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Sullivan County Manager's Monthly News

COUNTY MANAGER JOSHUA POTOSEK SUBMITS 2016 TENTATIVE BUDGET

Sullivan County Manager Joshua Potosek has filed his 2016 Tentative Budget. According to the County Manager, "The 2016 Tentative Budget proposes a tax levy increase less than what is allowed under the New York State tax cap law. This budget maintains vital services that are needed in the community and is achieved in a fiscally responsible manner while maintaining our fund balance levels at a level recommended by rating agencies and by our own Fund Balance Policy." Potosek added, "Our office is pleased to provide the Legislature and the public with the new budget layout this year. It has been enhanced to provide its reader with a better understanding of County government operations, the issues the County officials are currently facing, how they are addressing those issues and how decisions for the County are made."

The 2016 Tentative Budget includes:

- Total budgetary appropriations of \$207,471,547
- A proposed property tax levy of \$57,471,954, or an increase of 1.58%
- A proposed County Property Tax Rate increase of 0.93%
- A \$10 increase in tax liability per \$100,000 of assessment
- Sales Tax anticipation of \$37 million

The proposed budget will, notably, result in a New York State rebate check issued to all STAR eligible homeowners that is equal to the increase in their county taxes. This is due to the State's acceptance of the Sullivan County Government Efficiency Plan and the ability of the 2016 Budget to meet the tax cap requirement.

Please continue reading this month's special edition of the Sullivan County Manager's Newsletter for more information of what is included in the 2016 Tentative Budget.



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Sullivan County Manager
Submits 2016 Tentative
Budget

OUR COMMUNITY: SULLIVAN COUNTY AT A GLANCE

Sullivan County is a 968 square mile rural county in New York State located approximately 90 miles northwest of New York City in the Catskill Mountains. Its western border is shared with Pennsylvania and is marked by the Delaware River. Neighboring counties include Delaware County to the north, Ulster County to the east and Orange County to the south. In addition to the Delaware River, notable features include the Catskill Park in the northeast, the Shawangunk Ridge and Bashakill Wetlands in the southeast, and farmland in the western and northwestern portion of the County.

Historically, the two major economic sectors in Sullivan County have been tourism and agriculture. Unfortunately, both of these sectors have struggled in recent times. However, recently there has been renewed interest in both arenas, as the concept of buying locally produced foods has surged in popularity and agritourism has become a popular recreational option. Gradually we are seeing an increase once again in people vacationing in the Catskills, and the announcement that Sullivan County will be hosting one of three Class III Gaming facilities in New York State at the site of the former Concord Hotel has raised its profile once again as a prime location for vacationers.

As of the 2010 U.S. Census Sullivan County has a full time population of 77,547. This number is estimated to triple during the summer season, when the County experiences an influx of second homeowners and vacationers. The median household income was \$48,089 from 2009-2013, and 18.2% of the population was estimated to live below the poverty level for the same period. There were a total of 49,304 housing units in the County and the homeownership rate was 65.3%.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The Sullivan County Charter provides for a government consisting of nine elected County Legislators, each representing one legislative district within the County. The nine member board of legislators appoints a County Manager to oversee the day to day County operations. County departments each fall into one of five divisions which are overseen by a Commissioner who reports directly to the County Manager:

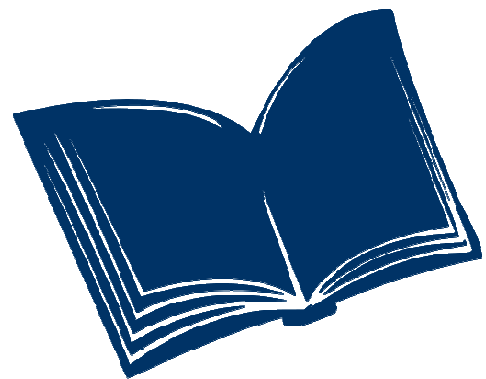
- Management and Budget
- Public Works
- Public Safety
- Planning and Environmental Management
- Health and Family Services

The County Manager, with the assistance of his Commissioners and Department Heads, must ensure that County Operations are functioning in a manner that is consistent with the policy established by the County Legislature.

SULLIVAN COUNTY TENTATIVE BUDGET DOCUMENT

The Sullivan County Operating Budget document (“Budget”) is meant to provide a roadmap for the delivery of services by Sullivan County departments and organizations for the upcoming fiscal year. The development of the Budget provides elected officials, administrators, department heads, and staff with the opportunity to assess current County operations, review relevant data, evaluate available resources and determine how to maintain and improve the delivery of services to the public that we serve.

