

# INSIDE INSIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF  
THE SULLIVAN COUNTY MANAGER



## EVERY REGION TO SEE PIECE OF \$30M GRANT

BY JOSHUA POTOSEK, COUNTY MANAGER

A transformational event is at hand, encompassing all parts of Sullivan County. In early November, Governor Kathy Hochul announced that we would be receiving \$29.9 million to dramatically expand super-high-speed, affordable broadband Internet access, particularly in unserved and underserved areas.

That was the biggest piece of a puzzle we'd

been working on for a decade, and it represents the largest grant for a single project that this County has ever received.

So what's next?

We will be engaging a project director to work with our for-profit partner Archtop Fiber, a Catskills-based fiber-optic communications provider with a solid goal to wire all of Sullivan County, much of the Hudson Valley and even part of Northeastern Pennsylvania with the latest high-speed Internet technology.

In just a few months, Archtop will have crews burying cable (called "microtrenching") along our highways and other public rights-of-way. The grant requires full buildout by the end of 2026, so expect service to begin sometime before then.

The cost is anticipated to be lower than average rates, and the speed is projected to be as high as 8 Mbps (upload and download). Archtop will handle that end of it.

The idea behind this public-private partnership is to put broadband access on par with other basic utilities, like electric service. You should be able to expect high-speed Internet availability wherever you live in Sullivan County, and this grant will not only provide wired availability but wireless availability via a dozen of our emergency communications towers scattered across the County.

Considering how important digital connectivity has become in our lives, I consider this project to not only be transformational but essential to making Sullivan an attractive place to play, live and work.

### WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THIS ISSUE:

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# MOVING FORWARD ON A CONFERENCE CENTER

Legislators have been talking about returning Sullivan County to the forefront of convention opportunities in New York State. From the 1950s to the 1990s, we were a top go-to spot for all manner of conferences, competing very well with other resort areas, even New York City.

Bringing large-scale conferences back - and the

revenue that comes with them - means we need to have a suitably large-scale facility. And these days, that means something purpose-built, possibly with its own sports complex, too.

Thus the Legislature has authorized \$100,000 for the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association (SCVA) to contract with Johnson Consulting to conduct a feasibility study on a conference center.

The funding is coming from room tax revenues - what tourists pay when they rent lodging locally. And it's going to the SCVA, which understands this industry and this County better than anyone else.

I expect we'll have a report in hand around this time next year, and legislators will determine next steps.

## 2025 BUDGET PROPOSED

The 2025 Tentative Sullivan County Budget I've proposed prioritizes debt reduction, road and bridge investment, and cost-effective government.

The \$301,002,983 budget, as currently proposed, includes a 2.5% increase in the tax levy, under the State-mandated tax cap. It does not propose incurring new debt or dipping into the fund balance of the General Fund for ongoing operations.

The proposed tax increase is due to the County's nearly \$3 million investment in improving EMS services Countywide, and an estimated 8.5% hike in our health insurance premiums.

Full details of the budget are available via a digital budget book at <https://county-sullivan-ny-budget-book.cleargov.com/17036> (also accessible through [www.sullivanny.gov](http://www.sullivanny.gov)).

Highlights include:

- \$21.6 million for road and bridgework throughout the County, to be achieved without going into debt by bonding
- \$2.7 million to continue the already-successful EMS fly car system throughout the County
- \$2 million for a Housing Trust Fund to address the housing crisis in the County, plus \$250,000 to supplement a State program that provides local renters with first/last months' rent and security deposits to ease the emergency housing crunch
- \$500,000 for the Sullivan Promise Scholarship Program

## FAMILIAR FACES IN NEW ROLES

I'm pleased to announce my appointments of Anna-Marie Novello as the new Commissioner of the Division of Management & Budget, and Lucrezia Anderson as Budget Director, replacing the now-retired Janet Young. Both current County employees, they are highly regarded by their colleagues.



