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PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday, January 18, 2023

FROM: Columbia County Board of Supervisors Chairman Matt Murell

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

STATE OF COUNTY INCLUDES TAX RATE DECREASE

“We enter 2023 with a county budget that includes a tax rate decrease of 7.49 percent based on a two percent tax levy, which brings the fiscal plan in under the New York State tax cap. The county again moves forward with no cut in services and no county-maintained program facing elimination, while again no county work force reduction is planned,” Board of Supervisors Chairman Matt Murell said in his opening remarks of the State of County 2023 address delivered at the board’s organizational meeting held Tuesday, January 3.

At the January 3 meeting, Chairman Murell was selected by the Board of Supervisors to lead the county in 2023, marking the eighth consecutive year he has done so. He has served as Town of Stockport Town Supervisor since 2012.

“I’m honored to have again been chosen by my peers as chairman,” said Chairman Murell. “The recognition tells me Columbia County is on the right track. I would remind everyone that this is a team effort and I am proud to be part of it.”

Chairman Murell proceeded to list a series of 2022 county accomplishments, followed by projects that loom in 2023.

Among 2022’s accomplishments:

- The sewer line project from Commerce Park to the Greenport wastewater treatment facility was completed. Following an initial cost estimate of \$8.7 million, the project came in at \$6.8 million and was finished on time.
- The PJ Keeler Columbia County Emergency Services and Response Training Facility, located in Commerce Park, was completed. “The dedication of the facility is a great honor for someone who’s done a lot for the emergency services of Columbia County,” said county Fire Coordinator George Keeler.
- All county transfer stations received paving and new compactors. The Greenport station has received a new top loading building, which was 50 percent funded with a DEC grant. Early in this new year, a food waste digester will come on line at the Greenport station.
- We are now in the final stages of completing an energy reduction/capital improvement project at the county DMV and the treasurer’s office building. This project replaced aging boilers and air conditioning

equipment and replacing aging roofs. As part of this projected, a new roof will be installed at the county highway garage, followed by the addition of a solar panel installation expected to save an estimated \$20,000 annually.

- New contracts with the four unions representing county workers were negotiated and finalized.

Looking ahead:

- When the Stall Bridge in Livingston/Clermont was closed by order of NYS Department of Transportation in June, residents were faced with a 10-mile detour. The board decided to use funds on hand to perform the necessary repairs and the design work is now underway. Current expectations are for the bridge to be reopened in early 2024.
- The Department of Social Services building is in line for an upgrade to its HVAC equipment, a better insulated roof, and a solar system that will supply half of the building's electrical needs.
- We are now looking into developing a much-needed new OFA kitchen and office area at the Commerce Park.

While noting that, in 2023, the county will be welcoming new directors of the Health Department and the Youth Bureau, Chairman Murell said, "I would like to take this opportunity to thank outgoing Health Department Public Health Director Jack Mabb for his outstanding leadership in the most difficult of times, as COVID-19 entered and then became part of our lives."

Chairman Murell expressed his appreciation to Treasurer PJ Keeler, Controller James Breig, Supervisor/Deputy Chairman Rob Lagonia, Supervisor/Deputy Chairman and Finance Chairman James Guzzi, Supervisor Tistrya Houghtling, Supervisor Art Bassin, Supervisor Rick Scalera, county Human Resources Director Michael Williams-Riordon, County Attorney Rob Fitzsimmons, Clerk of the Board Kelly Baccaro, and county department heads for their hard work and dedication, particularly over the past three extremely trying years during the COVID-19 pandemic.