This year, the 2016 Tentative Budget document has been redesigned to provide its reader with a better understanding of County government operations, the issues that County officials are currently facing (and how they are addressing those issues), and how decisions for the County are made. Staff in the County Manager’s Office and the Office of Management and Budget strive to make this document user friendly in order to ensure our citizens the opportunity to become educated on matters pertaining to their local government.



2016 TENTATIVE BUDGET: PRIORITIES AND ISSUES

The Sullivan County 2016 Tentative Budget maintains existing services and invests in the future of the County, while maintaining our strong financial position and staying within the New York State imposed tax cap of 1.58%. The average tax rate increase associated with this budget is 0.93%.

The spending plan includes the following new initiatives:

- \$8.9 million in county supported road and bridge infrastructure improvements. This includes \$1.5 million of new funds for a road surface treating program. Substantial funding is required to improve our road and bridge infrastructure. Closing the funding gap is a problem that cannot be solved in one year and will require a long term plan and commitment to allocate increased funding for these projects. Funding in the 2016 Tentative Budget would allow approximately 20% of all County roads to have work performed on them in 2016.
- \$125,000 to support future public transportation improvements. This funding would be allocated to the hiring of a Transportation Director as recommended by the recently completed Sullivan County Coordinated Transportation Services Plan.
- \$55,000 to support our local farmers by contracting for agriculture business retention and expansion services. The establishment of a Business Retention and Expansion Coordinator will prove to be an important link to have success with the implementation plans identified in the Sullivan County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan.
- \$150,000 to update our Sullivan County 2020 Strategic Plan. With 2020 a few years away, Sullivan County's comprehensive plan is stale and obsolete. The long awaited casino decision has brought an influx of optimism and opportunity to the County and has been justly called a "game changer." Consequently, the County needs a process and plan to help it proactively reap the potential benefits, and prepare for the potential impacts of anticipated new growth.
- \$100,000 for a parks master plan. Creating a master plan for the County's parks would provide a roadmap to improve our parks system and enhance and expand opportunities for outdoor recreation. The master plan would be of great value to our elected officials and county staff members when making decisions on the allocation of available County resources. Furthermore, the existence of a master plan would bode well for any future attempts to secure funding for specific park projects.
- \$100,000 for a D&H Canal rewatering feasibility study. Ultimately, the intention of this project is to provide a consistently watered segment of the former canal for recreational boating, fishing, and nature activities.
- The addition of eight positions in the Department of Family Services to ensure we are appropriately and cost effectively servicing our most vulnerable citizens. These positions are critical to sustaining positive momentum as we continue to improve service delivery.
- \$100,000 for the continuation of the Plans and Progress Small Grants Program. This program was a great success in 2015. It is important that we support local projects that have a positive impact on their communities and Sullivan County as a whole.
- \$150,000 investment for upgrades at the Emergency Training Center including a shower and bathroom facility. It is important that we ensure the health and safety of our fireman in the County.
- \$130,000 for a comprehensive salary study. Our employees are the backbone of all County operations, and it is imperative that we address the multiple concerns with regard to the fairness of compensation that have been brought to our attention.

GOING FORWARD: BUDGET ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT PROCESS

During the period of October 21 through December 20, the Sullivan County Legislature, normally through the Management and Budget Committee, reviews the tentative budget. The Management and Budget Committee meet with commissioners, department heads, and external agencies to discuss their budget request and the County Manager's recommendation for their department or agency.

The Sullivan County Legislature holds two public hearings on the tentative budget to obtain public comments. All line item changes are made through majority vote by the County Legislature. After the two public hearings and on or before December 20, the Legislature holds a meeting to consider the adoption of the budget.

The County Legislature has established legal control of the budget at the departmental level of expenditures and revenues. Transfers within departments can be performed administratively so long as total revenues or total expenses are not increasing. Transfers that require increases in total revenues or total expenses require a majority vote of the Legislature.

We encourage you to attend one of the public hearings to be held later this fall and to provide input on the 2016 Budget.