Anna-Marie  
Novello

Anna has served the residents and taxpayers of Sullivan County for 10 years, steadily adding to her responsibilities and reputation over that decade. Her eye for detail and her problem-solving capabilities make her perfect for this new role, and she'll work closely with me to prepare budgets and oversee the finances of all of County government.



Lucrezia  
Anderson

Lu has been an integral part of our operations for a cumulative 14 years, and I look forward to integrating her common-sense approach into our financial oversight and budget preparations.

# THE NEW CASINO IMPACT

New York State is planning to offer three full-fledged casino licenses in New York City next year. We don't know where these new casinos might go, but we do know their eventual openings will impact attendance at the State's largest casino, Resorts World Catskills - which happens to be in Monticello. Aggressively marketing our casino is up to its owners, but the County, the Town of Thompson, and the Monticello School District will suffer decreased revenues from the casino if patronage falls. So we're in discussion with our lobbyist to encourage the State to build mitigation payments into those licenses, in order to offset the revenue losses we might see. It's an uphill battle, but one we literally cannot afford to ignore.

## \$20M FOR DEVELOPMENT

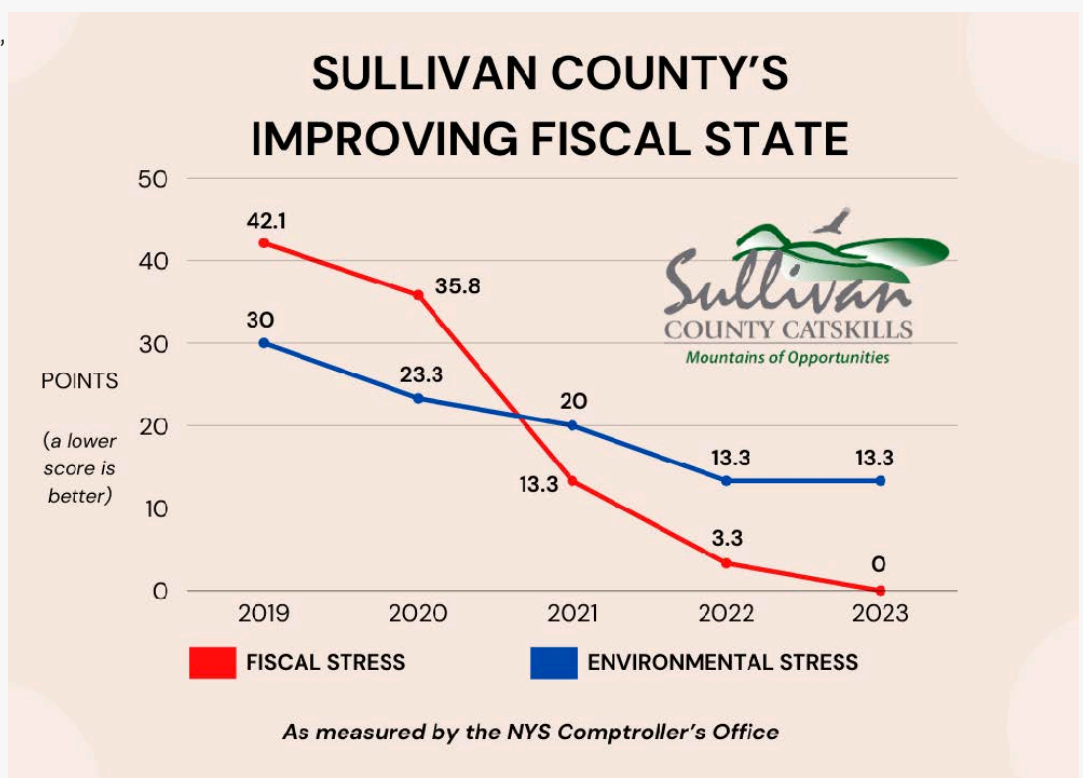
Thanks to diligent efforts by us, the Partnership for Economic Development, and the Town and Village of Liberty, the Town is receiving \$20 million from the State to build out water and sewer infrastructure along the Old Route 17 corridor between Ferndale and Harris. These improvements will enable the construction of a million-square-foot facility and encourage the development of 210 more acres and 4 million square feet within the corridor - which is already zoned for commercial/industrial uses.

