

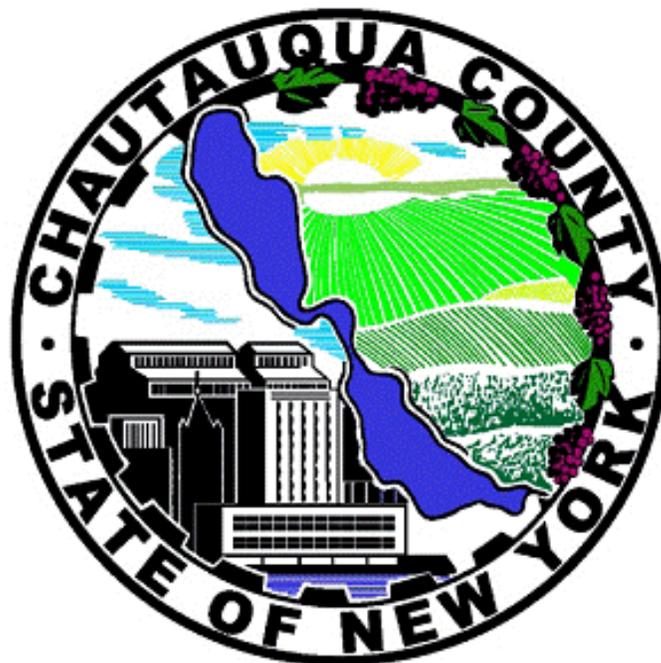
Chautauqua County, New York

State of the County

February 24, 2021

Paul M. Wendel, Jr.

Chautauqua County Executive



Thank you, Mr. Chairman. County legislators, department heads, and fellow Chautauqua County residents, thank you for tuning in to tonight's meeting and my first State of the County address, which is Chautauqua County's first virtual State of the County. Shortly after I transitioned into the role of County Executive, Chautauqua County and the world faced one of the most unique challenges of our lifetime the COVID-19 pandemic. Tonight, I will discuss the impact of COVID-19 on Chautauqua County and how we have met its challenges head on. I will touch on efforts made and successes we had during the past year, and conclude with plans that I feel will take Chautauqua County to the next level.

Early COVID-19 Response



The first two months of my administration began like many before me. I became acquainted with my department heads, my cabinet and leaders throughout Chautauqua County. I worked closely with our leadership in county government and began to form my vision of what 2020 would look like under my leadership. Many projects had already begun, and I quickly began working on seeing them to fruition. As the month of February unfolded things were changing in the eastern part of the state that would impact every county from Suffolk to Chautauqua. As I began meeting with our Health department it quickly became apparent that events were unfolding that would lead our county and our economy to an abrupt shutdown. On Sunday, March 15, 2020, we called an urgent meeting of county staff and other stakeholders to evaluate the rapidly developing COVID-19 situation. That afternoon I declared a state of emergency and immediately formed a COVID-19 Response team that began work on what would become a

year long commitment. This initial team helped set the course for our local response and communications and includes the following people. Sheriff Jim Quattrone, Public Health Director Christine Schuyler, Emergency Services Director John Griffith, and our three County Physicians, Dr. Robert Berke, Dr. Michael Faulk, and Dr. Brian Walters. Ultimately, as the situation moved toward a longer-term FEMA event, we moved the team to a FEMA Incident Command System

Communication



As our COVID-19 situation evolved, communication became a key priority. We were able to quickly develop communication plans and multiple modes of relaying important information. One of the things I am most proud of is our focus to ensure information was accessible to everyone. Early on, a request was made to provide a sign language interpreter so the deaf and hard of hearing would be able to understand our press conferences. As a result of that request Western New York Deaf Access Services recognized Chautauque County's efforts with a 2020 Community Partner Award.

