

"STATE OF THE COUNTY
JANUARY 5, 2015

"Members of the Board of Supervisors; County officers and staff; honored guests and visitors:

"It is an honor and privilege to be elected to continue as chairman of the Warren County Board of Supervisors.

"This Board is charged with the important and sometimes daunting responsibility of providing leadership in the development of and carrying out of plans, policies and activities important and vital, not only to County government itself, but to our city, towns, village, residents and visitors.

"While we have not always been in complete agreement as a Board during this past year, I can say that I believe that each and every member of this Board takes their responsibilities seriously and has the best interest of the County and its residents at heart. As a Board we have found ways to come together and should be proud of some very noteworthy accomplishments in 2014:

- * We were able to continue a stable financial outlook for the future of Warren County.
- * We authorized, as a Board, an additional one million dollars towards improving the County roads and bridges, a vital infrastructure benefitting not only transportation needs but our economy as well; this could have only happened as a result of good financial planning and I thank the Budget Officer, *Frank Thomas*, and the County Administrator, *Paul Dusek*, for their work in this regard.
- * We established a Human Resources Department.
 - * We saw the fruits of our long-term planning and strategies with regard to lowering the costs of a very significant employee benefit; our health insurance premium rose only four percent this year compared to previous and projected ten percent increases. While still increasing, this change shows the results of long-term planning and I recognize the work that was put into this by our broker, Capital Financial Services and County Administrator Dusek as well as the contribution made by the employees of Warren County in agreeing to changes that ultimately made this a success.
- * We took significant steps to address the shortage of court space working through various options in a cooperative manner with the court system and in a very transparent way. I thank (*County Facilities*) Committee Chair Dan Girard for his leadership in this matter as well as Supervisor Strough for his involvement and Jeff Tennyson, *Superintendent of Public Works*, for the services provided by the Department of Public Works in connection with this, as well as our engineers Clark Patterson Lee.
- * We approved the contract for the sale of the Westmount Health Facility that not only will provide fiscal relief to our County Budget, but will benefit the Facility's residents and County residents. We have negotiation assurances that the Facility will continue to operate for a number of years and for a study exploring further elderly services on adjacent property. I thank Supervisor Sokol for his

leadership in bringing this about and County Administrator Dusek for originally putting together the plan of action that brought us to this point and County Attorney Martin Auffredou and Special Counsel Larry Paltrowitz for all the work they put in to get us to this point.

* We began video recording Committee Meetings for the first time and provided access to

these videos on our County website; we're fortunate to have TV-8 record a number of our Board Meetings which likewise were also made accessible through our County website. I thank those Supervisors instrumental in making this happen, particularly Supervisors Taylor, Seeber, Westcott and Beaty. I also want to thank Mike Colvin, *Director of the Information Technology Department*, for his technical experience in putting this together and at a low cost.

* We improved availability of resolutions for consideration, documents and other information being presented at Committee Meetings and Board Meetings. I want to recognize Mrs. Sady and her staff for the initiatives they have taken in this regard.

* We modified our Board Agenda to allow comments by interested members of the public

on resolutions before they are voted upon.

* We began an effort to fix Committee Meeting dates so that the Supervisors and the public

could be able to plan for these Committee Meetings and help to assure opportunities for input.

* We changed accounting methodologies and established a new Occupancy Tax spending

plan to provide additional funds to municipalities for purposes of encouraging more tourism events to bring more visitors to our County. I want to thank Supervisor Conover, Supervisor Kenny, Budget Officer Frank Thomas, Supervisor Merlino, Treasurer Swan, Deputy Treasurer Lynch, County Administrator Dusek and the Assistant to the County Administrator, *JoAnn McKinstry*, for their work in making this happen.

* We significantly increased our payment to towns for highway snow and ice removal. I

want to thank Supervisor Simpson, Supervisor Conover, Supervisor Merlino, Mr. Tennyson and County Administrator Dusek for their assistance in developing the new formula providing for the increase.

* We made considerable progress in the development of the (*Wood Park*) Festival Space and

former Gaslight Village property. I want to thank Supervisor Monroe, Mayor Blais (*Village of Lake George*) and County staff members for bringing this project closer to conclusion.

* While it is still being looked at, we began the process of examining the possibility of

consolidating the (*Warren County*) Sheriff and City of Glens Falls Police Departments. I want to thank the Sheriff (*Bud York*), Supervisor Wood and Supervisor Brock for their interest in and support of this study.

* We have seen continued progress in the battle against invasive species in our lakes and

I want to thank (*Invasive Species Sub-Committee*) Committee Chair Dennis Dickinson for leading the fight on this front.