# STATE: NO FISCAL STRESS IN YOUR FINANCES

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

The Comptroller's Office released its 2023 Fiscal Stress rankings for municipalities Statewide, based on the annual financial reports submitted to the Office. Sullivan County 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). This latest report reaffirms that we continue to maintain County government's fiscal stability. In fact, the past five years have seen ongoing improvement in Sullivan's fiscal situation. In 2019, the County earned a Fiscal Stress score of 42.1 points. That has now hit

the lowest (and best) score possible: 0 points. Meanwhile, the Environmental Stress score stood at 30 in 2019 and now remains 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 - represent issues that are not fully within the County's control.





# LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT - AND NOT DONE YET!

Congratulations are in order to our Public Safety Deputy Commissioner and Fire Coordinator John Hauschild, who just received a very well-earned Lifetime Achievement Award from the Sullivan County Volunteer Firefighters' Association.

John, a Jeffersonville resident, has been a firefighter his entire life. He's been chief of his local department, trained hundreds (perhaps thousands) of first-responders, and even has operated his own fire extinguisher business.

We're lucky to have had him in the County's employ since 2008, much of that time overseeing our Bureau of Fire, which provides training to fire departments,

investigates the origin of blazes, and coordinates with our other emergency response agencies.

We celebrate this award with John, and this County appreciates his tireless, lifesaving commitment!



## SOON EXPANDING MOVE SULLIVAN!

What do you do with a public bus service that serves well over 500 people a day? You expand it!

Thanks to the diligence of our Community Resources Commissioner Laura Quigley and our partner Rolling V Bus Company, our free Move Sullivan buses will roam even farther in January - out to Livingston Manor, Roscoe, Callicoon Center, Jeffersonville, Youngsville and White Sulphur Springs.

We'll also debut one-hour loops in downtown Liberty and Monticello, enabling quick trips to the store, the doctor's office or the pharmacy. We've essentially added a new route for every year Move Sullivan has existed, and it remains completely free to ride - to SUNY Sullivan, to White Lake, to Wurtsboro, to Bloomingburg, to Rock Hill, to Woodridge, to Fallsburg.

Maps and schedules are at [movesullivan.com](http://movesullivan.com).



# HOLIDAY CONCERTS

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

<p>12 p.m., December 4, 2024</p> <p>10:30 a.m., December 6, 2024</p> <p>11:30 a.m., December 11, 2024</p> <p>12 p.m., December 12, 2024</p> <p>10:15 a.m., December 13, 2024</p> <p>1 p.m., December 13, 2024</p> <p>11:45 a.m., December 16, 2024</p> <p>1 p.m., December 16, 2024</p> <p>10:30 a.m., December 17, 2024</p> <p>1 p.m., December 17, 2024</p> <p>10:45 a.m., December 18, 2024</p> <p>12:30 p.m., December 18, 2024</p> <p>10:30 a.m., December 19, 2024</p> <p>12 p.m., December 19, 2024</p> <p>12 p.m., December 20, 2024</p>	<p>Livingston Manor High School Band and Chorus</p> <p>Chase Elementary School Chorus</p> <p>Fallsburg High School Instrumental Chamber Groups</p> <p>Benjamin Cosor Elementary School Chorus</p> <p>Sullivan West Elementary Chorus</p> <p>Roscoe Elementary and High School Choirs</p> <p>Liberty High School Jazz Band</p> <p>Liberty 5th &amp; 6th Grade Chorus and Liberty Middle School Honors Band</p> <p>Mackenzie Elementary School (Eldred) Band &amp; Chorus</p> <p>Monticello High School Emerging Ensembles and Chamber Singers</p> <p>Sullivan West High School Select Choir</p> <p>Liberty Mixed and Honors Choirs</p> <p>Sullivan BOCES Choir</p> <p>Fallsburg High School Treble Choir and Chamber Choir</p> <p>Monticello Middle School Groups</p>
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