



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
 - Perseverance
- These are the hallmarks of our resiliency.