

INSIDE INSIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE SULLIVAN COUNTY MANAGER

LEGISLATORS RECEIVE PROPOSED BUDGET

BY JOSHUA POTOSEK, COUNTY MANAGER

In mid-October, I proposed a 2027 Tentative Sullivan County Budget to the Legislature that avoids cuts to programs but also squarely faces the reality of significantly increased costs and declining sales tax revenues.

The document represents months of effort to navigate serious revenue declines while maintaining the County's fiscal stability and providing the services taxpayers need and demand.

Originally, budget estimates indicated a tax increase of 35% might be necessary. We brought that down to 27.67%, but as a taxpayer myself, I recognize this remains a sizeable increase.

The total $299,886,220 budget, as currently proposed, is lower than 2026's Adopted Budget and does not include utilization of fund balance (surplus) in the General Fund.

The proposed tax increase is due to steeply rising, inflation-fueled costs and an anticipated $6.5 million decline in sales tax revenue versus what was budgeted in 2026. The reduction in that revenue – plus the fiscally responsible decision to not endanger the County further by continually dipping into the fund balance – constitutes 15.5% of the 27.67% tax increase.

Full details of the budget are available via a digital budget book at **https://county-sullivan-ny-cleardoc.cleargov.com/28777** (also accessible through **www.sullivanny.gov**).

This is more than an online budget viewing tool. It allows users to easily search for information, quickly find what they're most interested in, and generate their own charts and graphs. It is an interactive way of understanding our most complex fiscal document.

This proposed budget also retains funding for the services and programs that impact residents' lives every day, from Public Health to Public Safety, from the Sheriff's Office to the EMS fly cars. But due to the significant proposed tax increase, we are avoiding taking on large projects or adding staff for the year ahead, and I continue to tell legislators and our economic development partners that it's critical we aggressively attract more taxpaying industries to the County – to help spread these costs across a wider tax base.

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SULLIVAN CONTINUES TO LEAD IN JOB GROWTH

Call it the 2026 Surge.

Sullivan County experienced a massive jump to **5% year-over-year job growth** in late 2026, solidifying its spot as the fastest-growing private employment sector in the Hudson Valley region.

But this run of healthy growth goes back to the days after the pandemic, when the County entered the top 5 rankings and has rarely fallen out of that tier since.

Healthcare and tourism industries were and are key drivers, while manufacturing and construction have helped too. As the past five years show in the accompanying graph, sustaining that growth rate hasn't been the challenge. What remains an issue is attracting jobs which pay a living wage.



As service staff can tell you in these industries, pay rates rarely keep pace with the ever-rising cost of living. It can be more depressing than exciting when you get a raise that's instantly swallowed up by bills.

Focusing solely on serving as a bedroom community for downstate regions is self-defeating and will continue making this area unsustainable for middle-income families. We need to attract economic development that moves families forward and expands our tax base.

THE AIRPORT CAN BE A BENEFIT FOR ALL OF US

Businesses have begun to take notice of Sullivan County International Airport. There's growing interest in our restaurant space in the new terminal, which will generate jobs when it's up and running. And we are getting ready to lease one of the seven offices in the terminal to an aircraft detailing (painting) company, who believes this is a very desirable spot with plenty of promise.

Interested in renting one of the remaining offices? Or just stopping by to catch the views, inside and out? The terminal is now open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every weekday, and I encourage you to check out the spaces and grounds.

Nearly $20 million in State grants has been poured into this facility to make it an economic driver, and we have a team actively engaged in and intent on taking the airport off the backs of taxpayers.



HEAP, CCAP REOPENED

I'm pleased to note that both the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Heating Benefit and the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) are once again accepting applications.

About HEAP

HEAP comes 'round every November, and considering the high cost of heating fuel right now, I'd bet it was none too soon for many of us.

Eligibility thresholds have been raised too, so you may qualify for a one-time payment to help cover several hundred dollars of whatever fuel you use. Here's a short list:

Household Size	Gross Monthly Income Limit
1	$3,563
2	$4,659
3	$5,756
4	$6,852
5	$7,948

For the full details and to apply, visit **https://mybenefits.ny.gov/mybenefits/begin** or call 845-807-0142.

About CCAP

CCAP was a bit more complicated to restart, as the State ran out of money for the program. Thus the County stopped accepting new applications - and worse, couldn't renew existing applicants' benefits when they ran out. This lasted for a good year, putting a lot of parents and childcare providers in a severe bind.

So it was good news in late summer when we announced that New York had not only put more money into the program Statewide but had doubled our allocation, from $3 million to $6 million. We started accepting applications in mid-September, and they haven't stopped since.

The place to start is by calling our Social Services folks at 845-292-0100.

Don't Wait!

Looking to apply to either of these programs? Do it now, as both HEAP's and CCAP's funding sources are limited.

In other words, first come, first served. Once those sources run dry, new applications will be rejected. And no one knows when that might happen.



FAMILIAR FACES ARE AT THE HELM

It's my pleasure to announce the appointments of Giselle Steketee as Sullivan County's next Commissioner of Social Services and Jennifer Diehl as Director of our Local Government Unit.


Giselle Steketee

Giselle has been a steady, professional presence at the Department of Social Services for 13 years and has capably served as the Acting Commissioner since this past May.

Jennifer has been with the County as a staff social worker for a total of 8 years and counting, and she is now overseeing our LGU, providing strategic and operational leadership for the County's behavioral health service system. Congrats to both!


Jennifer Diehl

STANDING TALL WITH THE DELAWARE COMPANY



Our partnership with The Delaware Company, a nonprofit based in the County, has been of outstanding value and benefit to residents and visitors.

The Delaware Company manages two County-owned properties: the Minisink Battleground Park near Barryville, and Fort Delaware Museum of Colonial History in Narrowsburg. Both have just celebrated notable achievements, thanks to The Delaware Company.

AT LEFT: Modelled after the famous Minuteman statue in Massachusetts, this militiaman statue was just installed and stands guard at the entrance to the Minisink Battleground Park.

AT RIGHT: County Historian John Conway also serves as The Delaware Company's president - and as a knowledgeable host at Fort Delaware, which was just honored with the History Preserver Award from the Sullivan County Historical Society.



CELEBRATING A COUNTY FULL OF VOLUNTEERS!



Formerly known as the Retired Senior Volunteers Program (RSVP), Sullivan Volunteers has opened its volunteer incentives to anyone over 18 who wants to volunteer anywhere in the County.

In September, Sullivan Volunteers thanked hundreds of selfless, giving citizens at a luncheon just for them at the casino in Monticello.

Interested in getting your mileage reimbursed and some liability insurance while you volunteer? Call Sullivan Volunteers at 845-807-0255 and talk to Coordinator Monika Roosa!

Marion Ziegler (seated) earned the Volunteer of the Year Award at the luncheon and was congratulated by (from the left) Sullivan Volunteers Coordinator Monika Roosa, Chair of the Friends of Sullivan Volunteers Deborah Worden and Office for the Aging Director Lise-Anne Deoul.