

INSIDE INSIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE SULLIVAN COUNTY MANAGER



ROUGH FISCAL WATERS AHEAD FOR COUNTY

BY JOSHUA POTOSEK, COUNTY MANAGER

I prefer to share good news on the first page of this newsletter, but this time, I feel it only right to let taxpayers know what Sullivan County is facing in the months to come.

I've mentioned before that our revenues have plateaued. Now, however, they are on a steep decline. In fact, sales tax income - our largest source of revenue since the pandemic, outpacing property taxes - has fallen by 16% since this same time last year. If that trend continues, we'll be \$14.5 million short of our budgeted anticipation of \$77.5 million in sales tax revenue. That may not sound like much compared to a \$300 million overall budget, but it will indeed come with serious impacts that we're only now beginning to fathom.

However, we're not sitting idle, waiting for the ax to fall. Legislators just sent a letter to the NYS Office of Taxation and Finance, seeking insight into why and where our sales tax receipts have dropped so precipitously, especially since other upstate counties have not experienced the same fall. County Treasurer Kathleen Lara, who has access to data about specific businesses (restricted just to her for obvious reasons), is taking a deeper look too.

I've directed commissioners and department heads to limit staff overtime as much as possible and to advertise and hire for absolutely essential positions only.

And even though the 2027 County Budget is six months away from being proposed, our budget staff is looking at any ways we can mitigate large increases in property taxes. That may require some tough decisions.

In the meantime, we're actively and aggressively looking at deferring expenses and increasing revenue. For example, the new, grant-funded Airport terminal positions the County to attract new investment from aviation businesses seeking hangars, office space and land on which to build. You, the public, will also have a role to play, through hearings, feedback and staying informed.

I'll share more in the months to come...

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PROUD TO BE NACA'S NEW REGIONAL VICE PREZ

I'm thrilled to share that I've been named the Northeast Regional Vice President of the National Association of County Administrators (NACA), serving as NACA liaison with county administrators in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Maryland, Delaware and the District of Columbia.



NACA provides valuable practical solutions and networking for me and my colleagues who oversee the operations of county governments nationwide. Having benefitted from NACA's nuts-and-bolts approach to leadership issues, I'm proud to be introducing other municipal administrators to their apolitical advice, support

and education.

NACA also advocates for counties at the Federal level, and I joined their recent Executive Committee meeting in Washington, DC as part of a National Association of Counties conference.

NACA is relentlessly issues-oriented, offering real-world ideas and moderated best-practices webinars, among other useful services. Similar to my membership in the National Association of Counties and the International City-County Management Association (ICMA), NACA gives me insight into how other county leaders are addressing critical issues, and allows me to share our best practices with them, as well. You can learn more about NACA at www.countyadministrators.org.

INVENTORYING A PRECIOUS RESOURCE

It seems crazy to think we could ever run out of water here, right? After all, Sullivan County is a land of lakes, streams and rivers, and we've seen our share of floods, downpours, heavy snow, and the subsequent snowmelt.

But where is the water we need and can use? How do we find it, and just as importantly, how do we protect it?

True to its name, Sullivan County's Division of Planning, Community Development and Environmental Management has taken the lead in answering these questions, thanks to funding from the County Legislature to undertake two studies: one of local water and sewer

infrastructure, and one of water buried deep underground.

We've already completed the infrastructure study, and we're now engaged in figuring out where our aquifers are located.

We've contracted with an engineering firm to leverage existing data (USGS wells, previous soil samples, precipitation reports, development patterns) with field studies to determine, with reasonable accuracy, where our aquifers exist and what kind of capacity they possess. Results are expected in mid-2027, and we will make them available, via an interactive map, to everybody shortly thereafter.

CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION BEGINS WORK

As required every decade by our version of the U.S Constitution - the Sullivan County Charter - the Charter Review Commission has begun meeting to conduct an in-depth review of County government. The 9 members, chosen by the Legislature, are taking long, hard looks at how government is structured and where that structure might be

improved.