2020 County Budget Adjustments



Early in the pandemic, our focus was on the physical health of our residents and what quickly emerged was a need to transition to their fiscal health and our ever-changing county budget. The unknowns around the impact of economic shutdowns, sales tax reductions, and increased expenses of the pandemic, led me to create my COVID-19 Finance Team. This included our finance and budget team along with legislative leadership. While many counties and municipalities in the state were facing budget deficits, we worked with diligence and engaged all department heads in the process, as we recognized opportunities for what became over \$4 Million in reductions to our 2020 adopted budget. To further assist in our budget reductions, we offered our county workforce voluntary furloughs. Those furloughs helped our county with an additional \$1 Million in savings. We are currently operating with fewer employees than we had 10 years ago, and are now perhaps the busiest that county government has ever been. I would like to personally thank all of our county employees for the terrific work they have done and continue to do throughout these unprecedented times. Despite all of these unknowns, I was able to produce a 2021 budget that was structurally balanced and protected the fiscal health of the county. Thanks to better-than-expected sales tax revenues and departments holding to the budget reductions, our proactive approach paid off with preliminary budget figures showing 2020 coming in \$4.5 Million better than budget.

Chautauqua County on “PAUSE” Local Businesses Stepping Up



CCIDA EMERGENCY LOAN FUND PROVES A HUGE SUCCESS

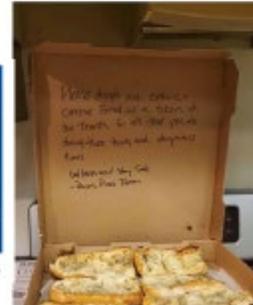
APRIL 24, 2020



The Chautauqua County Industrial Development Agency (CCIDA) was successful in expeditiously establishing and implementing an emergency working capital loan program to benefit Chautauqua County businesses that have been negatively impacted by the Coronavirus. The CCIDA quickly obtained approval from the US Economic Development Administration to implement the program, and \$250,000 was allocated to the fund a little over a month ago.



Partnership between CCIDA, Foundations, and JCC Makes the Program Possible



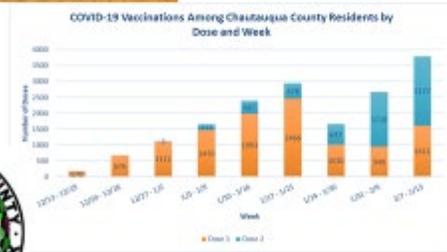
While COVID-19 surged down state, Chautauqua County was eluding the massive hospital surge and the high rates of COVID positive residents. New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo put all of New York State on “PAUSE” in order to slow and stop the spread of the virus. During this time, it became obvious that the closing of our economy would have a significant impact on our economic health here in the county. Our economic development team jumped into action to help local businesses. Working with local foundations, we launched a personal protective equipment (PPE) grant program that helped 30 local businesses comply with state requirements. Also, we implemented an Emergency Working Capital loan program which assisted 24 companies with low interest loans. This loan program later served as a model for several counties throughout New York State. A special thanks go out to my staff, the health department staff, the Economic Development/County of Chautauqua Industrial Development Agency (CCIDA), the Sheriff's Department and the Emergency Services staff who were all instrumental in assisting residents and businesses. I also thank the many Chautauqua County businesses who helped serve others. Early in the pandemic when PPE and sanitizer supplies became scarce, Jay Baker and his team at Jamestown Plastics developed an innovative, reusable face shield to help protect frontline workers. Southern Tier Distilling and Five & 20 Distillery shifted production to make hand sanitizer. Pace’s Pizza wanted to make sure frontline workers were appreciated and well-fed. They rose to the challenge by instituting a pizza donation program in which they matched every pizza purchased for essential workers. We are fortunate in our county to have many businesses who came forward to help in this time of need.

