

Chairman Kendall, Members of the Legislature, Guests:

It is fitting I give this community address – the State of Our County – at this historic site in our County. I thank Board members of the *Cunneen-Hackett Cultural Center* for your dedication and commitment to this precious community resource... Jo Ann, I appreciate the brief history you provided and know, under your enthusiastic leadership, the Center can and will thrive.

As you just heard, this building was erected in 1883 as an oratory theatre...it was a venue for speeches of the day on topics of the day. The history of this beautiful building offers a palpable *Connection* with our past. The performances, artistic displays, and youth activities provided here inspire us today, and enrich our hopes and dreams for the future. I am honored and grateful to be here.

I believe we share a vision of a community where there exists unity of purpose...where the *connections* to our past can strengthen our future...where the richness of our community is best defined by the diversity of our people who *create connections* and open possibilities for all ethnic, cultural, and religious groups represented in our society...where our whole is made stronger by *increased connections* among our parts...where county government *fosters connections* among and across the geo-political boundaries of our local communities...where county officials *implement connections* to provide quality services to our residents...where we all work together as a government and a community to keep Dutchess County on track and *connected* for an even more prosperous future.

Our rightful confidence in our understanding of community needs and priorities sanctions the high standards for which we are known; our spirit and our character will support us when we must strive for what we know is right for our community; our shared values as public officials and the common refrain we hear from our residents demand we do all we can to ensure a prized quality of life --- a quality of life with the right balance of what we must do, as defined by others, versus what we choose to do, as defined by our community; and our dignity and integrity should sustain us as we fulfill and honor our respective responsibilities.

The current state of Dutchess County is strong, yet vulnerable. Just as every county, we are vulnerable to significant costs and state mandates we cannot control. Mandates that if left unchecked and unchanged by the State Legislature and Executive Branch could turn our hard work into hardship in a New York minute!

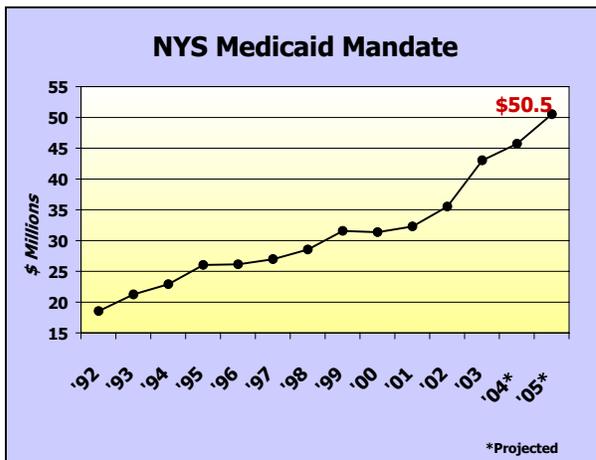
I believe local officials have an obligation to continue to advocate and fight for reform on behalf of the residents and businesses in the County. However at the same time I will strive to manage our local destiny...even if I cannot always control it...and I will continue to enhance and formulate the *Connections* to fortify our community as we prepare for the future.

County Finances: Striving to Manage Our Local Destiny

While we continue to work together as a county government and a community to strengthen our local economy, meet our residents' needs and make Dutchess County an even better place to live, the fiscal challenges before county government make it increasingly more difficult to manage our local destiny.

The colossal Medicaid vise continues to squeeze county budgets across New York State threatening our ability to deliver the core services so important to county residents. In recent years, counties have repeatedly called upon Albany to send a cavalry to save our taxpayers from the suffocating grip of Medicaid, but instead of a cavalry counties continue to face the firing squad. Medicaid and other Albany imposed mandates have forced taxpayers to bear an onslaught of property tax increases, sales tax increases, increases in fees, reductions in reserve funds and, most recently in Dutchess County, a tax on new mortgages to offset these exploding costs. These skyrocketing mandates have placed Dutchess County's enviable Aa2 bond rating at risk. The multi-million dollar fiscal pressures placed upon the county by the state's ever-increasing mandates have forced us to trim budgets for services to residents to unsustainable levels, stretching our resources beyond the limit and leaving us fewer resources with which to bring about positive change for the lives of our citizens.

Once again we are faced with annual double-digit Medicaid increase, with costs for 2005 projected at over \$50 million, an increase of more than 10% over our



2004 projected cost. This brings the total 5-year mandated increase in the County share to a stunning \$19 million. In early October 2004, our weekly Medicaid payment rose to an all time high of \$1.5 million, and an average of \$132,000 every day for this one state-mandated program. In another five years, if reform is not enacted, our mandated Medicaid costs will likely reach an astonishing \$83 million per year or nearly \$1.6 million per week from our treasury.

While NYS has provided some relief with the 2-year takeover of Family Health Plus projected to save Dutchess about \$900,000 this year, this savings represents only 1.8% of our overall Medicaid costs, which is minimal when compared to the multi-million total Medicaid budget, and does not come close to even covering the annual projected growth.

Medicaid as the health insurance program for the needy is a worthy and necessary program. However, County governments have absolutely no control over the costs. Washington and Albany make all the decisions and our taxpayers must pay the bill. Medicaid program enhancements enacted by our senators and assembly members in recent years include 11 major enhancements since 1999. This includes five since government finances were damaged by the attacks of September 11, 2001--enhancements enacted by state officials with the full knowledge of the financial harm these actions would bring to counties across New York State.

Leading up to the Governor's 2005 State of the State address, County Executives from around the state led by the New York Association of Counties (NYSAC) met with the Governor's staff as well as state senate and assembly leaders to present a unified message for Medicaid reform. The County Executives followed these meetings with a press conference to announce the county legislative plan to again call for a cap on local Medicaid expenditures during the 2005 session.

Echoing the warnings of County Executives across the state, State Comptroller Alan Hevesi in a recently issued research brief points out county property taxes would have to increase by an average of almost one-third by 2010 to keep pace if Medicaid costs continue to rise at the current rate. Comptroller Hevesi states "Medicaid costs are pushing already high local property taxes even higher. In 2003, Medicaid alone amounted to 19 percent of county spending and equaled 73 percent of property taxes. The projected average annual increase in overall county property taxes would be 6.5% a year for five years..."

After months of negotiations with NYSAC and County Executives across the state, Governor Pataki has included a proposal in the 2005/2006 proposed state budget that would begin to slow the growth in local Medicaid payments. This would be accomplished by using 2005 as a base year, increased each subsequent year by prescribed growth rates of 3.5% to 3% until 2008 when the state could assume all local Medicaid costs effective January 1, 2008. However, to partially offset the cost from that point forward, counties will be **required** to make an annual payment to the State which would equal the 3.0% growth rate or a fixed percentage of local sales tax revenue. Under this proposal, Dutchess County's costs would still increase by more than \$20 million over the next 5 years - \$20 million that would fall on the backs of our property taxpayers.

Therefore, it is hard to characterize an expense that goes up \$20 million as a "cap". The State's financing of this initiative is also dependent on the enactment of cost containment proposals which have been proposed in the past but failed to be adopted by the state legislature. While the Governor's proposal is a small step in the right direction, we must continue to aggressively lobby our representatives in Albany until serious Medicaid reform and taxpayer relief becomes a reality.

That is also why once again this year tax bills are being sent out to Dutchess County homeowners reflecting the Medicaid share of their tax bill broken out

separately at a startling 71 cents of each dollar of their property tax bill. The support of this Legislature in 2004 was critical in taking this step to better educate and inform our local taxpayers of Medicaid's local costs and the need for reform NOW.

The increased growth in the non-Medicaid share of the tax bill is due to other mandates such as child institution costs and social services programs, debt service for local capital projects already approved, the Sheriff and the Jail, Public Works and the Health Department to mention a few. These mandates have forced the county to tighten spending over the last few years to the point where it has undermined our ability to provide our critical traditional core services. As a result, we are seriously behind in several high priority program and service areas which are important and essential for our residents. Therefore, my plan for this year includes strategies and resources to realign, restructure and reallocate within those non-Medicaid areas in county government where there are compelling needs.