- * We saw continuity in services provided by our (*County*) Clerk's Office, Department of Motor Vehicles, Offices of Employment and Training, Office for the Aging and Veterans' Services. I want to thank Committee Chairs Frasier (*Human Services Committee*) and McDevitt (*County Clerk-Motor Vehicles Committee*) for their leadership as well our County Clerk, *Mrs. Vogel*, and County staff.
- * We authorized a new credit card this past year called the p-card which should provide a financial return to the County for the use of the same. I particularly want to thank our Purchasing Agent, *Julie Butler*; County Attorney Auffredou; County Administrator Dusek; Treasurer Swan; and other involved County staff for making this happen.
- * We held our first meeting regarding the Emergency Services issues faced throughout the County and began an important dialogue towards the development of potential costs saving solutions that will also improve services; I would like to see this continue in 2015. Thank you to Supervisor Vanselow for his input and past experience in this field.

"This is a partial list of our accomplishments and by no means recognizes all the Supervisors and County staff who have participated in these achievements.

"With all that said and taking a moment to recognize and enjoy our accomplishments, we know that our work has really only begun.

"As I think about this past year, I realize that this was really a transition year for the Board and the County. For the years before 2014, the Board and Administration were focused on putting all of their efforts into the financial recovery of the County from the 2008-09 recession and also from the debilitating loss of revenues and diminished fund balances. While those years were hard, in some ways it was easier for everyone to be unified in approach and solutions since it was all about a single objective and goal of saving money, cutting costs and returning the County to a stable financial condition.

"With the County's condition stabilized, this past year we turned to other matters relating to capital projects, County government transparency, organizational operations, and allocation of resources. We saw that with regard to these matters, there is often more than one correct or appropriate choice. Accordingly, there was more debate and disagreement.

"While this may have been uncomfortable to some extent, what we all must remember is it was okay. It's okay to debate. It's okay to argue over points. And yes, it's even okay to disagree.

"But one thing that must not be lost - once a matter has been debated and a decision has been made by majority vote, it is incumbent upon all of us to move ahead and be respectful of the process and of each other. Otherwise we will stagnate as a County and government. We will not be able to continue to accomplish the tasks and many important projects that still lie ahead for us to address.

“To facilitate healthy debates and assure that everyone is heard and has appropriate information, I will be calling for the Board, in this upcoming year, to begin to engage in strategic planning sessions where everyone will have an opportunity to have a say on the future agenda for the County. In addition, I will be calling upon the Administration and the Department Heads to assist us in assuring that we have resolutions, documentation and other information on matters that come before us in advance of all of our meetings. In a similar vein, I am also asking the Administration and Department Heads to cause all of this information to be posted on the County’s website in a timely fashion so that members of the public may likewise have access to the information and participate in the discussions and debate.

“If we are able to put these overall management operational tools in place, I believe it will help us deal with the issues in a way that is not only transparent but allows everyone a voice. With solid planning and procedures in place, I then want to challenge this board to take up and accomplish the following goals:

* I believe we must work with other municipalities in the County to look for shared services

or consolidation opportunities that will save taxpayer moneys and will meet the Governor’s one percent tax savings target. We should do this while sustaining, if not improving, services provided to our residents. To this end, I have requested at this organizational meeting, to modify the rules of the Board to provide for the creation of a new Shared Services Committee. I request that the Committee and County Administrator Dusek dedicate time and resources to accomplishing these goals.

* I am also challenging the Budget Officer and Budget Team to find ways to include an additional five hundred thousand dollars for road and infrastructure improvements in the 2016 Budget and subsequent budgets.

* I am asking the Board, Administration and appropriate Department Heads to take all action necessary to complete the Court Expansion Project by early 2016.

* While he has done a remarkable job this past year, particularly in the face of the addition

of a number of mandated positions, I am asking Sheriff York to continue to look for ways to cut Jail over-time costs and improve revenue.

* I am asking County Administrator Dusek to develop a plan for the sale of County-owned property adjacent to Route 9 and follow through with the study of uses available for the property next to the Nursing Home (*Westmount Health Facility*).

* I am asking the Board to continue to support, educate and pursue means that will adequately address the threat of invasive species to all of our lakes and bodies of water within the County.

* I am asking the Board for their support in taking steps to improve radio communications in the County.

* I continue to challenge all Departments to run their operations in a business-like manner, cutting costs where possible but also continuing to provide excellent service to our residents.

“As we begin 2015 and consider all of the challenges and work that lie ahead of us, let us also consider the opportunity for success, positive relationships and outstanding service to our residents. Let us remember that we are not managing the County’s affairs just for today but that we will be accountable for our actions into the future.

We must therefore, be good stewards of the County's assets and resources that are available to us today.

“While we may debate and disagree, let us remember that we also will be judged on our ability

to come together. We must not only operate and manage the affairs of the County today but also

contribute to the success of the County tomorrow.

“I consider the State of the County to be healthy and well-managed. I believe this Board, as well as the County's Administration and Departments, are ready to take on the new challenges that are before us.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin B. Geraghty, Chairman
Warren County Board of Supervisors”