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State of the County Address

Great things have happened in recent years in Oswego County that have changed the perspective of how our local government operates. We, as a collective team, have made great strides in securing the financial future of Oswego County. After many hours of meetings, debates, data studies, and interactive discussions we have been successful in several endeavors.

Here are some examples of what the Legislature has accomplished:

Land banks - Land banks have been around for many years, but not in our area. Under this Legislature and with the authorization of the State of NY, we established the first-ever Land Bank in Oswego County. This will help all municipalities, from the cities to the towns and villages. Thank you to Legislator Broadwell and the Land Bank team for all the time and effort that you put in to make this a success.

Department of Social Services Study- We hired Bonadio financial consultants to help us find ways to cut costs in the Department of Social Services. That effort produced savings of over \$100,000 for the taxpayers. Thank you to Commissioner Alvord and Veronica Turner for helping us better understand the challenges of administering Social Services. We now need to help the people of Oswego County better understand the many responsibilities and issues that the Department of Social Services deals with, as it accounts for a significant amount of our budget....

Health Department – The latest report shows that people across the county are working together to improve health behaviors. Health behavior rankings moved from 62nd for many years to 54th in 2016. The county adult smoking rate and the adult obesity rate showed marked improvement in 2016. Many organizations in the county –nonprofit, for-profit, faith-based, government, school districts, higher education, healthcare, and social services – have taken leadership roles to increase our residents’ awareness of making healthy choices. Individuals across Oswego County are striving to adapt healthy lifestyles. All efforts, big or small, direct or indirect, add up and now we’re starting to see a strong impact on the county’s health rankings. Although the county made the heavy lift in many activities, let’s try to keep the community’s spirits up for continued improvement. Thank you to Jianchang, Legislator Proud and our community partners for all their hard work to raise awareness and improve our overall health.

Public Safety Study - We need to better understand the services provided by our public safety departments. Therefore, we are requesting an RFP for a study that will gather data and help us make effective changes. Our goal is to improve our ability to offer our constituents a safe environment. I would like to thank Sheriff Todd for opening our eyes to the situation. Sheriff Todd has kept an open mind through all these changes. If I may say he has been a real trooper! Yes, we may differ on some key points but he remains one of the most well-respected county officials I know.

Economic Development – This Legislature along with the IDA have hired the Camoin consulting group to develop a Strategic Economic Advancement Plan for Oswego County. They'll be looking at how we can remove barriers and attract and improve business here. I look forward to having a plan to review by mid-year. Thank you, Dave Turner and Legislator Reehil for spearheading this initiative.

New Software - This legislature approved the purchase of a new accounting software package. The new “munis” system will be implemented by the end of the year. We have been running on a 20-plus year-old system. The new system will be much more efficient and will provide real-time numbers for our review. Thank you, Treasurer Beardsley for your vision of bringing Oswego County to the 21st century.

Other high points - The marine sanctuary, bicentennial book, and Super Dirt Week. All have had or will have a positive impact for Oswego County! Thank you to all who made these projects possible.

As many of you know, Oswego County has made new friendships in Albany and Washington.

Albany - I would like to take a brief moment to say a sincere "thank you" to Governor Cuomo for all that he has done to help us over the past couple of years. I am not sure everyone really understood the severity of the closure of the FitzPatrick Nuclear Plant. It would have devastated our county and our workforce. I consider him not only a friend but a fighter for Oswego County.

A big "thank you" to Senator Ritchie and Assemblymen Barclay and Oaks. All three have always been there for endless support. They continue to fight to make Oswego County a better place to work, live and raise a family.

Washington - What a great friendship we have with Congressmen Katko. He has been fighting for us on so many levels. He has championed stricter drug laws and is a leader in the effort to make Fort Ontario a National Park. He has told us that he is only one text message away for any need and has held up to this commitment multiple times.

A thank you to the media. I am so impressed with how our local media reports on Oswego County. The reports are positive and concise. So, thank you to Andrew Poole, Steve Yablonski, Debra Groom and all your staff for making the news an additional positive resource toward improving Oswego County. I bet you have never heard that from a Legislature Chairman before.

To the county employees, thank you for all your hard work that is done on a continuous basis. I can only hope that I can visit more departments and see the continued success.

As legislators we have common goals. Many might say one goal is for more night legislative meetings. As proven in the past, night meetings do not bring more people out. However, I understand the struggle in getting time off to attend these meetings. I will ask the Legislature to vote this year to change night meetings in July and August for this year only; that will give us a 4-month run of night meetings.

In closing, I would like to thank each and every one of you-- this legislature -- for never losing sight of our common goal to improve Oswego County. We all have our own opinions of what would be best for our individual areas, but thank you for always being mindful that the entire county has to be considered when enacting change. Thank you for listening to one another and being respectful while making your point or opinion known and understood.

To the legislature, don't take “no” or “can’t” for an answer. Question everything!!! Debate each other with integrity and mutual respect. Thank you for making 2016 a great year for Oswego County. I am looking forward to a very promising 2017.