNTY COURTHOUSE.

ITS AWESOME CONSTRUCTION ALSO SERVES AS A DAILY REMINDER THAT WE ARE BLESSED TO LIVE IN A COUNTRY GOVERNED BY LAWS.

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CENTENNIAL, WE WILL LAUNCH A MAJOR EXTERIOR RENOVATION OF THE COURTHOUSE NEXT YEAR.

WHEN DONE, WE WILL HAVE ADDED MANY YEARS TO THE LIFE OF THIS GREAT CIVIC STRUCTURE AND ALSO RESTORE IT TO ITS ORIGINAL LUSTER.

THERE IS ALSO RELATED LEGISLATION BEFORE YOU NOW TO USE THE LAST OF OUR 2001 TOBACCO BOND TO INSTALL ARCHITECTURAL LIGHTING FOR THE CIVIC AND CULTURAL CORRIDOR OF DOWNTOWN WITH THE COURT HOUSE AND COLUMBUS CIRCLE AS THE CENTERPIECE.

THIS PROJECT WILL ADD TO THE SENSE OF BEAUTY AND SECURITY OF DOWNTOWN, MAKING DOWNTOWN A MORE ATTRACTIVE DESTINATION FOR CONVENTIONS, TOURISTS AND RESIDENTS.

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, MUCH HAS BEEN SAID AND WRITTEN ABOUT "GREEN" ENERGY.

I AM A TRUE BELIEVER THAT THE "GREENEST" ENERGY POLICY OF ALL IS CONSERVATION.

THREE YEARS AGO, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THIS LEGISLATURE, AND PARTICULARLY THE EXPERTISE OF LEGISLATOR BRENDAN WHELAN, WE BEGAN A PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP WITH CARRIER CORPORATION TO SAVE ENERGY ON AN UNPRECEDENTED SCALE.

THE PROGRAM HAS INVESTED IN ENERGY EFFICIENT LIGHTING, PUMPS, MOTORS, AND HEATING AND COOLING SYSTEMS IN NEARLY ALL OF OUR FACILITIES.

THE 1 POINT 9 MILLION DOLLAR ANNUAL SAVINGS MORE THAN PAYS FOR THE COST OF THE IMPROVEMENTS.

ALL TOGETHER, THOSE PROJECTS WILL SAVE OUR COUNTY, OUR COMMUNITY, AND OUR COUNTRY 11 MILLION KILOWATT HOURS OF ELECTRICITY AND 1 MILLION THERMS OF NATURAL GAS EACH YEAR.

THAT IS ENOUGH ELECTRICITY TO POWER 1,800 HOMES AND ENOUGH GAS TO HEAT 667 MORE ANNUALLY.

WE HAVE DETAILED MUCH OF THIS EXCITING CONSERVATION EFFORT ON OUR WEBSITE, ONGOV.NET.

AND WE WILL BE ANNOUNCING NATIONAL RECOGNITION WE JUST RECEIVED FOR THIS ENERGY SUCCESS.

MAINTENANCE OF OUR COUNTY ROADS IS A CENTRAL PART OF A SYSTEM OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE THAT IS INTEGRAL TO OUR ECONOMY, QUALITY OF LIFE AND MOTORIST SAFETY.

THIS BUDGET INCREASES THE AMOUNT OF OUR ANNUAL ROAD REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE PROGRAM PAID WITH CASH BY 500,000 DOLLARS TO 3.25 MILLION DOLLARS.

OUR PARKS TRULY ARE EXTRAORDINARY.

COUNTY PARKS ARE BEAUTIFUL, PEACEFUL, FUN, AND ACCESSIBLE TO EVERY MEMBER OF OUR COMMUNITY.

THEY HELP SHAPE THE CHARACTER AND IMAGE OF OUR COUNTY.

THIS YEAR, I HAVE PROPOSED INCREASING FUNDING FOR CAPITAL MAINTENANCE TO 425,000 DOLLARS, UP FROM 375,000 DOLLARS THIS YEAR TO FURTHER ENSURE OUR TREASURED ASSET.

IN 2007, THE METROPOLITAN WATER BOARD WILL LAUNCH ITS LARGEST CAPITAL PROJECT SINCE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CONDUIT PIPES FROM LAKE ONTARIO — A 56 MILLION DOLLAR PROJECT, FEDERALLY MANDATED, TO PROVIDE COVERED WATER STORAGE AT BOTH THE VAN BUREN AND MANLIUS RESERVOIR SITES.

THIS PROJECT SHOULD PROVIDE ADDITIONAL IMPETUS TO CONSIDER A MERGER OF THE METROPOLITAN WATER BOARD AND THE ONONDAGA COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY.

I AM PLEASED THAT THIS LEGISLATURE HAS ASSEMBLED A TASK FORCE TO TAKE A SERIOUS LOOK AT THE POSSIBILITY AND LOOK FORWARD TO ITS RECOMMENDATIONS.

THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION IS UNDERWAY WITH A LARGE NUMBER OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS.

THE LAKE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT IS CERTAINLY THE MOST VISIBLE OF THESE EFFORTS, BUT WEP IS NEAR COMPLETION OF MAJOR UPGRADES TO THE WETZEL ROAD TREATMENT PLANT.

AS PROJECTED, THE LAKE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT MEANS HIGHER DEBT SERVICE COSTS.

FORTUNATELY, WE ENACTED THE SOUND FINANCIAL POLICY TO RETAIN OUR SEWER FUND RESERVES AND ARE MAKING PLANNED DRAWS ON THESE RESERVES TO SMOOTH THE GROWTH OF SEWER RATES.

IN CONCLUSION, I RECOMMEND FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION A BUDGET THAT LIMITS REAL SPENDING GROWTH TO LESS THAN ONE PERCENT, THAT LOWERS THE COUNTYWIDE TAX RATE TO ITS LOWEST LEVEL IN AT LEAST 27 YEARS, AND THAT STILL ACHIEVES OUR MOST IMPORTANT PROGRAMMATIC GOALS---INCLUDING THE CONTINUED OPERATION OF VAN DUYN.

WITH THAT, I TURN THE NEXT PHASE OF THIS PRESENTATION OVER TO CHIEF FISCAL OFFICER JOE MAREANE, WITH MY APPRECIATION TO HIM AND HIS STAFF FOR THEIR COUNTLESS HOURS OF COMPILING A LEAN BUT CERTAINLY NOT MEAN BUDGET.

AS ALWAYS, I OFFER MY SUPPORT TO ASSIST THIS LEGISLATURE DURING THE REVIEW PROCESS.

THANK YOU.