Another Albany mandate we will be dealing with in the very near future is the mandated expansion of the County Jail. While this will reduce the cost of housing out inmates in other institutions, the savings will be dwarfed by staggering increases in staffing, facility operating costs and debt service for what will be by far the largest capital project in county history. Recently Sheriff Anderson has requested the support and approval of the County Legislature and the County Executive for a major jail expansion which according to the Sheriff's proposal was expected to cost county government a startling \$45 to \$50 million. Thereafter, the New York State Corrections Commission advised Dutchess County we would be required by the State to build a larger and more expensive facility that may cost \$70 million or more (including interest it will exceed \$133 million). This is simply for construction costs. Additionally, operating costs for a larger facility including staff will reach multiple millions of dollars annually.

These are costs that would send fiscal shock waves through other departments, services and programs in county government and create serious damage, as dollars would be siphoned from precious existing county programs. Important services residents depend on would be casualties of the money shift to pay for the Jail expansion. Dramatically sharp increases in property taxes for Dutchess County homeowners will also result. Therefore, I have asked the Legislature and the Sheriff to more fully explore less costly options available to the county before the county expends a half-million dollars to proceed with design and costs of unknown proportions. There are simply too many unanswered questions.

This is why I contacted Honorable Francis A. Nicoli, Administrative Judge of the 9th Judicial District, to review the need for additional judicial resources or other means to move the caseload through the Dutchess County criminal court system more effectively and efficiently in order to reduce the expanding population in the County Jail awaiting judicial disposition, trial and sentencing. I have also requested the District Attorney, Public Defender, Director of Probation and

Commissioner of Mental Hygiene together with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to immediately devise and implement policies, procedures and practices to strategically and tactically, on both a short and long term basis, bring a more effective and efficient process relating to the number of “bed days” and inmates confined to the Dutchess County Jail. As parole violators continue to contribute significantly to the jail population, cooperation from New York State Parole officials will be critical.

Again this year we are faced with the mandated increase in assigned counsel rates for private attorneys who handle cases in which our Public Defender’s Office has a conflict of interest. The rate increase effective January 1, 2004 resulted in a county cost last year of over \$1.6 million, an increase of nearly \$400,000 from the prior year, and these costs will continue in 2005 and future years.

The state law that increased the rates also created an indigent legal services fund to be used to offset the increased costs of the higher rates for assigned counsel. The Office of the State Comptroller estimated there would be about \$75 million in this fund as of December 31, 2004. \$50 million should have been available for local governments after the state received \$25 million for its increased costs for law guardian representation. However, the NYS Legislature appropriated only \$12 million in the state budget for distribution to counties and NYC on March 31, 2005, substantially less than the \$50 million expected to be available. That is why the task team put in place by the administration in 2004 will continue efforts to develop creative solutions for controlling these costs, and will explore further the possibility of creating a *Conflict Defender’s Office*.

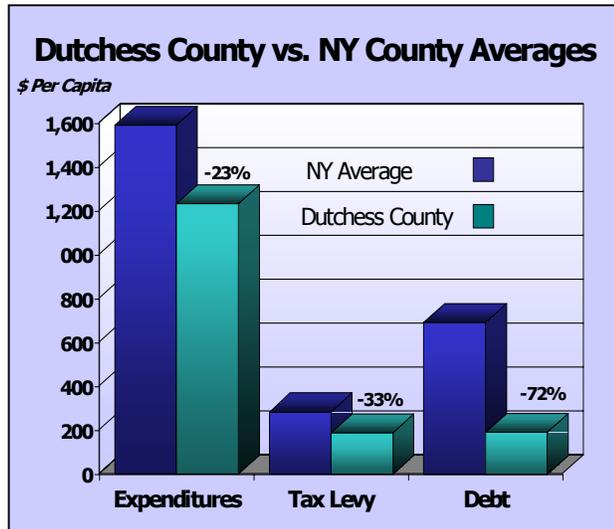
While pension costs for county employees remain relatively flat for 2005 compared to last year, we need to remember 2004 had an enormous increase over 2003. Pension costs have increased \$10 million since 2002 due to a weak stock market impact on the pension fund along with Albany’s decision to enact pension benefit enhancements, yet another Albany imposed mandate.

Also, health insurance costs for County employees, while not a state mandate, have increased by \$6 million in the last five years reflecting the nationwide trend in the insurance industry. Our 2005 expense is expected to be more than \$16 million. This is why I put in place a health insurance task force to explore options and alternatives that can offer relief to our county taxpayers and our employees and retirees who contribute to the cost of their health insurance premiums. Recommendations from the task force are expected to be forthcoming within the next few weeks. Any changes to our health insurance plans must be negotiated with our labor unions.

Yet in spite of the more than \$9 million in new 2005 spending for Medicaid, pension costs, other state-imposed mandates, health insurance, and employee salary increases, spending in 2005 has been held at \$364.8 million, an increase of just 5.1% over the 2004 modified budget. Regrettably however, the state

mandated cost increases have still forced an average county property tax increase of 14.8% this year, or \$90 for the average home assessed at \$250,000.

However, based on statistical data, published recently by the State Comptroller and reflected in the graph to the right, Dutchess County taxes its residents **33% less per capita** and spends **23% less per capita** than the statewide county average. Dutchess County's **indebtedness per capita is an impressive 72% below** the statewide county average. Of particular importance to Dutchess County property taxpayers, the county property tax levy totals only 22% of the County's constitutional taxing limit.



In December, *Moody's Investors Service* assigned Dutchess County a bond rating just prior to our sale of \$31 million in general obligation bonds. These bonds will fund more than 20 previously authorized capital projects and will be paid back over 15 years at an average interest rate of 3.5%. While *Moody's Investors Service* continues to recognize Dutchess County's growing tax base, above average wealth levels, and our modest debt burden in assigning a December 2004 bond rating of Aa2, we have been moved to the "Watchlist" for potential downgrade. This is of obvious concern. This assignment to "Watchlist" reflects a significant depletion of county reserves over the last three fiscal years and the expectation that financial margins will not be substantially augmented in 2005. *Moody's* points out, "consistent with the statewide trend, Dutchess County continues to reflect rapid growth in Medicaid, pensions and health benefits, as well as contractual salary increases." That is why we must continue to work together toward fiscal policies and decisions that are sound and prudent.

Moody's Bond Rating

Rating	# of Counties
Aaa	1
Aa1	1
Aa2	7
A1	6
A2	14
A3	12
Baa1	10
Baa2	2

Dutchess County's rating is still higher than 83% of Moody's rated New York Counties with only 2 counties in a higher rating category.

The good news is while the rating is slightly less than the County's previous level of Aa1 in 2003, Aa2 nonetheless confirms the County's enviable standing in the Aa credit category. Dutchess County's rating is still higher than 83% of *Moody's* rated New York Counties with only two counties in a higher rating category.

We can also take pride that Dutchess County's outstanding indebtedness

represents a mere 5.6% of the constitutional debt limit. Based on the needs of our growing county, this positions us for several major project priorities included in the 2005 Capital Program some of which the Legislature has already authorized funding for including the *Eastern Dutchess Government Center*, the *Central Dutchess Water Pipeline*, our highway and rail trail infrastructure and a new financial management system. Our reduction of debt service through tobacco securitization in 2003 and the low interest rates at this time provide an opportunity for the County to move forward with these important projects.

However, bearing in mind the fiscal realities facing the County, we must move forward judiciously to preserve our long-term fiscal stability. With every budgetary decision we make, we must be mindful our current capital plan will add substantial new debt service to our operating budget each of the next five years. We have already pushed some projects out to future years and will continue to prioritize and refine our costs and timeline in 2005 and beyond. Each of these initiatives support our core mission as a County government and each is critical to providing for the future economic well being of our government and of our community.

