STATE OF THE COUNTY

SHAUN C. VAN DOREN, Freeholder Director
JUNE 5, 2020
FACTS & FIGURES

• The State of Hunterdon County is strong, vibrant and resilient;
  • Began 2020 with a $ 30.8 million surplus and ZERO Bonded Debt, the only County in New Jersey with no debt;
  • Adopted a 2020 Budget of $ 89.35 million, $ 10 million less than the nearly $ 100 million budget of 2006 and lower than the 2011 budget; freezes the county tax rate at 31.5 cents per $ 100 assessed value for 2nd year in a row;
  • Aggregate assessed valuation = $ 20.3 BILLION
  • Rank 1st in the State with a total of 440 preserved farms, comprising 34,044 acres (2nd behind Salem) costing $ 287.76 million, of which the County contributed $ 35.48 million.
    • NJ recently named #1 state in U.S. for farmland protection policies by the American Farmland Trust;
    • Hunterdon County has played a leading role in the state achieving this status. Our residential and commercial taxpayers have been a significant part of that achievement by providing the funds for preservation through the open space/farmland/historic preservation tax.

• Funded $ 4.54 million in open space and historic preservation grant funding toward County open space as well as municipal and not-for-profit open space and historic preservation; annually returns 10 % of open space tax to municipalities;
COUNTY INVESTMENT

• Infrastructure & Technology
  • 6 year capital plan (2020-2025) proposed investment of $136 million, including:
    • $63 million for roads and bridges
    • $8.3 million for IT
    • $19.6 million for buildings and property
    • $28 million for farmland and open space preservation
PARTNERSHIPS & SHARED SERVICES

• Economic Development – Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce
  • Shared operations out of the Chamber Offices;
  • Moving the economic health of the County forward for the betterment of our business community;

• County of Warren
  • Correctional Facility Shared Service – saving Hunterdon taxpayers $ 250K; $ 90/inmate w/ average 43 inmates

• NJ Highlands Council
  • 1st County to conform to the newly adopted Highlands Council procedure for Highlands conformance;
    • Strong position of protection of drinking water, critical habitat environmental and natural landscape through open space preservation and enhancement of County parkland;

• State of New Jersey
  • Department of Human Services
  • Governor’s Council on Alcohol & Drugs
  • Department of Health & Senior Services

• Hunterdon’s 26 municipalities
  • Cooperative purchasing for:
    • Gasoline
    • Road Materials
RESPONSE TO COVID-19

- The County’s preparedness and successful response to the pandemic occurred ‘not by chance, but by design’ as quoted by our COS George Wagner;
- County Emergency Proclamation Issued March 16;
- The County has in place a consistently updated Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and continuity of operations plan that was implemented when the state of emergency was declared.
- Implemented our EOP through County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) in coordination with State OEM and 26 Municipal OEM Coordinators;
  - Daily & Weekly Calls on needs and assessments
- The Health Department and OEM have trained and planned together for the past 15 years to ensure coordinated efforts in the face of a health emergency. It has paid off.
- The Health Department marshalled its resources to begin case management and contact tracing, well ahead of most other county and municipal health agencies across the State
  - Hunterdon is fortunate to cover all 26 municipalities for health services
- Our 9-1-1 dispatchers remained at their work stations performing 24/7/365 throughout the pandemic.
- Activated County stockpile of PPE for distribution to Hunterdon Medical Center, Long-term Care Facilities and EMS Squads
  - Distributed almost 121,000 pieces of PPE from County inventory at value of $ 80,000.
RESPONSE TO COVID-19

• Financial Belt Tightening
  • Departments asked to go back and find cost savings; County special appropriation of $100K on March 31;
  • Didn’t raise taxes – maintained fiscal conservatism

• Communication
  • Held weekly calls with all 26 municipal Mayors to provide updates from County Health Officer and OEM Coordinator and share ideas and common goals;
  • Economic Development – expanded 78 corridor Mayors initiative to all County mayors with bi-weekly calls specific to business needs in their municipalities;
  • Facilitated participation with 2 US Senators and Congressman as well as Legislators from 15th, 16th, & 23rd Districts;
  • Participated on daily and weekly calls with Governor’s Office to provide continuous updates
RESPONSE TO COVID-19

- Partnerships
  - Joined Somerset County to establish a joint County COVID testing facility
    - Tested over 1200 residents to date between both counties with 30% of the tests positive; County personnel spent 1,056 hours covering field operations
  - Joined Warren and Sussex Counties on business partnership – ‘A Gateway To Business Re-opening Resources’ is a convenient one stop hub of information that includes CDC and OSHA guidance.

- Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development
  - EDA grants and loans – application process, webinars
  - Route 579 Trail for Farm Markets
    - Agribusiness and agritourism continues to be an economic driver in the county and is one of the economic development priorities
  - Take-out Restaurant Guide

- County Government continued to operate throughout pandemic
  - Held March 21 e-waste drop off
  - Rotating shifts for Department Heads and Essential Employees;
  - Deployed IT equipment (computers and phones) for personnel to work from home;
  - Buildings closed to the public but appointment only service continued;
  - DPW and all employees whose work assignments cannot be performed remotely are now reporting to their county workplaces.
WHERE ARE WE TODAY

• This is not the 2020 I pictured when assuming Director’s Office
  • Small businesses shuttered, massive unemployment, State slow to respond
  • One size fits all just doesn’t work; NY and PA had regional approach to re-opening; NJ lags behind
  • County has pushed Governor’s Office on a weekly basis re-opening businesses and re-starting services including:
    • Manage own County Parks & Libraries
    • Curbside retail
    • Shop-by-appointment
    • Regional approach

• 1,004 confirmed positive cases; 40 % from long term care (LTC) and correctional facilities

• 61 confirmed deaths

• Average daily case increase is 4 (non LTC/Correctional Facilities)
WHERE ARE WE GOING

• Hunterdon County is a unique and special place – look no further than the just released report from the international non-profit organization Save The Children that ranked Hunterdon County as the #1 safest county in America to raise a child;

• Despite the pandemic and the challenges we face - Our Future is Bright – we have the ability to face these challenges head on by working together thru
  • Partnership
  • Collaboration
  • Ingenuity
  • Perserverance

• These are the hallmarks of our resiliency.