

INSIDE INSIGHTS

The Monthly Newsletter of the Sullivan County Manager's Office

December 2017

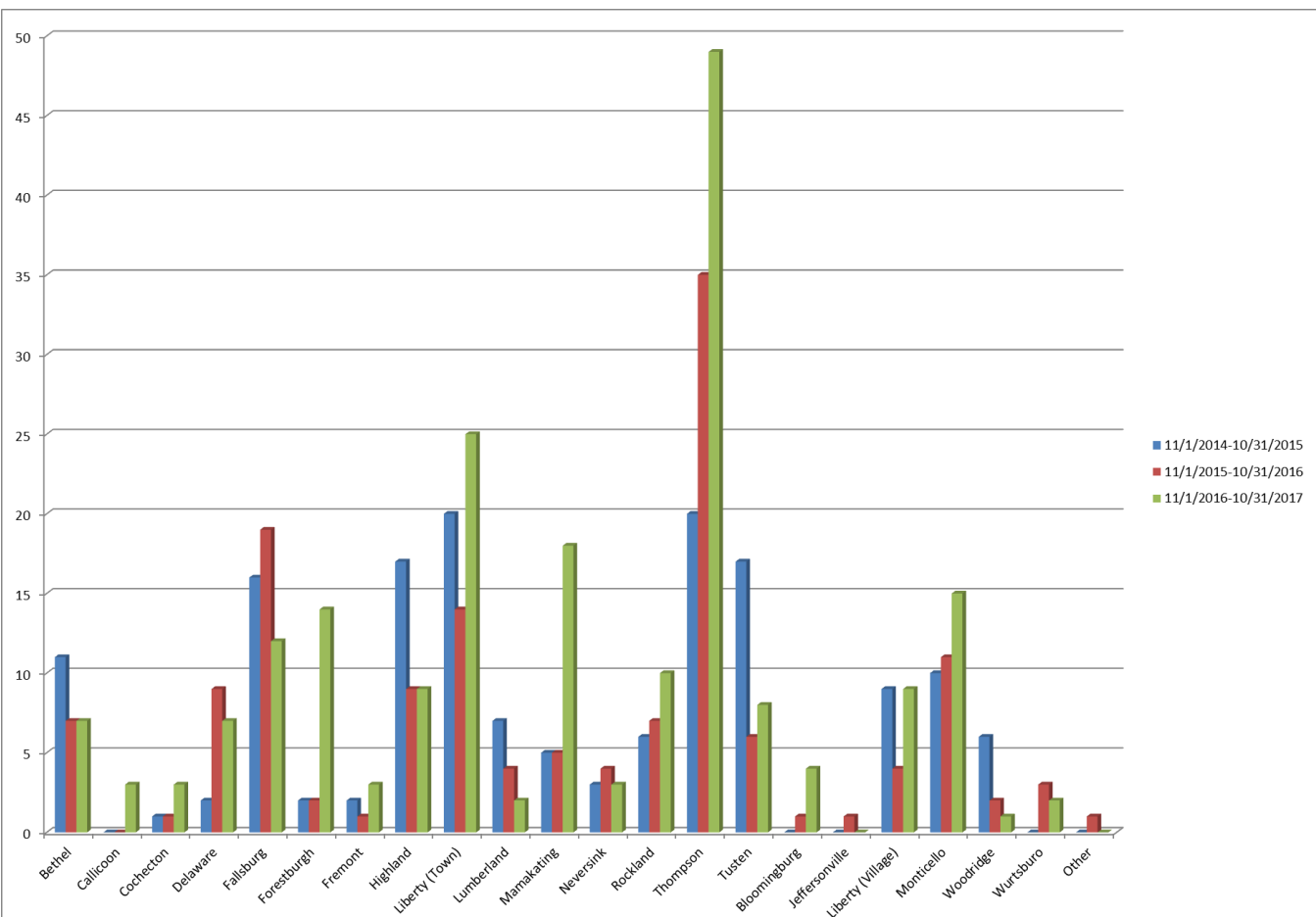
Growth isn't just coming ... it's actually already here

While the Resorts World Catskills casino, the YO1 health resort and the indoor waterpark are the most visible examples of Sullivan County's healthy economic outlook, there are plenty of other projects and municipal activity afoot.

"Economic development is definitely on an upswing," notes Sullivan County Manager Josh Potosek. "Our Planning Division has been very busy this year, as evidenced by the number of projects needing their review. In the past month alone, the amount of review requests has doubled."

In This Issue

- We're serious about no smoking
- Visit the waterpark
- Inside our dedicated Foster Care Unit



The Sullivan County Division of Planning has conducted more than 200 GML-239 reviews this year, a third higher than either 2016 or 2015. Much of the reviewed activity has occurred in the Town of Thompson and Village of Monticello. These reviews are required by the State when public and private land use proposals have potential countywide or intermunicipal significance.