The County expects to realize the \$122.25 million sales tax estimate budgeted for 2004, which represents nearly 5% growth. The County's sales tax estimate for 2005 of \$126.9 million projects a fairly healthy growth rate of 3.7% this year. This estimate reflects some moderating in the growth rate in the economy and factors in a combination of rising gasoline and oil prices that have already caused a slight reduction in consumer spending. The $\frac{3}{4}$ % increase in the sales tax rate effective June 1, 2003 is due to sunset November 30, 2005. Legislative action will be required to continue the current 3.75% county rate. If the Legislature chooses not to act and the $\frac{3}{4}$ % increase expires in November, the projected impact would be over a \$2 million loss of sales tax revenue in 2005 with a projected 2006 revenue loss of over \$20 million. Without this additional sales tax revenue, local property owners would be called upon to shoulder a much higher property tax and fund balance would shrink even further.

Under Governor Pataki's budget plan announced last week, the state sales tax exemption on clothing purchases could not return in 2005 as approved last year by the State Legislature. However, his plan does propose two tax-free weeks on clothing purchases worth \$250 or less, up from the two tax-free weeks currently permitted on purchases of \$110 or less that potentially could negatively impact our sales tax collections later in the year.

We found it necessary to draw down over \$1 million from our reserves in 2004 primarily due to costs for housing out inmates in other institutions, Family Court attorneys and assigned counsel and health insurance. In 2003, we used \$8.2 million from our reserves primarily due to Medicaid and other state obligations beyond our control. Our undesignated fund balance at the end of 2003 had dwindled to \$7.6 million compared to \$24 million just 5 years ago, our lowest balance in more than a decade.

Moody's, the NYS Comptroller's Office and the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommend county unreserved general fund balance of no less than five percent of regular general fund operating revenues. Dutchess County's percentage of unreserved fund balance is 2.1%, well below the recommended level, a key factor in *Moody's* decision to place Dutchess County on the "Watchlist" for possible downgrade. As noted by *Moody's*, replenishing our fund balance is critical to the financial stability of Dutchess County. The 2005 budget includes a modest \$500,000 in appropriated fund balance from the Road Fund, \$200,000 from the Mass Transportation Fund and no appropriation of general fund balance, a step in the direction for long-term fiscal stability of our county.

Not yet knowing our final 2004 year-end fiscal position coupled with the uncertainties of the state budget impact and the outcome of negotiations with two of our employee bargaining units, we must stabilize our "rainy day funds" in 2005 and begin to replenish them in 2006 and beyond. This will require the commitment and discipline of all to maintain fiscal stability moving forward.

Unlike other counties during these challenging fiscal times, we have successfully managed to avoid laying off our highly valued county employees. One way County government has been able to control costs is through restructuring and realigning our workforce to work smarter. It is important to emphasize Dutchess County Government still employs fewer people today than it did in 1992 when I took office, although our mission is greatly expanded. Negotiations are underway with the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), our largest employee bargaining unit, and will begin shortly with the Police Benevolent Association (PBA), the bargaining unit representing the Sheriff deputies and supervisory staff, with the objective of settling equitable contracts as quickly as possible. Our goal is to recognize and reward our employees for the outstanding service they provide while recognizing the economic realities we face.

I commend and thank my executive department heads and our elected officials in working with us and rising to the challenge, continuing to develop creative solutions for meeting our service delivery objectives. There are numerous examples of the type of creative programming and best practice solutions that Dutchess County has become known for across the state, and for which county government is looked upon as a "model". These practices have not only saved taxpayers money and avoided new costs, but they have elevated Dutchess County in the eyes of its peers and those with whom we do business.

Dutchess County's Criminal Justice and Safety agencies and our Office of Computer Information Services (OCIS) have a long history of working together to address common information processing goals. The close working relationship among our Criminal Justice departments is unique as is the groundwork that has been laid in our current computer systems. This is evidenced by what we learned when contacting virtually all NYS counties regarding their current Criminal

Justice automation. What we found was quite surprising – we are the only County in New York State that electronically shares and interconnects Criminal Justice records of the District Attorney, Jail, Probation and Sheriff. This interagency collaboration has been paramount to our past success and will be vital to the successful implementation of a proposed new Criminal Justice Management System.

New World Systems, our financial management system vendor, states, “Dutchess County conducted one of the most thorough, well thought-out selection processes *New World Systems* has seen to date. The County took a strategic approach and mapped out current and long-term goals that would benefit the County and its citizens.”

The Vera Institute of Justice worked with Dutchess County departments and agencies to help provide peer-to-peer technical assistance with a focus on the PINS (Persons in Need of Supervision) system and juvenile delinquency. They were impressed with the high level of existing collaborations among and between county departments and agencies; *The Center for Governmental Research (CGR)* in its recent work with Dutchess County also cited the highly collaborative approach we have to the delivery of services to our residents. Because of this recognition and the very pro-active approach we encourage in county government, our professional staff are constantly sought after to serve on regional, state, and in some cases, national boards of associations.

- Robert Allers, Commissioner of Social Services serves as President of the New York State Public Welfare Association;
- John Beale, Director Office for the Aging serves on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging as well as the Board of the State Association of Area Agencies on Aging, where he is also Chair of the Legislative Committee;
- Betsy Brockway, Director of the Youth Bureau serves on the New York State Office of Children and Family Services Advisory Board;
- Dr. Michael Caldwell, Commissioner of Health serves as President of the National Association of County and City Health Officials, is the immediate Past President of the New York State Association of County Health Officials, and is the immediate past President of Dutchess/Ulster American Heart Association;
- Nelson Kranker, Director of Consumer Affairs is an active member of the National Association of Consumer Affairs Administrators;
- Ian G. MacDonald, County Attorney serves as a member of the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children which is chaired by Chief Judge Judith Kaye;
- Donald Miller, Director of Central Services is an active member of the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing and is the current President of the New York State Association of Municipal Purchasing Officials; and
- Dewitt Sagendorph, Coordinator of Emergency Response Services serves as President of the New York State County Fire Coordinators Association.

These and other references to a select number of awards, recognitions and affiliations I will make throughout the document really do speak to the caliber, the dedication, and the spirit of our workforce. My thanks, my appreciation and my sincere respect go out to our workforce for a job well done!

Many of the fiscal pressures we faced in 2004 will continue to challenge us this year. Recognizing the fiscal challenges before us, it's important to examine our past achievements and move ahead with new initiatives to enhance our traditional core mission. There is always a bar to be raised, always something we can do better. To the extent we can, Dutchess County will *strive to manage our local destiny* as we look to the future.

Technology

One way we can continue to *strengthen connections* with our county residents, our communities and outside agencies is through technology. Technology has become an essential component of county government, particularly in these fiscally trying times, when counties must get the most from their technology resources.

Work is underway on the new integrated financial management system that will replace our outdated 30-year-old system. When the new system is implemented, it will provide hundreds of County staff with new tools and resources necessary to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively. Critically, it helps county government meet its stewardship responsibilities with the public's money. Perhaps most exciting is we will be able to expand our eGovernment initiatives in the future by allowing the public to process financial transactions over the Internet *strengthening connections* with our residents throughout the county.

As the County's Geographic Information System (GIS) continues to expand, it has become the backbone of many county and municipal day-to-day activities and planning endeavors. To further enhance our effort, this past fall we were pleased to accept a NYS grant to extend our GIS to various participating municipalities *strengthening connections* with our communities.

In March we hope to gain legislative approval to move forward with a new highly integrated criminal justice computer system to *strengthen connections* between our criminal justice departments, outside agencies and the state and federal agencies we are required to report to. The system will leverage the best concepts and historical data of our current applications with new visions and technologies to move our criminal justice departments forward into the 21st century. The system will provide 500 county criminal justice staff including Deputy Sheriffs and District Attorneys with the tools and resources necessary to do their jobs better. This ultimately means added safety and security to Dutchess County residents.

