



## STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS

July 22, 2010

I want to thank you all for your patience regarding my “State of the County” message that, according to our Rules of Order, should have been delivered in June. As you know, I have been wearing two hats since January.

The past six months have been a real learning experience for me and we have all seen many changes and some new faces, particularly in our administrative staff. We have recruited a new administrator, auditor, probation director and mental health professional.

By assuming a more “hands on” approach to the way it governs, this legislative body has developed the knowledge and understanding necessary to make government services more affordable for our taxpayers. This will continue to be our primary objective as we go forward. We must continue to look for ways to deliver the services we provide more efficiently and to maximize our very limited sources of revenue. This is not an easy task and will take a concerted effort on all our parts.

Some of the more difficult challenges we face in the coming year include the future of the County’s Certified Home Health Agency program, cuts in Human Services, increased retirement costs, deteriorating infrastructure and, not surprisingly unfunded mandates.

State funding for the County’s Certified Home Health Agency program has been eliminated from the 2011 State Budget. This is an extremely valuable and vitally important program for those in need of such services. At the same time, it is a service that is offered by other, private professional health care providers.

Looking ahead to 2011, we are anticipating an increase in retirement costs of approximately 5 to 7 % .

Many of you are keenly aware of the issues we face with un- or underfunded state mandates. These challenges are becoming more difficult to overcome as the state continues to reduce, or in some cases eliminate funding for these mandated programs placing more financial burden on our taxpayers.

We predict a significant increase in mandated Medicaid expenditures. This increase could reach as much as \$1.5 million. Our lease at the Mental Health building expires in December of 2010. We should consider a month to month lease until we decide on a permanent location. We have encountered problems with our 2010 budget which overstated revenues by \$300,000 and understated expenses by \$36,000. We have also recently learned that some of our financial accounts have not been accurately reconciled.

The condition of the County’s infrastructure is of serious concern. We were fortunate to receive stimulus funding to reconstruct 90% of Page Green Road, but we cannot continue to rely on grant funds to maintain our infrastructure. While we continue to seek grant

funds to reduce the financial burden on our taxpayers to address the needs of Dwyer Park, Little York Dam and County buildings in general, we must develop a long term strategic plan to effectively maintain public facilities.

The County, in my opinion, is carrying too large of a debt load, approximately \$32 million, including interest, and this must be reduced in order to lower taxes. With that in mind, we are evaluating the landfill to increase profitability, even exploring the possibility of selling the facility to cover the losses that have impacted our debt situation.

We must also continue to identify ways to maximize our limited revenue streams, however small they may seem.

This year the AUD was submitted on time. We have temporarily filled a vacant position to assist the Treasurer's Office to bring the reconciliations of all accounts up to date and will execute all tax sale foreclosure proceedings in house with no additional staff and expect to generate \$22,000 - \$42,000 in revenue.

The County rejected bids and saved \$89,000 in special need individual transportation costs by identifying and implementing cost effective alternatives.

We are currently evaluating energy efficiency in the County Office Building and Courthouse facilities including: light fixture replacement, boiler replacement and upgraded controls with a goal to recuperate our capital expense with reduced utility costs.

We have also made improvements in some of our service delivery areas. The Mental Health Department has reduced their client waiting period from over 50 days to 10 days and will generate more revenue as a result.

The IDA/BDC reports 120 new jobs have been created by Pyrotek, Cortland Plastics and Glyph. Furthermore, our long term relationship with Pall Corporation will increase jobs at the Smith Corona plant.

To date, our sales tax revenue is slightly ahead of last year's at this time and the return of the NY Jets will almost certainly increase revenue from last years numbers.

There are many challenges ahead of us and the good news is that we have an excellent staff who not only understand the challenges, they also work hard to insure that only necessary expenses are made and they continue to offer suggestions for improvement. To date expenses have not exceeded budgeted amounts, in most cases. My goal is to finish fiscal 2010 under budget. In order to achieve that goal the State must maintain their funding levels with no additional cuts. We must do more with less and I implore all employees, be they management, union, elected representative or taxpayer that this is a team effort and sacrifices are necessary on all fronts. I sincerely thank and admire those of you who have stepped up and put in the time and energy to move our County forward.

Jack Williams  
Chairman of the County Legislature