

# INSIDE INSIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF  
THE SULLIVAN COUNTY MANAGER



## A BUDGET THAT DOESN'T THE BANK

BY JOSHUA POTOSEK, COUNTY MANAGER

I was pleased in early November to present a proposed 2024 Sullivan County Budget that significantly expands services without raising property taxes.

Typically, that's an extremely rare scenario, but thanks to a healthy, robust local economy and sensible fiscal management, County government is in an enviable position to better serve residents without costing them more.

So here's what I've presented to the Legislature for their review:

- An historic **\$23.6 million for road and bridgework** throughout the County, to be achieved without going into debt by bonding
- **\$2 million for a Housing Trust Fund** to address the housing crisis in the County
- **\$700,000** for the Sullivan Promise Scholarship Program, which provides **up to two full years of tuition-free attendance at SUNY Sullivan** for local high school graduates
- **\$450,000** to expand Move Sullivan's popular bus routes to Cohecton, Eldred, Foxcroft Village, Grahamsville, Jeffersonville, Livingston Manor, Narrowsburg, Neversink and Roscoe
- **\$360,000** to replace patrol vehicles in the Sheriff's Office
- **\$300,000** (an increase of **\$100,000** over last year) for the Youth Bureau to fund local organizations serving youth and their families
- **\$300,000** to demolish blighted properties via the Sullivan County Land Bank and the Remove Unsafe Structures (RUS<sub>t</sub>) Program

- **\$165,000** to hire new dispatchers in the Sheriff's Office, thus allowing two more deputies to head out on road patrol duties
- **\$150,000** for a **Water Resource Study** to map the inventory of this liquid necessity, especially in areas facing development

More details at <https://county-sullivan-ny-budget-book.cleargov.com/13509>.

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# WE REBUILT MANY ROADS AND BRIDGES IN 2023

The 2023 construction season saw our Division of Public Works (DPW) and subcontractors spend a lot of time and money on roads, bridges and associated infrastructure.

In fact, Sullivan County spent more on that work this year than in any other year - **\$21 million**, much of which was from State and Federal sources.

And we did it without going into further debt, for the second year in a row.

Typically, we have to borrow, via short-term bonding, to ensure we keep pace with the needs of our roads and bridges. It's increasingly expensive to maintain 400 bridges and nearly 400 miles of roadway throughout the County, but thanks to strong sales tax revenues, sensible fiscal management by my staff and me, and an eager Legislature, we've repaired/replaced almost 70 miles of highway and close to a dozen bridges in the past two years alone.

10 Year Look Back - Miles of County Road Repaired or Overlaid or Both

No. of Years Back	Year	Miles of CR (Repaired or Overlaid or Both)
10	2014	25.8
9	2015	30.7
8	2016	35.4
7	2017	25.4
6	2018	35.2
5	2019	26.0
4	2020	28.9
3	2021	33.5
2	2022	37.0
1	2023	31.7

But the job is never done, and in my 2024 Tentative County Budget, I've proposed upping our highway/bridge outlay to **\$23.6 million** - again, without going into any debt. For the time being, we are in a good position to not only keep pace but get ahead of our roadway needs, and we owe it to the taxpayers not to squander that opportunity.

## FISCAL STRESS? NOT HERE

I'm very pleased to say the NYS Comptroller's Office has once again designated Sullivan County free of fiscal stress, with our finances continuing to be in the best shape since reporting began.

They recently released the 2022 Fiscal Stress rankings for municipalities Statewide, based on the annual financial reports submitted to the Office. We scored better than ever, once again earning the best rank of "No Designation" (meaning there are no indications of the County being susceptible to fiscal stress at this time).

In 2019, Sullivan earned a

Fiscal Stress score of 42.1 points. That improved to 35.8 in 2020 (a lower score indicating better finances), then to 13.3 in 2021 and now dropping to a **best-ever 3.3 points**.