This year our Real Property Tax Office will continue to *strengthen connections* with our local governments by assisting assessors with assessment administration and revaluation projects, as well as providing support to assessors in optimal utilization of the Real Property System, providing training for the Board of Assessment Review, and continuing their role in GIS development and maintenance.

Additionally, this year we will provide resources for computerization in the Department of Social Services (DSS) to bring the department up to speed with the rest of the County and to provide the tools to work more efficiently allowing more staff time spent helping vulnerable clients.

We look forward to continuing this collaborative teamwork with our departments and our communities as we move forward with our technology initiatives. Using technology to improve efficiencies while maximizing the effectiveness of our programs is just one example of how we can *strive to manage our local destiny*.

Re-engineering Funding Streams

Through the collaborative efforts of our Health & Human Services Task Force we have found we can save \$1.6 million in 2004 and 2005 by funding Child Preventive Services through DSS to maximize our reimbursement. Additionally, our 2005 spending plan includes the restructuring of our domestic violence program to provide more comprehensive and coordinated services between the District Attorney, Probation and Social Services while maximizing state aid reimbursement through DSS. This will save the county over \$350,000 in 2004 and 2005. These are just a few examples of how *strengthening connections* between county departments and programs can bring cost savings to Dutchess County.

Working together we can *strive to manage our local destiny* through strong fiscal stewardship. At the same time, however, we will maintain our high standards on the programs and service delivery side of what we do and continue to create *connections* with the private and not-for-profit entities in the community to fulfill our ever-changing needs.

Improving and Safeguarding Lives: Cross Systems and Community Connections

Health and Human Services

As costs beyond our control continue to grow and our money becomes more severely limited, we must constantly search for innovative and creative ways to provide services. This year the administration will formalize and strengthen system collaborations and *connections* among our health and human services departments through the creation of a Health and Human Services Cabinet. Our focus will be on the coordination of our service delivery system, including a stronger program evaluation process that will produce better outcomes for families and improving lives. This reorganization is the result of a comprehensive 18-month process I initiated in 2003. This included seven county departments and my executive and budget staff in conjunction with the *Center for Government Research (CGR)*. Additionally, in 2005 we will begin a comprehensive review of three high cost centers, the Public Assistance, Food Stamps and Medicaid areas in DSS to identify improved management and administrative processes to benefit both clients and staff.

The Department of Mental Hygiene has recently completed a multi-year restructuring process which transferred traditional adult outpatient mental health and chemical dependency clinics, case management services, children's intensive case management and school-based treatment programs to community not-for-profit agencies. Importantly however, due to the strong *connections* we have fostered with numerous community service providers such as Astor Home for Children, Family Services, Hudson River Housing, Gateway Community Industries, Greystone, Mental Health Association, PEOPLE, REHAB, Rehabilitation Support Services, Taconic Resources for Independence, DC Council on Alcohol and Chemical Dependency Services, Lexington Center for Recovery, Cardinal Hayes Home for Children, and DC Association for Retarded Children, we have successfully broadened the reach and availability of mental health services in our community for almost 20,000 people --- without government providing the service directly. Kudos to Dr. Kenneth Glatt and his staff for this brilliant example of how to restructure and reform a government service with a thoughtful and comprehensive effort.

In 2005, our Youth Bureau and Youth Services Unit will continue to be strong collaborators not only interdepartmentally within county government, but also with other community coalitions and committees such as the Children's Services Council we initiated in 1998, the City of Poughkeepsie's Weed and Seed program, the Workforce Investment Board's Youth Council, and the Coordinated Children's Services Initiative, just to name a few. We promote the principles of youth development and evidenced based programming and strategies in selecting the youth services we fund, and are fortunate the Youth Bureau has a strong and active Advisory Board of citizen volunteers to help evaluate funding requests and provide recommendations to us. Recently at a statewide conference for Youth Bureaus across New York State, Commissioner John A. Johnson in his remarks to the professionals present recognized Dutchess County as an exemplary County in accessing non-traditional youth bureau funding streams and focusing on outcomes in the services we provide.

We also have a committed and talented Youth Council, presently with more than 50 young participants who represent "youth voices" in county planning and learn valuable leadership skills as they also participant in many community events and complete numerous service projects to benefit nonprofit organizations. We are proud the lives of thousands of our county's young people are touched through the admirable work of a small, dedicated staff in our Youth Bureau.

Another way we have been touching the lives of young people throughout the County is our multi-year Children's Health Initiative where we have committed county resources of \$2.3 million since I initiated it in the year 2000. This collaboration with the *Children's Services Council* and *The United Way* has successfully reached in excess of 10,000 children of all ages in all areas of the county with an anti-tobacco message. This year, I recommended an increase in funding to this health program to include new efforts in educating the community about the lifelong and serious effects often caused by childhood obesity. Let us

continue to recognize the importance of keeping our youth healthy, happy, and active members of the community!

Our Office for the Aging has become particularly adept at maximizing what we do while minimizing the cost. We will serve 150,000 home delivered meals and 50,000 congregate meals in 2005. We expect to provide more than 20,000 hours of non-Medicaid home care and 70,000 units of transportation. We are proud to be able to touch the lives of 14,000 individual seniors throughout the year!

In 2005, we will enhance our caregiver program with a new component called *Making the Link: Connecting Caregivers with Services through Physicians*. Again utilizing a cadre of volunteers, an ambassador program will be developed where information and literature on existing caregiver programs will be provided to Physicians' offices for distribution to patients – a direct link to people in need from a source they trust. Also, working with other County departments such as Traffic Safety, Health, the Sheriff's Office, Mass Transit as well as St. Francis Hospital, workshops will be conducted at our existing senior *Friendship Centers* on *Older Driver Safety*. This important defensive driving information is planned for not only senior drivers but for family members and friends as well.

The Dutchess County Veteran's Services Agency's prime objective is to work with the approximately 26,000 county veterans and their families. This past year we served more than 6,000, and in 2005 will be increasing our veteran outreach with weekly hours at the Beacon office as well as frequent presence in the North East area with the Castle Point Mobile Clinic.

Very shortly, our Prescription Drug Discount Program, a joint initiative supported by the County Legislature, will be put into action. Dutchess County, one of just 31 counties nationwide to adopt the program, was able to make a timely connection with the National Association of Counties (NACo), on whose Board of Directors I serve, to join their national prescription drug program. The no cost discount prescription drug card will be made available to any county resident who desires it. We are advised participants on average will achieve savings of 20% off the retail price of commonly prescribed drugs. There are thousands of uninsured who could benefit from this program believed to be working middle-class individuals, the backbone of our community, whose wages are over levels to participate in existing government programs but not enough to pay for the high cost of most prescription drugs. Until more information is



known nationally, the agreement with NACo for the prescription drug discount program will not possess any drugs imported from Canada or any other nation.

Public Safety

A new important public safety initiative is enhancing our ability to receive and respond to Cellular 911 calls. Woven into the fabric of our 911 Center are many "behind the scene" services. One of those services is EMD, our Emergency Medical Dispatch program. This program is activated each time there is a call for a medical emergency. The dispatcher taking the call assesses the problem while another simultaneously sends assistance. The first dispatcher remains on the line coaching the caller with life saving advice until help arrives. This medical coaching is called *Dispatcher Life Support* or DLS. To date our dispatchers have been credited with approximately 25 life saving interventions.

We are very proud of this record of success and especially proud of Nancy Douglass one of our dispatchers who received special recognition from NYS as the "Public Safety Telecommunication Specialist" of the year. Nancy was credited with calming the caller and providing clear CPR instructions, helping to save the life of a sudden cardiac arrest victim. We will enhance and strengthen our EMD program this year to insure a consistent high standard of service. This approach to EMD reflects our over all public safety goal of providing the best 911 service possible to those who suffer emergencies and need help in a hurry.

A top priority of mine has been to implement a revolutionary enhancement to our 911 center. Cell phones are prolific. Currently our 911 operation does not have the capability to identify the physical location of a cell call. In 2005 we will acquire equipment that uses satellite or triangulation data of a cellular caller which will then be transmitted to the 911 Center and displayed on a computerized map. It will no longer matter whether a 911 call is made from a wired telephone or cell phone, the location will immediately be seen and assistance will be quickly dispatched.