Families matter here

Forget what you've heard. The Sullivan County Foster Care Unit does not aim to break up families. Quite the opposite, in fact.

"As much as we love our foster parents and kids, it is a very traumatic experience for a child to be taken out of a family," admits Sullivan County Health & Family Services Deputy Commissioner Robert Kuhn. "Our mantra is about prevention, about preserving families, about reducing time in foster care."

Thus it's rare when caseworkers recommend Family Court terminate

Who we serve and where

- 101 children in foster care (as of December 2017)
- Infants, children, pre-teens, teens and college-age adults up to 21 years old
- Biological, adoptive and foster parents and siblings
- 6 adoptions so far this year, with 2 more possible by the time you read this
- 36 foster homes in Sullivan County

More foster care and adoptive families are desperately needed. Call Michael Osepowicz at 845-513-2389 to learn how to join our Foster Care Unit in making a difference in a child's life!



The Foster Care Unit includes, from the left, Senior Caseworker Kim Nash, Caseworker David Ninnie, Caseworker Keisha Malone, Caseworker Jessica Brignoll, Supervisor Wendy Mason and Caseworker Amanda Giangiacomo. Not pictured are Senior Caseworker Michael Osepowicz and Caseworker Carlton Smith.

parental rights. In reality, they're working hard to avoid that outcome.

"We really do care about each and every family we work with," acknowledges Wendy Mason, Supervisor of Foster Care, Adoption and Home Finding. "We are here way past five every night and on the weekends, helping kids, teens and adults."

It's one of the tougher jobs in the County workforce, not only for the hours worked but the inherently heartwrenching, stressful situations.

"It is hard, and it can be really sad," nods Jess Brignoll, one of the newer caseworkers but a seasoned County employee. "I myself didn't grow up with a great life, so I feel I can walk in their shoes, and I like teaching kids."

The triumphs make the challenges worth it. Jess remembers a young man whom she had to literally run after to get him into the proper residential program. He wouldn't speak for the longest time, so she had no idea whether she was getting through to him.

Then one day he told a coworker, "Can you tell Jess thank you for what she did for me?" Jess tracked him down, and they enjoyed a reunion full of conversation.

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The 85,000-square-foot waterpark's roof is under construction. When complete, it will allow guests to swim year-round, likely requiring sunblock lotion and sunglasses.

Yes, we're getting a waterpark!

Sometimes forgotten amidst the excitement surrounding the Resorts World Catskills casino is the fact that the encompassing Adelaar resort property will also feature an indoor waterpark. It's already under construction, in fact, and legislators recently took a tour.

The waterpark and adjacent family hotel sit about half a mile north of the casino complex in Monticello, along Chalet Road, on property that used to host the former Concord Resort Hotel's International Golf Course, sibling of the Monster course.

Hundreds of workers have already erected the laminated arches which will support the roof of the waterpark, along with footings that will hold the slides which will exit and re-enter the structure. Designed by the same group that operates Aquatopia in the Poconos, the complex will open in 2019, about a year after the casino.

Costing close to \$200 million, the resort will cover 425,000 square feet and will likely be a focal point for families looking not just to swim and recreate at the waterpark but to enjoy Legoland, the casino and existing attractions in the Sullivan, Orange and Ulster region.



The 324-room, seven-story hotel next to the indoor waterpark will feature 20,000 square feet of conference space, including a 6,500-foot ballroom.

Please do not smoke on any County land

We're serious about our no-smoking policy, which prohibits lighting up (or using tobacco products of any kind, including e-cigarettes) on property owned by Sullivan County.

That includes not just buildings but land, from our parks to our Government Center to our Social Services complex.

Starting January 1, we'll more vigorously enforce that smoking ban, and anyone found violating the



As a reminder of our policy, you'll notice pictures of County officials (like District 5 Legislator Terri Ward) in various County facilities.

policy will be asked either to stop or to only smoke in their personal vehicle.

Why the fuss? Because it's the healthy thing to do, and we're a County committed to improving the health of our citizens and our employees.

But we'd rather help than hassle, so if you'd like to find out how to quit, our Public Health Services team stands ready to assist with plenty of free material and support. Call 845-292-5910 confidentially, and soon you can be breathing easier!

Congratulations are in order!

Our Emergency Operations Center, nerve center of the 911 system, celebrated its 30th anniversary this month, and the entire County salutes the hardworking staff who keep us safe 24/7/365.



Maternal Child Health of Sullivan County Public Health Services won the hotly contested Holiday Door Decorating Contest, which we hold every year throughout County facilities. Their creative (albeit “Grinchy”) door beat out nearly two dozen other contestants, thanks to the student judges from Liberty High School. Every one of the doors was an imaginative and festive take on the Holiday spirit, and many were on view in public spaces, adding joy to the season for our citizens and visitors.