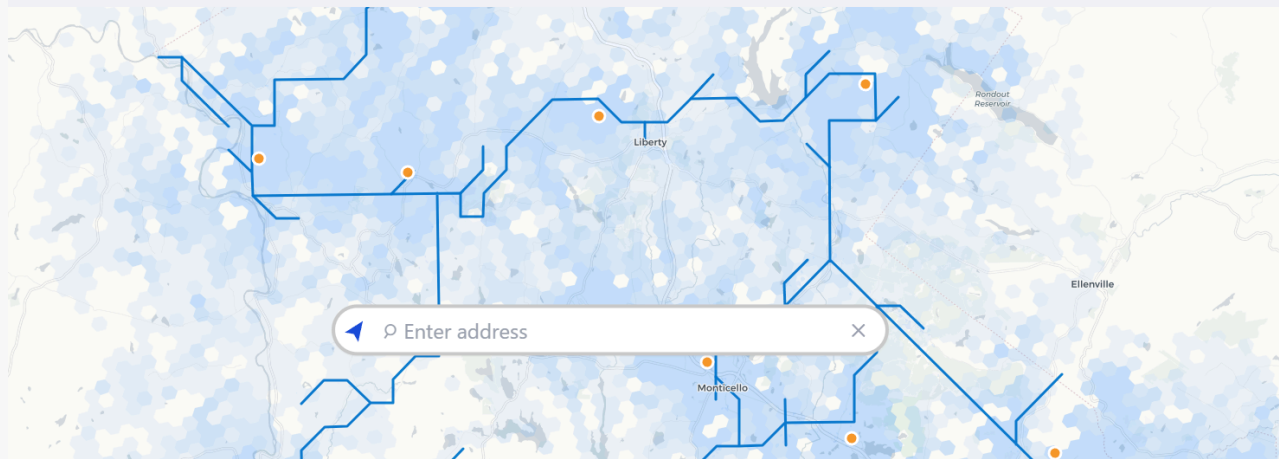
That's no small or easy task, and I expect it will take 1-2 years before they issue recommendations for the Legislature to consider.

In the meantime, track their progress by attending their meetings the first Wednesday of every month at 4 p.m. in the Hearing Room of the Gov't Center.

Check Availability

This is a screenshot of our new site: www.connectsullivan.com

Check to see if you can get connected!



READY FOR BROADBAND SERVICE? WE ARE!

The long-awaited day has finally arrived: Sullivan County and its private partner Archtop Fiber are launching high-speed Internet service across ultimately 22,000 local homes and businesses. Yes, broadband has been available in many parts of the County for many years, but it's often come with a price - not just the escalating cost of service but time spent waiting for lines to be strung or repaired, outages due to bad weather, and excess fees to maintain a fast connection (especially with satellite).

A decade ago, our IT Commissioner Lorne Green

envisioned a cheaper yet better solution - offering a wireless broadband signal, similar to cell phones. Now - thanks to NYS' ConnectALL program and a \$30M grant - we're about to offer both, with Archtop Fiber burying hundreds of miles of fiber-optic cable along our roads and to our communication towers, which will extend service even farther.

Our ultimate goal? 100% coverage at a competitive price.

Check out our progress, and see if you're in a service area, at www.connectsullivan.com!

911: ON THE JOB ... AT ALL TIMES

Recently released stats from our 911 Center show just how vital this service is to both residents and visitors.

For 2025, firefighters were dispatched 6,699 times; emergency medical services, 21,972 times; and police, 22,220 times. Combined, this represents a 16% increase from 2024.