Working together to strengthen our public safety resources in Dutchess County continues to ensure the safety and security for our emergency professionals or volunteers and our residents. This year we invested in a new live-fire training building on the grounds of the County's Emergency Response Center to provide offensive and defensive training for more realistic simulations. We also converted the 30 year old existing structure at virtually no cost to the county for "cold" type training which allows firefighters a controlled environment to build their confidence wearing self-contained breathing apparatus.

Strengthening our resources with limited means also calls for working together in acquiring funds from state and federal government so Dutchess may maintain 21st Century technology. Through a combination of state and federal grants, our Emergency Response Department along with the Sheriff's Office were able to secure a Communications/Command Vehicle that will possess the latest technology for cross jurisdictional use between various government agencies to

communicate at any large scale event. This command vehicle positions us on the cutting edge of security measures, better preparing us to protect our citizens in the event of a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or explosive material catastrophe.

Over the past year Dutchess County has made many strides in making our community ready, willing and able to respond to our citizens by focusing on preparedness. We continually refine our emergency response protocols for responses to chemical, radiological or biological hazards. In 2004, the main focus has been on testing and drilling our emergency preparedness plans.



We conducted a full-scale simulated Point of Distribution (POD) drill at the Civic Center, demonstrating our ability to provide antibiotics to 500 people within a two-hour period. Just last month, we held an exercise during the Flu Clinic at East Fishkill Baptist Church, where we completed a time study to determine our ability to meet required standards, that is providing medication to our entire population within five days and vaccinating the entire population

within ten days. The average time for the entire process of screening, registration, and vaccination was 45 minutes. Facilitating *connections* with community organizations and private businesses, the County also has secured approximately 30 sites available as PODs in the event of a disaster.

For additional support during the course of an emergency, and in conjunction with developing our Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan in 2003, we worked together with the Northern Metropolitan Healthcare Foundation (NorMet) to recruit and build a local Medical Reserve Citizen Corps. (MRC). Recognized last year by the US Office of the Surgeon General and the US Public Health Services as a 'pioneer' in emergency preparedness, our MRC is one product of the County's integrated emergency response plan, a multi-organizational plan that addresses the many facets of human need in a disaster. Our ability to connect our many human service agencies with local organizations such as our three highly advanced area hospitals, the American Red Cross and the Hudson Valley VA Health Care System, and thanks to the many committed volunteers in our community, I am proud to report we have enrolled well over 500 volunteers in the MRC to assist existing medical response organizations and professionals capable of responding to a large-scale disaster of any kind. The system simply would not work without committed and spirited volunteers in the community.

Another aspect to public safety important to me is the security of county-owned and publicly-used facilities for both the public and our employees. The Legislature has already authorized \$1.5 million dollars for security enhancements and we will be moving forward. We will initially focus on equipping our facilities with a common electronic ID/card access control system, intrusion detection, CCTV and alarm systems.

I refer frequently to collaborations we pursue. Another I would like to make special mention of is with the local fire companies. Our Personnel Department in cooperation with area fire companies now locally administers the Firefighter Physical Ability Test (FPAT) for potential firefighter candidates. In the past firefighter candidates were sent to the State Fire Academy only to find they could not pass the physical ability test, thereby disqualifying them. This resulted in substantial lost time and expense for the local fire district. Now the fire companies provide equipment and staff to work with our Personnel Department to administer the physical ability test here in Dutchess County. Candidates passing the FPAT are certified for one year, assuring that time and funding are not lost. Recruiting the adequate number of volunteers and providing the appropriate training is difficult enough, so we want to assist our local fire companies as much as we can.

Finally in the area of law enforcement, strong recruitment and workshop training initiatives have been undertaken to enlist a diversified law enforcement workforce. Recently, our Equal Employment Opportunity Office assisted the Criminal Justice Council's (CJC) Police Recruitment Committee in the search for applicants, especially minorities and women to take the recent Deputy Sheriff/Police Officer Civil Service examination.

City of Poughkeepsie Police Chief Ronald Knapp, a CJC member, chaired this committee. Through the efforts of Sheriff Anderson and Chiefs from several local communities, 1,020 applicants applied to take the examination in December. A total of 874 candidates voluntarily completed the ethnicity data that showed us 15.0% of the applicants were female, and 18.0% minority. The Census 2000 shows that 16.0 % minorities are represented in the total civilian labor force in Dutchess County.

The Personnel Department, assisted by Jail staff, has also held workshops for correction officer applicants. When we compare the number of female correction officers working for the County with those working in the external labor market, the County exceeds the labor market representation.

We must continue to do all we can to ensure the diversity of our workforce reflects the diversity in our community.

Connecting Our People to Our Services

Between 1990 and 2000 the population east of the Taconic grew by 13 percent. By 2010 we expect an 11% increase. While our county government already provides a broad range of services and programs to residents east of the Taconic Parkway, there is a growing need to consolidate these services. A County Government Services Center will be convenient and accessible to Eastern Dutchess residents as well as provide professional and efficient office space for our dedicated county staff. That is why in 2005 we are excited to begin design and construction of the Eastern Dutchess Government Center at our property on Oak Summit Road in the Town of Washington. The renovation of the old north and west wings of the former infirmary building will create approximately 26,000 square feet of modern office space to initially provide services by DSS, Health, Youth, Mental Hygiene, Probation, and the Family Partnership Clinic.

A few years ago, we began a comprehensive reorganization of the Medical Examiners Office and hired a full time Forensic Pathologist as our Medical Examiner. Dr. Kari Reiber currently utilizes the morgue facility at Vassar Brothers Medical Center to perform autopsies. This facility and the morgue at St. Francis can no longer fulfill our needs. Both the Legislature and the Executive Branch agree a larger more modern facility is required to support the County's commitment to this office and its important responsibilities to our community, so therefore, this year I will move forward with a request for a bond to design and construct a county forensic center.

Through an exhaustive and comprehensive evaluative process, it has been recommended space be provided to support the specialized needs of victims of violent crime, such as victims of domestic violence, elder abuse, child abuse, and sex offenses. This cross systems approach will consolidate services and foster collaborative interaction from multiple county departments and agencies including the District Attorney, Sheriff, DSS Child Protective Services, DSS Adult Protective Services, Forensic Nursing, Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners and Domestic Violence Outreach Services.

All of these various initiatives, whether they be in health and human services, public safety, or enhanced government services, are significant advancements for a safer and healthier community...a community where our residents can find comfort in and enjoy a prized quality of life of relaxation, recreation, or even reconnecting to the past.

Managing Development and "Sprawl Busting": Fostering and Implementing Connections

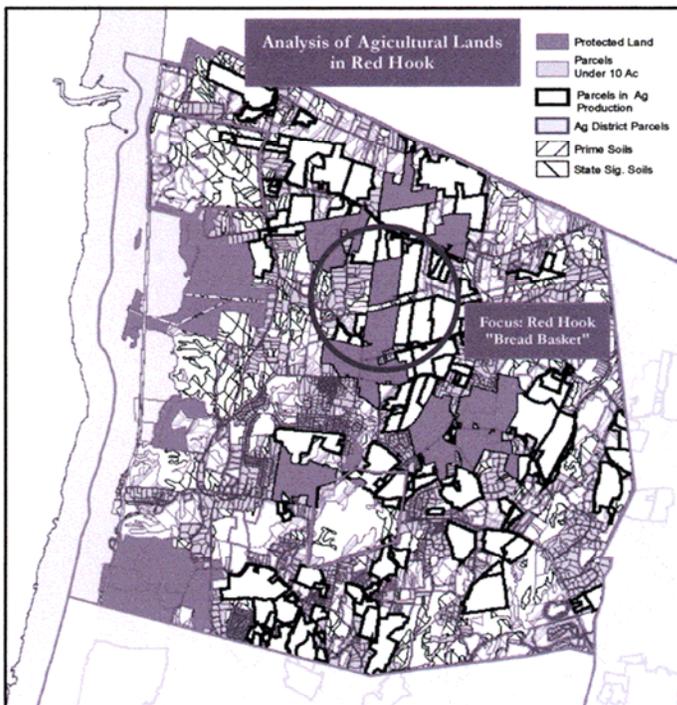
We all know Dutchess County is growing rapidly. Our Planning Department reviewed more developments in 2004 than at any time in the past 15 years. Beacon and Poughkeepsie have been rediscovered and both are undergoing a physical renewal. Communities are responding by updating their local master plans and zoning ordinances. Beekman, Fishkill, LaGrange, Milan, North East,

Pawling, Poughkeepsie, Rhinebeck, Tivoli and Wappinger are all in some stage of a master plan revision process; and Amenia, Hyde Park and the Village of Red Hook are making changes to their zoning ordinances. We also used County financial resources to assist two towns, Amenia and Milan, in their master plan efforts.