Building Relationships; Leading Reopening

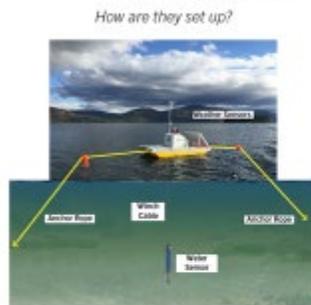


Chautauqua County emerged as a leader in reopening concepts and continued building regional relationships that in turn would help facilitate a safe reopening of our county and our economy. The Western New York Regional Control Room built valuable relationships with Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul and county leaders across Western New York. As the Control rooms became a source of collaboration my office began to spearheaded other regional collaborations. As the Governor focused on growing concerns of the infection rate increases in Pennsylvania, I formed the Border Counties Coalition. This group consisted of all counties that bordered Pennsylvania from Rockland all the way to Chautauqua County. These efforts proved to be vital in understanding the need to work with our bordering state and not to shut them out. In efforts to work collaboratively with not only state and regional leaders, I felt it imperative to work with mayors, supervisors, and highway supervisors to apprise them of the ever changing world we were living in and how to help them assist their constituents during this difficult time. Last, we were able to expand testing availability when appointments were scarce, by requesting rapid testing machines through our control room. By working together, we were able to get things done and help shape the reopening process used across the state.

Continuing the Fight Against COVID-19



Growing Our Economy



What do boaters need to know?

Stay well outside of the orange warning buoys when approaching the vertical profilers. These buoys are in place to help boaters avoid hitting the anchor ropes. The anchor ropes go down and away from the buoys at a 45-degree angle.



The Chautauqua Lake Memorandum of Agreement is set to expire this year, and we have already begun developing a new Memorandum of Understanding. This MOU will build on the original MOA to incorporate the lessons learned. We will continue facing our Chautauqua Lake challenges head on with scientific analysis. Our lake Initiatives have brought world-class researchers to Chautauqua Lake including The Jefferson Project, Bowling Green and North Carolina State Universities. We will continue to establish Chautauqua Lake as a scientific research center.

The key to lessening the tax burden continues to be growing our local economy. This is more crucial now than ever as our local businesses and industries adapt to the post-COVID-19 economy. Chautauqua County businesses are creative and resilient. We have already seen many great examples of businesses adapting to safety regulations needed to re-open their doors. For example, The National Comedy Center developed its “Laugh Safe” program to protect visitors, creating a model which can be used at museums and attractions across the country. We have also seen local businesses working to develop their online presence through the “ShopLocalCHQ” online marketplace. This concept originated from my office but quickly became a collaboration with our economic development team, and the Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce.

Economic Growth & Resiliency



While other counties in the state looked to establish business and economic resiliency teams, we were ahead of the curve with the Partnership for Economic Growth (CCPEG). Our CCIDA and Economic Development Team continue their focus on business retention and development efforts. They have successfully obtained a \$10.5 Million U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant to establish a revolving loan fund. Business developments that were in the works continue to move forward in Chautauque County. Some projects of note include Arktura, a ceiling tile manufacturer moving into vacant space at our Mason Industrial Park, and Petri Baking Products is moving forward in its previous facility in Silver Creek. In addition, the announcement of a new Love's Travel Stop and Country Stores, Inc. brings long overdue development to the I-90 Exit in Ripley, N.Y. We are also pursuing reinstatement in the Essential Air Service program to bring commercial flights back to the Chautauque County Jamestown Airport. We have welcomed Luscombe aircraft manufacturing to the Jamestown Airport, as well as Beta industries, an aircraft manufacturing company that has produced Electric Aircraft. Chautauque County will be serial number two of a charging station that will provide needed support to this company's efforts with expansion and contracts with the Us Air Force.



The path to a thriving county demands economic growth, workforce readiness, a quality of life environment, an effective and efficient county government, and a growth of our agricultural opportunities. I am working to promote an environment within Chautauqua County for both small and large businesses to grow and prosper. Collaborative efforts have begun with JCC and private businesses to address our workforce readiness cultural. I will continue to aggressively support initiatives such as the CCPEG, and promote tourism one of the leading industries in our county. We will work to further explore government efficiencies and regional concepts which include countywide code enforcement and a county housing court. We will continue improving our communication within County Government as well. I have established a number of topic-focused cabinet groups such as the Human Services Cabinet, Finance Cabinet, and Department of Public Facilities Cabinet. Each will meet on a monthly basis to help ensure our departments are working efficiently and collaboratively. I will continue to be a dedicated champion for the residents of Chautauqua County, to work tirelessly to bring Chautauqua County to the next level. The pandemic is merely an obstacle in our path to success. My goal is for efficiency, cost reduction and economic development. Together these efforts will become models for other counties throughout our Empire State.