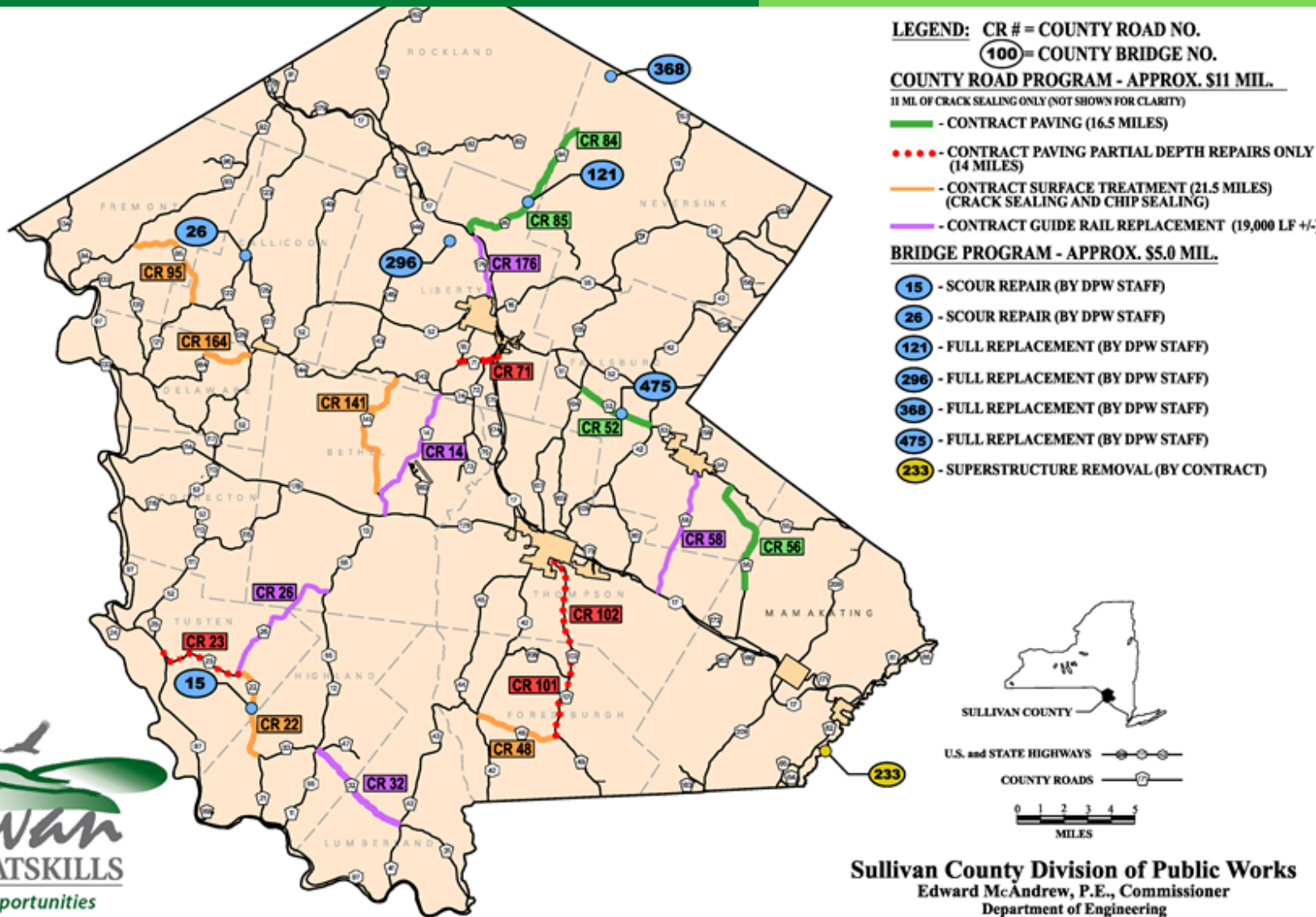
Thank you to all our first responders!

STATE GIVES US \$2M FOR RADIO UPGRADE

NYS' Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services has provided \$2M to our Division of Public Safety to complete the installation of interoperability channel repeaters, allowing our responders to communicate even if they're on disparate radio systems.

This will be particularly helpful during large-scale incidents involving a wide range of agencies, like during wildfires.

The upgrade should take about two years.



YOU'RE LOOKING AT \$16M WORTH OF WORK

The above map - viewable in its entirety at www.sullivanny.gov/Departments/PublicWorks - represents \$16 million worth of expenditures approved by the Legislature and now being carried out by the Division of Public Works, directly and through contractors.

Decisions on which roads and bridges to rehab, repair or replace are made by our team of skilled engineers, based on regular assessments of our highways and associated infrastructure.

We also try to repave each County route every decade (more often, if necessary), though across 1,000 square miles and 400 bridges, that's not a simple task.

Nor is it inexpensive, as bridge replacements can easily run into the millions of dollars. Even guiderail replacements can cost well over a million dollars for just 19,000 feet (that's about 3.5 miles)!

I'm very proud of the work our Public Works team does to keep our roads safe, smooth and passable, and you should be too. They are out early in the morning, late at night, and in the baking heat of a summer day, applying their expertise and skills to highways on which we all depend.

They often do so in dangerous conditions, due to weather, ice, snow, rain and inattentive or reckless drivers. There's not much we can do about a storm or the outdoor temps, but we all can play a part in keeping our workers safe while they're doing the same for us.

Please... don't speed, don't ignore the flaggers, and pay close attention to signage, stripes and cones that are designed to keep you well away from our workers in the field. Trust me, they'll be grateful! And in return, they'll do their best to keep you on your way.