Residents feel a sense of urgency about the need to prevent excessive growth and want to limit urban sprawl in the County now more than ever. So do I.

That is why the County adopted the *Partnership for Manageable Growth* in 1999. Since then, the County has entered into 12 partnerships in eight towns throughout the County to place significant agricultural and recreational acreage under protective open space easements. County resources have been used to permanently protect important farmland, view sheds and recreational assets. This past year alone, we closed on four properties preserving 605 acres.

In 2002, I issued a challenge to local communities to join the County in our open space protection program. Congratulations to Red Hook, Pawling, Dover, Rhinebeck and Wappinger, who are meeting the challenge with significant open space purchases and open space easement purchases. In 2004, I partnered with Scenic Hudson and the Trust for Public Lands at the Wallace Center to present a workshop for public officials on local open space easement programs. We had terrific attendance and it seemed to stir interest in local communities becoming partners with the County to protect significant open spaces.



Each town needs to identify its significant open space resources and develop a protection strategy. As an example, I want to show you a map of Red Hook, detailing open space parcels of 40 or more acres. You can see the parcels being farmed. These are by no means secure from development; in fact, farmland is the most likely to develop. But we do not have to sit idly and watch these precious resources disappear.

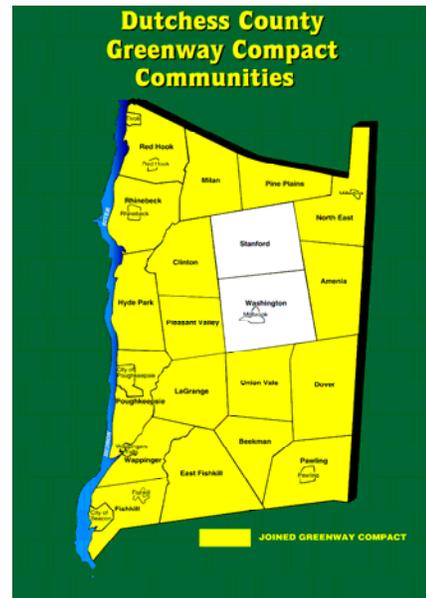
With the GIS, it is much easier for towns to understand and diagnose their land use situation. Where are the

parcels over 40 acres or over 100 acres? Which ones are being actively farmed? Which ones are in Agricultural Districts? Which ones are on prime agricultural

soils? Answers to these questions can literally be answered in seconds and mapped in minutes. It gives us a great head start before we then apply our more personal knowledge of an area to establish a protection plan. We must make better plans now to match the better data at our fingertips.

Additionally, I call upon each local community to complete biodiversity studies and outline protection strategies for its significant habitats. Each community should insure its zoning and zoning practices allow development to fit into, rather than overtake, the landscape with suburban sprawl. There is not a minute to waste, and we at the County are committed to help when communities ask.

Twenty-seven Dutchess municipalities are now Greenway Compact members. Thus, Greenway principles are imbedded in their zoning and subdivision regulations. Through the Dutchess County Planning Federation and the Pace University Law Center, I believe the local volunteer citizen planning board members need to be better trained to administer their land-use regulations. We need to take community and land use planning to a new level.



Fortunately, there is evidence this is beginning to happen. Congratulations to the East Fishkill Planning Board, who recently approved the Moore Farm development, a planned 240-unit, mixed residential community, which permanently preserves over 75 percent of the land area. By using similar conservation subdivision plans, we can make at least 50 percent open space the norm for a property being developed. And this can be done at no cost to the taxpayer. It also provides permanent benefit to the resident who will live within or adjacent to open space that is forever protected.

We do not have to, nor should we, contemplate wall-to-wall suburbanization by the year 2050. Greenway principles anticipate a varied rural district, mixed with woods, fields, natural corridors and housing districts.

A proposed residential development on the eastern border of Red Hook Village is being planned with village-scale lots. An environmental impact statement in Hyde Park shows a mixed-use residential development across from the CIA in which half the acreage remains open and 10 percent of the housing will be available for moderate-income households (see below). These high-quality, planned developments exemplify high standards that towns are beginning to insist upon and that we at the county believe are essential to our future.



Good local planning *connects* town government with land in the name of public interest. How can we become highly effective **sprawl busters**? Large lot zoning will not stop sprawl. It just spreads it out more. Countryside and natural habitats get destroyed in the process. Large lot zoning is too simple and easy an answer to sprawl. It simply will not work by itself. Too many towns are still looking at this technique as the single answer to rapid growth. I urge these local leaders to rethink that policy.

It may be an elderly housing and environmental clean up project in Red Hook or a government center – town garage plan in the Town of Red Hook. Or a town center plan in Unionvale. Or zoning advice in Hyde Park. Or a cluster subdivision in Dover. Or master plan assistance in Rhinebeck. Or a Village Green project in Pawling. Or open space preservation in the Town of Poughkeepsie. Or the application of affordable housing standards in East Fishkill. The record of county leadership and local/county partnerships is already a strong one. Let's make it stronger, resulting in even more consistent, uniform and effective zoning practices. The County's current zoning review system (237-1, m) over local projects is not sufficient to insure good planning practices. Now we need an expanded partnership where we can seize the initiative in planning activities.

I invite local communities to choose to work more closely with the County for improved decision-making in development layouts. Our County staff frequently sits with consultants, town engineers and planning board members during the approval process, but only if we are invited by the town. On a voluntary basis only, this local/County *connection* should be expanded. Then we can be creative in the land development process, requiring the highest development standards and making preservation of open space resources an integral part of the development process. **Let's remember – with land use decisions we do not get a second chance.**

Dutchess County has a singular reputation in the Mid-Hudson for high quality planning at the local level. But I am asking that we approach our planning responsibilities with even **greater urgency. Sprawl busting will not occur with a business-as-usual attitude.** Our site planning must be better and substantially different in approach. Again, I am willing to involve the professionalism of planners at the Department of Planning and Development even more with those local communities who want to make a difference. As with our financial position as a county, our position is strong but vulnerable. If we *connect* better, town to county, we can turn our vulnerability into an opportunity.