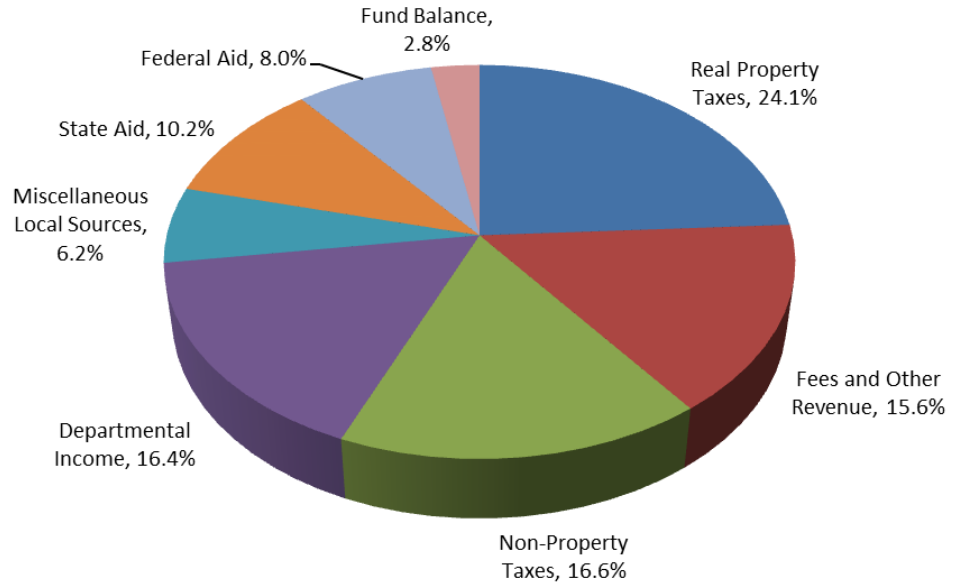
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Sullivan County Manager Joshua Potosek would like to thank all of the Commissioners, Department Heads, and Staff who assisted in the development of the 2016 Tentative Budget.

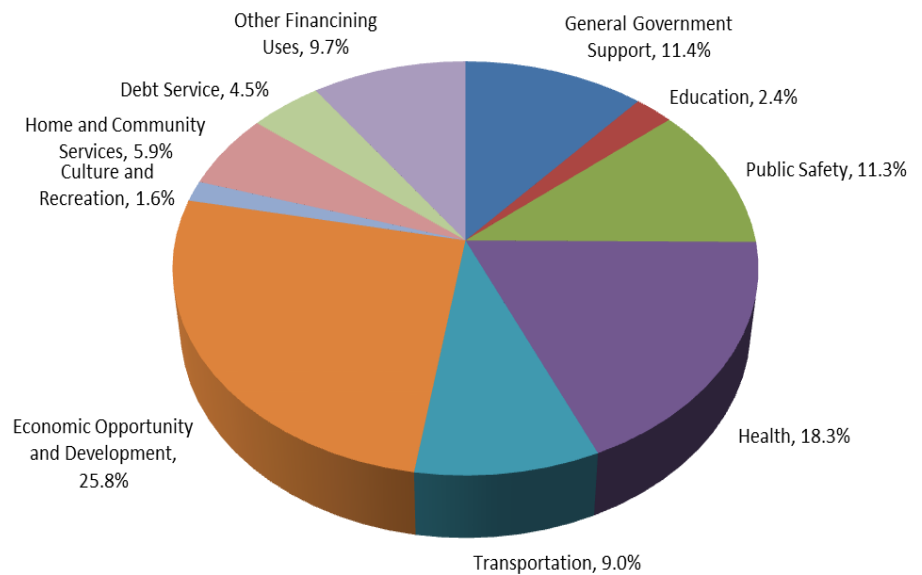
Every department participates in crafting the Tentative Budget document that ultimately is presented to the Legislature for final review, amendment and adoption. This is a process that, for many, begins in the early to mid spring and continues throughout the fall. Thank you all for your assistance.

I would also like to offer special thanks to Janet Young, Commissioner of Management and Budget, and her staff, Heather Brown, Research Analyst, and Nadine Bury, Executive Secretary, as well as Michelle Huck, Executive Assistant to the County Manager, for the incredible effort they put into the completion of this year's budget document.

TOTAL REVENUE BY TYPE, 2016 TENTATIVE BUDGET



TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS BY FUNCTION, 2016 TENTATIVE BUDGET



The County Manager is the full time Chief Executive and Administrative Head of the County of Sullivan. He and his dedicated staff are prepared to answer your questions and to hear your comments.

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