Don't throw away that Christmas tree

The Sullivan County Department of Solid Waste & Recycling is pleased to announce that it will once again accept retired natural Christmas trees at no charge from Sullivan County residents, businesses and visitors at the end of this Holiday season.

For individuals with access to backyards and open spaces, strategically-placed, spent Christmas trees offer welcome cover during the winter months for birds and wildlife. Residents, businesses and visitors with limited access to open space, however, are encouraged to take their trees to any Sullivan County Recycling & Transfer Station for FREE disposal.

Sullivan County Division of Public Works employees will chip the trees for use as mulch in County parks, landscaping and beautification projects. Repurposing wood chips in this manner helps to conserve natural resources and enhance the appearance of the County.

“This is a great opportunity to be a part of a Holiday tradition in Sullivan County, knowing that your tree beautified our communities and will continue to bring value and enjoyment to people who live and visit here,” said District 7 Legislator Joe Perrello, chair of the Legislature’s Public Works Committee. “It’s also the perfect way to make an important statement about recycling.”

For additional information about waste reduction strategies reuse and recycling, as well as transfer station hours of operation, please contact the Sullivan County Department of Solid Waste & Recycling at 845-807-0290 or visit <http://co.sullivan.ny.us/Departments/SolidWasteRecycling/tabid/3198/Default.aspx>

Save the dates and learn more

- O&W Rail Trail Community Meeting, January 30 (snow date January 31) at 6 p.m., Government Center, Monticello
- Historic Tax Credit and Grant Workshop, hosted by the Preservation League of NYS, State Historic Preservation Office, & Sullivan County Division of Planning; January 18, 3-6 p.m., United Methodist Church, 170 North Main Street, Liberty

2018 County Budget adopted

In a unanimous vote on December 14, legislators passed the 2018 Sullivan County Budget.

Totaling just over \$226 million in appropriations, the Budget comes with a projected tax levy increase of 2.3%, under the State-mandated property tax increase cap.

“I am grateful to legislators for passing a 2018 budget which largely reflects what I proposed in October,” said County Manager Josh Potosek. “We avoided a large tax increase without reducing jobs or services, and so the County is well-positioned for the incredible growth coming our way in the new year.”

This Unit is all about the family ...

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Wendy had a similar experience. "I had a child who I thought I hadn't reached at all, and I was so frustrated," she recalls. "Years later, he came back and asked for me. I found out he is extremely successful — a millionaire — and he had come to tell me everything I ever taught him is the reason he's successful today. That just floored me!"

He added one more thing: "Don't think I'm the only one you've ever helped. Every kid you've ever worked with is thinking the same thing."

That's what motivates Wendy and her staff through the tougher days, made more challenging by the fact that foster care cases have nearly doubled in the last decade. Five caseworkers and two senior caseworkers, plus Wendy, oversee more than 100 foster children located not just in Sullivan County but in homes as far away as Binghamton and Albany.

"Opiate use is rampant, and it's a difficult addiction to work with," she explains of the mounting number of foster care cases. "We also have the poverty level here, and that doesn't help matters."

Some parents do choose to give up their children for adoption, and that's where Senior Caseworker Kim Nash comes in.

"I love doing the adoptions," the 27-year County employee affirms, adding that it can be even more satisfying when biological and adoptive families stay in touch. "It makes a nice extended family for everyone."

Foster care is often the route to adoption, she notes.

"We do a lot in this Unit for birth families and adoptive families," Kim explains. "It's a very wonderful, good program."

What the Unit most needs now, says Wendy, are foster homes — families willing to open their hearts and lives to children ages 0-21.

"It's the same exact process to become a foster or adoptive parent," she notes. "And if you're looking to adopt a child through this agency, you're going to have to do it through the foster care system."

Only 36 foster homes currently exist in Sullivan County, and there's a need for at least 50.

"We have some foster parents who are EMTs who take our most medically fragile babies," Wendy explains. "We're looking for more of those, too."

The Foster Care Unit provides a full host of supportive services, from coordinating supervised visits with biological family to taking kids to doctors' appointments, so brand new and experienced foster families aren't left to fend for themselves.

"We serve the child, their family and the foster family," says Wendy.

And their good deeds aren't confined to working hours. The Unit crew, for example, makes

sure every family they work with has Thanksgiving dinners and Christmas presents.

"Making a difference in just a couple children's lives is enough to carry me through," Wendy says. "That's what it's all about."

"Our mantra is about prevention, about preserving families, about reducing time in foster care."

*- Health & Family Services
Deputy Commissioner*

Got a question?

Try your legislator first, by calling the Sullivan County Legislature's office at 845-807-0435. They can direct you to your representative, who is elected to serve you.

Or look up who you're seeking directly, via the County's website: co.sullivan.ny.us

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