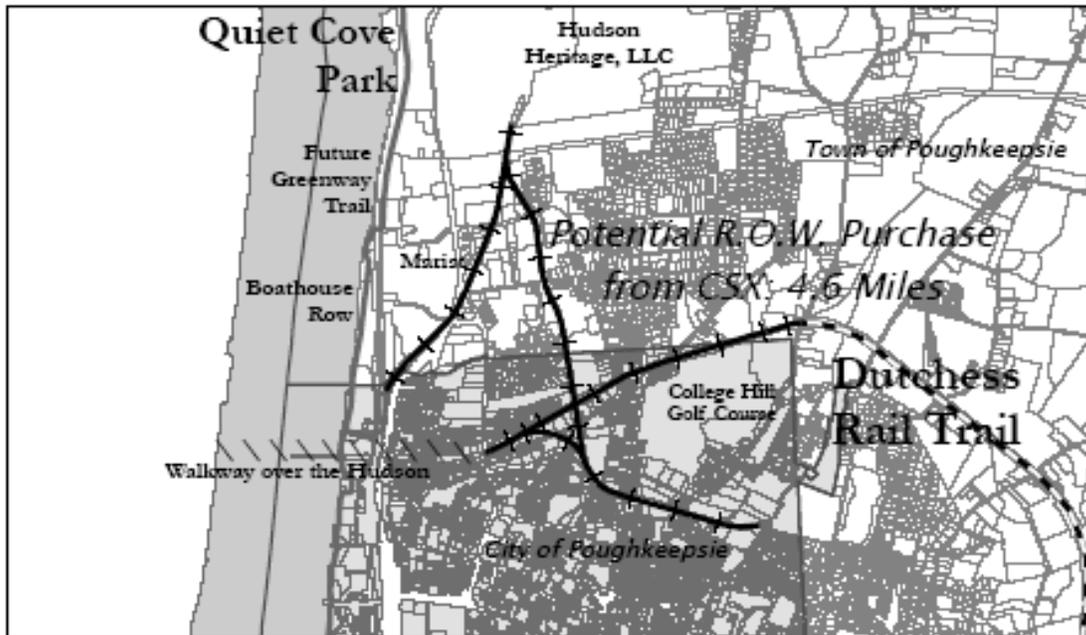
Wise purchase of open space easements, combined with improved zoning, including conservation zoning practices, and professional zoning administration, will make us effective sprawl busters. Neither zoning or easement purchases by themselves is sufficient to do the job. But if there is a stronger County/town *connection* in subdivision and site plan review, and if more towns commit and match their own *local* financial resources with the County Open Space Program, we can relieve our constant worries about sprawl.

Open space is not simply an alternative to development; it complements development and should be seen as an adjunct to the development process. We can think of individual parcels to be saved, but more importantly, we need to think in terms of a system of environmental functions with its purifying, habitat, aesthetic and recreational components.

I want to congratulate Rhinebeck, Pleasant Valley and Milan for joining the Greenway compact in 2004. We now have 27 communities of 30 agreeing, with some specificity, to pull in the same direction. Part of that vision is to pool our assets, share our advantages and make our communities more connected. The vision has no place for sprawl.

Too often our highway system divides us more than it *connects* us. That is why I have been so aggressive in establishing a system of trails.

This year, we extended the Harlem Valley Rail Trail 2.6 miles from Mechanic Street in Amenia south to the Wassaic Train Station. Next year we will prepare construction plans for a new 13 mile Central Dutchess Rail Trail system between Hopewell Junction and Morgan Lake in Poughkeepsie. We will then be ready to go out to bid on this trail in 2006. We will also begin design work for the Harlem Valley Rail Trail between Irondale in Millerton and Boston Corners on the Columbia County line. Not only will the trail *connect* to Rudd Pond State Park in the town of North East, it will extend north to Bash Bish Falls in the town of Copake in Columbia County.



Most exciting for the new year is an initiative I have just launched to explore the purchase of 4.7 miles of abandoned rail right-of-way in Poughkeepsie. This purchase from CSX would allow us to extend the Mid-County Rail Trail from Morgan Lake in Poughkeepsie north and west to the entrance of Marist College on Route 9 and, in effect, create a pedestrian trail link to the college's waterfront park on the Hudson River.

Abandoned rail lines are unique opportunities to *connect* our communities that we can't let slip by. In Dutchess County, they are becoming the backbone of our increasingly impressive greenway trail network. If we let our imaginations go, we need not fast-forward too far to see a trail system that connects to Ulster and Putnam counties and further to points west and south.

We are only content when growth occurs in the right places. One of our most successful economic development strategies has been to target economic incentives in specific zone locations within twelve targeted communities in Dutchess County. This past year, two economic zone projects with large potential impacts include a planned mixed-use development, Dover Knolls at the former Harlem Valley Psychiatric Center and Dooley Square, the former J.D. Johnson Building. Four businesses are now certified in eastern Dutchess, 12 businesses in southern Dutchess, 255 businesses in the City of Poughkeepsie, and 64 businesses in the Town of Poughkeepsie. The combined capital investment potential is enormous and totals billions of dollars.

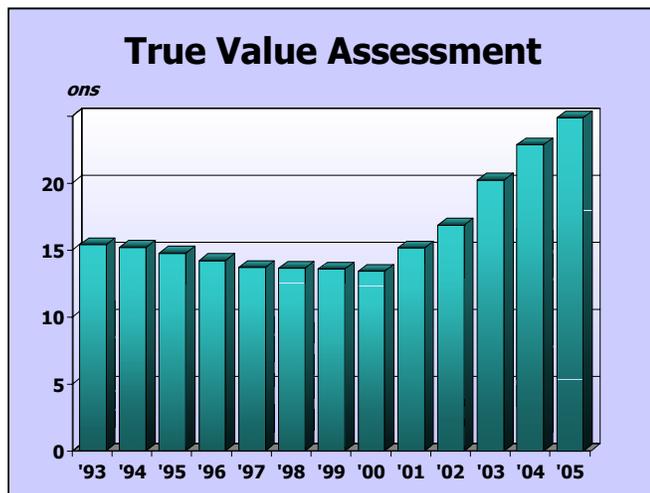
The IBM Corporation has been a huge beneficiary of the EDZ program, and I am proud of that. I prefer to make that comment than to have to say they were an incentive beneficiary in some Asian or European country, or in Tennessee, the Carolinas or Texas. But now when we think IBM, Dutchess County as a host

community can also proudly think Sony, Toshiba, Samsung, Infineon, AMD and Charter. The latest announced expansion of Bldg. 323 exemplifies our increasingly global economy and the effectiveness with which Dutchess County is driving our own economy.

Since our first Economic summit in 1993, we have designated the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) as our agency for coordinating the recruiting, retention, marketing, and deal-making activities within Dutchess County. They also oversee our tourism activity, directly supporting one of our strongest economic sectors.

I want to thank Richard Henley, the outgoing Chairman of EDC, for his leadership these past two years and to welcome Mary Madden, the incoming Chair. The EDC Board is working to renew its core mission in support of a balanced, diversified economy in Dutchess County. Our fine efforts have been recognized by Governor Pataki in his State of the State Address when he pointed to Dutchess County's strong economic growth. As a result of our aggressive job development agenda, unemployment in Dutchess County is in the envious position as second lowest in the state at 3.6%. We created 2,300 jobs in 2004 and we generate small, new highly skilled business on a regular basis. I have gathered several products made in Dutchess County that most of us are not familiar with. For example, how many of you know of Chocovision who makes personal and industrial sized chocolate making machines? Or Dorsey Metrology who makes finished metal gauges? Or Harney Tea, making gourmet tea? Or what the new 300m m IBM chip wafer looks like? Or that Atlantis Energy produces solar panels? And there's Southeastern Container which manufactures millions of plastic bottles for soft drink consumers in the Northeast.

A healthy local economy driven by important economic development policies and strategies, coupled with a strong housing market has brought \$2 billion growth in our true value property assessments reaching nearly \$25 billion this year. This represents the fifth year of significant growth following many years of decline in the 1990's.



Here's another example of the success of our economic development blueprint. Data for 2003 from the NYS Department of Labor and Marist College Bureau of Economic Research reveals that Dutchess leads the Hudson Valley in construction jobs and ranks second in the region for issuing residential

construction permits. Large economic development projects have earned county officials top grades according to Richard O'Beirne, Executive Director of the Construction Contractors Association of the Hudson Valley. Plans currently underway for a large multi-use project on the Poughkeepsie waterfront, redevelopment on the Beacon waterfront, IBM East Fishkill's expansion and other projects "all point to good work on the part of county officials," stated O'Beirne.

