

2020 BUDGET MESSAGE FROM DANIEL P. McCOY

I am once again pleased to present a proposed budget that builds upon the fiscal progress and programmatic growth that my administration has made since the beginning of my administration in 2012. At that time our County faced significant financial challenges, including double digit real property tax increases, the use of fund balance, and short term cash flow borrowings. Through prudent fiscal management, we have dramatically turned the course, and this budget is the exemplar of that effort. This is in fact the seventh straight budget that I have proposed that is under the State mandated tax cap despite an ever increasing number of unfunded mandates combined with continued cuts in state and federal aid.

Most importantly, this budget is balanced and provides the services County residents rely upon; services for seniors, children, veterans or those in our county most in need. This is accomplished without any cuts to our programming or our workforce; without budgeting gimmicks or one-shots, and without the use of general fund reserves. Our efforts have resulted in a projected undesignated, unappropriated fund balance of over \$60 million, double that of when I took office.

Furthermore, not only are we continuing to provide existing services, we continually look to enhance and improve our programs through strategic expansion, increased efficiencies and other improvements. These critical services come at a cost, and the only revenue directly under our control is our county tax levy. I remain committed to not placing additional stress on our county and real property owners. Due to an overall increase in the full valuation of real property within the County we were able to realize a slight decrease of the tax rate of 1.3%.

For the fourth consecutive year the State Comptroller has placed Albany County into a category of no designation of fiscal stress based on our prudent management practices and impressive record of fiscal improvement and growth. We take pride in the fact that our score has improved each year the State Comptroller has analyzed this data.

This budget increases compensation for virtually all workers. All but one collective bargaining units have settled five year contracts by this point guaranteeing their members raises this year. For our non-union workers this budget contains a 2% raise over their 2019 salary.

2020 is the second year of statewide implementation of the Hurrell-Harring indigent legal defense reforms, Statewide Implementation directly funds 30 positions at over \$3.5 million dollars in 2020. This includes the addition of 16 new positions in the Public Defender, Alternate Public Defender and 18-B Departments. The program is reimbursed by New York State and will improve indigent legal defense by increasing access to quality defense and reducing caseloads for the County's defense attorneys. This budget also includes \$250,000 for special programs in the Albany County Dept. of Probation to further initiatives of zero youth detention.

Another new unfunded mandate that is impacting the budget is the implementation of lowered action levels for blood lead levels in children that were included in the New York State FY 2020 Budget. While the County fully supports taking aggressive measures to reduce lead exposure and is complying with these changes, enforcement of the new standards falls to Counties without state funding support. In Albany County, implementation is estimated to cost over \$350,000 and will include new employees, lab fees, equipment, and more.

Also, the budget continues our support of the Albany County Land Bank, with a grant of \$250,000, bringing the total support from the County to the Land Bank to \$2.5 million in direct support along with \$331,000 in forgiven revenue due back to the County and \$26.1 million in assessed value of tax foreclosed real property since the Land Bank was formed. In that time the land bank has enabled more than 445 properties to return to the tax rolls and has been repeatedly cited as one of the most successful in the state.

I look forward to the next few weeks when we will review this budget proposal with the members of the County Legislature who have been important partners in the success we have had in stabilizing County finances and in putting into place sound budgetary practices.

For the past year we have been working with the highly respected national economic development consulting firm Camoin Associates to put together, with input from a broad based group of community leaders, a new economic development strategy for our County. Our goal is to position our County to be a regional leader in our effort to attract new businesses, support existing businesses and to overall improve the quality of life for our residents. Toward that and this budget contains \$100,000 in funding to begin to implement the recommendations Camoin is expected to present in the coming weeks. We have also allocated \$25,000 to assist local governments in conducting a complete census count for 2020.

I would like to thank legislative leadership for working with my administration in our effort to keep Albany County moving forward with our mutual goal of improving the quality of life for our residents while maintaining fiscal prudence. We are only able to move forward if we are all working together towards the same goal.