Meanwhile, the Environmental Stress score dropped from 30 in 2019 to 23.3 points in 2020, then 20 for 2021, and now stands at its own **best-ever of 13.3 points**. Unlike Fiscal Stress, the data used to create the Environmental Stress score - population changes, poverty levels, tax base, unemployment rates, state/federal aid and other items - represents issues that are not fully within the County's control.



**County Bridge 198, spanning Halfway Brook between Eldred and Yulan, was replaced earlier this year.**

We're excited to announce our

# FOOD SCRAP RECYCLING PROGRAM



LET'S KEEP FOOD OUT OF A LANDFILL AND TURN IT INTO USEFUL COMPOST!

The first 400 registrants get a FREE kitchen collection bin and a larger, 5-gallon exterior collection bin!

Register to try out this pilot program by contacting Recycling Coordinator Kassie Thelman at 845-807-0291 or [recycling@sullivanny.us](mailto:recycling@sullivanny.us). (Pre-registration is required.)

# HOLIDAY CONCERTS

Inside the Sullivan County Government Center Lobby,  
100 North Street, Monticello

11 a.m., December 6, 2023  
10:45 a.m., December 7, 2023  
1 p.m., December 7, 2023  
10:30 a.m., December 8, 2023  
12:30 p.m., December 8, 2023

11 a.m., December 11, 2023  
12:45 p.m., December 13, 2023

10:30 a.m., December 14, 2023  
11 a.m., December 15, 2023

11:45 a.m., December 18, 2023  
11 a.m., December 19, 2023  
10:30 a.m., December 20, 2023

12 p.m., December 20, 2023  
10:30 a.m., December 21, 2023

12 p.m., December 21, 2023

Fallsburg Senior High School Band  
Sullivan West HS Select Choir  
Fallsburg Junior High Chorus  
Chase Elementary School Chorus  
Livingston Manor High School Band and Chorus  
Sullivan BOCES Student Chorus  
Benjamin Cosor Elementary School Chorus  
Sullivan West Elementary Chorus  
Liberty High School Mixed Choir and Honors Choir  
Liberty High School Band  
Tri-Valley High School Jazz Combo  
Monticello Middle School 6th Grade Chorus, 7th-8th Grade Chorus and String Ensemble  
Monticello High School Emerging Ensembles and Chamber Singers  
Eldred 6th Grade Chorus, 6th Grade Band, High School Chamber Groups  
Minisink Valley HS Mixed Choir, Treble Choir, Chamber Choir, and Bass Ensemble

## A HOMETOWN HERO

Sullivan County Public Safety Commissioner **Scott Schulte** knows firsthand what Israelis and Palestinians are enduring. He headed to Israel shortly after the Hamas attacks in October.



The Ulster County native and firefighter has long been a member of the Emergency Volunteers Project, a disaster relief & rescue organization whose primary mission is to deploy volunteer teams to Israel in times of crisis. "We're under Israel's National Fire Service, approved by the Knesset," Scott says. "I've been deployed twice before, but this is the first time for a fully declared war."

During his 10-day deployment, Scott was assigned to areas of Israel under direct attack, fighting fires caused by rockets.

I'm incredibly proud of Commissioner Schulte for undertaking this very dangerous mission. All of Sullivan County applauds his dedication to protecting and saving lives, and we are grateful for his safe return and that of his teammates.

We also pray for that ever-elusive peace in the Middle East, and our thoughts go to all the innocent families caught in the crossfire of this conflict.



**Scott Schulte and teammates responded to fires like these in Israel, caused by rockets that hit cars and buildings.**

# CREATING NEW EMPLOYMENT FOR OUR RESIDENTS



Eleven locals are taking a 10-week welding course at Sullivan BOCES in Liberty, fully paid for by Sullivan County and administered through our Center for Workforce Development. Taught by Nick Conklin, the class is part of an ongoing effort to increase the local employee pool for trades.