Dutchess County ranked 61 on a list of 200 "large" metropolitan areas, in the annual economic ranking of "America's Best Performing Cities" released by the *Milken Institute* in November. Dutchess scored third in the nation in a supplemental report ranking places for innovation on patents per 100,000 of population in 1999. Our best numbers among the ranking elements came in job growth from 1998-2003 and wage growth from 1997-2002. Translated, that means more household income for Dutchess County families.

A primary role for Dutchess County is to manage growth through the wise provision of infrastructure. I applaud the Dutchess County Legislature in providing funding to initiate construction of our 13-mile pipeline between Poughkeepsie and East Fishkill. And I am proud to say with the way we crafted the project, every dollar of County investment in this worthwhile project is matched by two dollars, one from the State of New York and one from IBM. The southern terminus of the line is the IBM Corporation, which is making a long-term \$3.5B investment there. Enroute, communities have better opportunities to plan their growth because the provision of water allows for more creative and sustaining land use patterns. I especially applaud the leadership of Thomas LeGrand and the other Water and Wastewater Authority members who are overseeing a complex and time-consuming project.

Last year, the county through its Water and Wastewater Authority acquired Dalton Farms water and sewer systems in the Town of Beekman. We worked cooperatively with the Beekman Town Board and residents of Dalton Farms. As we planned when we first decided to make the purchase, we have already been able to add other users to the system which helps to reduce costs for those on the system.

Now operating ten systems in six towns, our WWA has proven to be a flexible and effective structure for managing water and wastewater infrastructure in Dutchess County. Since requests for assistance keep coming into the Authority, I am sure that it will continue to play a critical role in our growth management and economic development plans in future years.

In the 2005 budget, we have increased resources, adding two critical positions to the environmental services division of our Health Department. With the growth we've seen, we know we need to collect better data on water resources, and water quality. And that is why in the 2005 budget we crystallized our 1999 strategy for

a water protection plan in Dutchess County, and have partnered with the Legislature with funding that will focus on water quality within the county.

In 2004 I established the *Dutchess County Housing Coalition* with financial assistance from the Dyson Foundation. The purpose of the Coalition is to increase the supply of moderately priced housing. Fishkill, East Fishkill and Pawling have responded to our county “call to arms” on this issue and begun to tackle the problem head on, and we are inspired by their efforts. But this is a County-wide problem, and the Coalition is working to expand housing opportunities throughout the County.

This past year, the Coalition approached six communities about adding zoning provisions so that affordable housing is built into the development process. I am happy to report the local receptivity to making their zoning more inclusive was, in all six cases, very positive.

Our Coalition is now working with localities on housing surveys so town leaders can be more precise in what to emphasize when they revise their zoning. The Coalition is also beginning to prepare checklists and model language that can be tailored to the needs of each town. This language will cover procedural issues, eligibility requirements, unit calculations, appearance and location factors and methods to retain eligibility.

Finally, the Coalition has been reaching out to employers to create “employee-based” housing units. A private company has agreed to assist in funding these units and is working with a local non-profit agency. This work could inspire other companies to do the same.

Tourism continues to be an important component of our economy. Last year our Tourism Agency worked with 80 companies and 150 people on health care issues for those working in the tourism industry.

We are lucky because the place we call home is attractive to others who want to explore our cultural, educational, and recreational resources. We hosted over 400,000 visitors last year. Our scenic and historic brochures, our crafts/arts brochures and our bike tour brochures are popular items. As the result of an idea I launched 2 years ago, we are currently designing an informational kiosk for the Poughkeepsie Train Station and working with The Arts Council to design artistic representations of the County to help welcome and inform visitors at one of our key gateways, the Poughkeepsie train station.

We continue to add new and exciting assets that enhance our quality of life and also nourish the tourism activity we relish. In 2005, the Hudson River Rowing Association will break ground and construct the *Community Boathouse Rowing Center* in the town of Poughkeepsie, just south of the Marist campus and Vassar College property. This project has it all – connecting to a rich historic past of

Hudson River rowing, to its neighborhoods, and among local high school rowing clubs.

When I approached several potential financial sponsors for support of the construction effort, I was gratified a common, very positive vision of the Hudson River waterfront emerged. Now we are seeing that vision in action. It is a full expression of the optimistic Greenway Program which our leadership has helped to focus energies on the Hudson River. Ground breaking is not far away. The *Community Boathouse Rowing Center* is part of the optimistic waterfront revival that we see on the Marist Campus, at the new *Quiet Cove Riverfront Park* in Poughkeepsie and on Dennings Point and Long Dock in Beacon.

This year will mark the first year that improvements will be made at the *Quiet Cove Riverfront Park*. We will dismantle old structures, begin landscaping and provide initial parking and picnicking facilities for the public.



Rivers & Estuaries Center Beacon Building One Beacon, New York

Lastly, at Dennings Point Beacon, Dutchess County is the principal financial sponsor of the first building being renovated for the new world-class Rivers and Estuaries Center. As you know, our administration prepared the successful application that prevailed in a fierce competition to be selected. I want to thank Chairman Kendall and the legislature for their foresighted support of the

Center, which promises to become an exciting resource center for scientists around the globe. This building is scheduled for completion by the fall, 2005.

These combined government, community, and private sector efforts and activities all serve to revitalize our cities, preserve our rural landscapes, provide our families recreational and cultural pleasures, and lift our spirits to new heights!

What has always lifted my spirit, too, is the strength of our volunteer network. When speaking about volunteers, it is so important I talk of the hundreds who have *connected* with county government to assist us in delivering such a breadth and scope of services. In addition to the approximately 2000 county employees who work tenaciously to provide programs and services to county residents, there are numerous volunteers working hand in hand with them to strengthen our

impact on the community. Volunteers who donate their time, energy, experience and passion creating a crucial *connection* and having a profound impact on county programs and ultimately on people's lives.

Whether it's the Deputy Coordinator volunteer at Emergency Response who coordinates local fire response resources, or the volunteer driver at OFA who enables a senior to remain independent at home by providing food or transportation services, our volunteers are heroes. But volunteers not only give with their hearts and time, they also often use personal vehicles and other assets in the course of service provision.

I do not have to tell you how the costs of gas and insurance have risen in recent years. The volunteers who give selflessly of themselves and their time find it harder and harder to continue providing services as their personal costs have escalated. That is why in 2005 I am launching a new initiative to help volunteers meet the increasing costs of providing these crucial community services by significantly increasing the reimbursement for the use of personal vehicles.

Additionally, our volunteer Deputy Coordinators, as part of the Emergency Response Department, coordinate the response and resources used in critical incidents with their experience, expertise and coordination capabilities. These are the men and women who get a call and put their lives on hold to come to the aid of our community; who provide us with a blanket of security, allowing us to feel safe day in and day out as we move through the course of our lives here in Dutchess; who make sure that resources are coordinated, efficient, and effective so lives are saved; and for whom we are so grateful. That's why in 2005 I have initiated a stipend incentive program to help retain Volunteer Deputy Coordinators at Emergency Response.

Believe me, these are small costs to incur to maintain our quality volunteers and to express our appreciation for their truly invaluable contributions to the community's well being.

As a final lift to the spirits of local historians and others passionate about history, I am so pleased this year to be able to take a step to *connect* our past, our present and our future. Even before the creation of the United States, Dutchess County played a vital role in our nation's history. That is why I have included funding in the 2005 budget to insure we can support the efforts of the volunteer community to continue to record and preserve the rich heritage of Dutchess County. Our goal is to enhance the efforts of our community organizations, not duplicate them.

Certainly as we can all sense and feel inside the walls of this precious community asset we sit in today, the history of our community indeed offers a clear *connection* between our past, our present and our future, and it continually enriches us as individuals and a community.

As a final thought today, I ask that we all take just a moment to offer our silent thanks and our personal prayers for the safety of our troops and *connect* our hearts and souls to those who put themselves in harms way each day to provide us with the freedom and liberty we have to enjoy all the riches our community offers today and into the future.

May God Bless them, their families, and Dutchess County.

Thank you.

William R. Steinhaus
Dutchess County Executive
January 26, 2005