

2017 Budget Message from Daniel P. McCoy

My administration has worked hard to fulfill our commitment to stabilize our County's finances; make our County safer and more secure; make the delivery of County critical services to seniors, to young people, to veterans and to those who are disadvantaged, more effective, efficient and equitable, and to do all of these things without placing any undue burden on the real property tax payers of our County.

For four continuous years we have presented budgets that have been structurally balanced, without the use of reserves or one shots and we have avoided the past practice of short term cash-flow borrowings. We have notably stayed under the mandated tax cap, but for two consecutive years we have not raised real property taxes. During that time period, despite the pressures of unfunded mandates, and the slow growth of our national economy, we've nearly doubled our available budgeted reserves to the highest amount in recent County history.

In fact, just last month our State Comptroller's office issued its annual Fiscal Stress Monitoring Report that places Albany County into the category of "no designation" of fiscal distress, an improvement over previous years where we were classified as having either moderate or susceptible fiscal stress. Based on the trend analysis done by the State Comptroller we are on the path to continued strength going forward. I am proud to present this 2017 Executive budget that continues to build upon this record of fiscal progress and programmatic growth. It is a budget that is both balanced and that continues our commitment to the vital programs that further the critical mission of County government.

Because of the growth of our real property tax base, we've been able to put into place a 1.38% increase to the County's tax levy. This increase to the levy will result in a slight decrease in the residential tax bill for an average \$150,000.00 home and is well below the allowable tax cap mandate.

In reviewing this budget, I call to your attention, that we've again avoided the use of one shot budget gimmicks. Toward that end, we propose, subject to Legislative approval, including the one-time Casino revenue payment of \$1.7 million received in 2016 into the Tax Stabilization reserve fund. The intended use of this reserve would be to permit us to offset or minimize tax increases in future budget years due to unforeseen or unquantifiable occurrences.

This budget proposes a grant of \$250,000 to the Albany County Land Bank, which in a very short period of time has become one of the most successful land banks in New York State, providing opportunities for neighborhood revitalization and home ownership in communities across the County. This grant, along with prior funding, brings Albany County's financial commitment to the Land Bank to \$1.75 million and allows the Land Bank to leverage additional funding sources including grants and bank settlements.

We've also proposed creating a \$250,000 cultural and economic development fund to help stimulate and support cultural and economic development efforts and programs throughout Albany County.

Additionally, we've consolidated recreation & youth sports programming into a new Department of Recreation. This department will be responsible for our AAU sports collaboration which has already engaged thousands of young athletes throughout the County. The department will also be responsible for the programming of our rail trail, hockey facility and county parks including Lawson Lake.

It is important to note, that this budget contains no reductions to County programs or to the County workforce and includes a 2% raise for non-union County employees. Lastly, this proposed budget does not call for the use of any reserves.

I look forward in the days and weeks ahead to reviewing this proposed budget with members of the County Legislature who have been an important partner in the success we have achieved in stabilizing County finances and in putting into place sound budgetary practices, particularly with regards to the dramatic economic turnaround at our County Nursing home.

I believe this budget demonstrates our commitment to ensuring the financial stability of our County as well as our commitment to the important mission of County government.

I would like to thank our Legislative leadership for working with myself and my administration in our effort to keep Albany County moving forward on those commitments and on our mutual goal of improving the quality of life for all of our residents.