

Hoosick Falls & Surrounding Areas News

Rensselaer County Sees \$18 Million In Savings During 2020

County to Use Some Savings to Support Community Organizations in 2021

Press Release from the Office of the County Executive

Rensselaer County finished fiscal year 2020 with an \$18 million surplus, with County Executive Steve McLaughlin and members of the County Legislature saying they will begin putting some of the savings into the community.

The \$18 million surplus came despite the county wrestling with the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, with McLaughlin crediting sound management for the accomplishment. The county has reduced taxes each of the past three years and expanded important county services. For example, the county paved 50 miles of roads, a record number of miles in a year.

"We are very proud to have met the challenges of COVID-19 during 2020, protecting and even expanding needed services, and to be able to save money on behalf of our residents," said McLaughlin.

"Every day during the pandemic presented new challenges we have not seen during our lifetime. Credit to our managers and employees for stepping up to truly do more with less, and during trying times," added McLaughlin.

"Now, we are ready to provide funding to many of the community organizations that keep our county strong and who may have lost funds during the pandemic or incurred additional expenses," added McLaughlin.

The county generated the savings by coming in under budget in key areas like personnel and purchasing during 2020. The county also saw strong performance for sales tax, property auction and related areas.

The county saw savings thanks to more efficient energy purchases and refinancing of county debt during 2020.

The county has generated strong savings each year of McLaughlin's term of office and added to the county surplus. The county's annual independent audit is now being completed.

"This is great news for Rensselaer County and shows our county is strong, growing and well-managed during these challenging times. This gives us momentum as we work to move past COVID-19," said Vice Chair of the Legislature for Finance Bob Loveridge.

"We are pleased to see these savings for our taxpayers and we will continue to work with the County Executive to conservatively manage county finances," said Vice-Chair Kelly Hoffman.

"Rensselaer County continues to remain on solid financial ground, despite all of the challenges of last year. The Legislature will continue to work with County Executive McLaughlin to make sure the county's future remains even brighter," said Chairman Michael Stammel.

Hoosick Falls Village Adopts 21-22 Budget

by Doug La Rocque

The Village of Hoosick Falls is slated to receive \$180,000 in American Rescue Plan monies sometime this summer, with another \$180,000 about the same time next year. Confident of this funding, when the village put together its proposed budget for the 2021-22 fiscal year, it included these monies as revenue and earmarked them to help pay for such things as a new police car and a plow/sander/chassis for the Highway Department. The public hearing was held earlier in April, and the Village Board scheduled a special meeting on Thursday, April 29 to adopt the spending plan.

Duck, Here Comes The Monkey Wrench

First, as the meeting opened, Village Treasurer Denise McMahon explained that because of an error discovered by the NYS Comptrollers office, there was \$4,700 in Veterans Exemptions not issued in last year's tax levy. This means, adjustments have to be made for the coming year, and as a result, the amount of the Village's total tax levy is \$1,711 less than was budgeted. Ms. McMahon suggested the trustees find a similar amount in reductions to balance the books.

That was a small monkey wrench. The biggest one appeared when Village Attorney Andy Gilchrist informed the Board the New York State Conference of Mayors was strongly recommending these ARP funds not be included in village budgets yet, because the exact regulations on how they can be spent is still forthcoming from the federal government.

He also cautioned that even when these regulations are released, it would be prudent not to include the ARP funds until they are actually in the bank.

Trustees thought that was prudent advice and then spent about 90 minutes discussing what changes should be made on the expenditure side, to balance the unanticipated loss of revenue. Attorney Gilchrist did say these changes need not be permanent. Once the spending guidelines are released and the money is really in the bank, the Board could do a budget amendment, putting back in the additional revenue, and then decide how to best spend the money. Associations such as Hoosick Rising and CiviCure have already outlined some suggestions they think would be a wise use of a portion of this money.

No Change In Tax Hike

Despite all this maneuvering, the now adopted budget, still calls for a slightly more than one cent per thousand tax hike, which is under the tax cap. For a home assessed at \$100,000 it is roughly a 10 dollar increase.

BENNINGTON

Medical Matters

To Deal With BIPOC Vaccine Efforts

Southwestern Vermont Health Care's (SVHC) Medical Matters Weekly with Dr. Trey Dobson, a weekly interactive, multiplatform medical-themed talk show, will feature Natalie Kwit, public health veterinarian with the Vermont Department of Health, as a guest on Wednesday, May 12 at 11 am (note special earlier time). The discussion will cover everything you need to know about ticks and tick borne diseases.

The show is produced with cooperation from Cata-

mount Access Television (CAT-TV). Viewers can see Medical Matters Weekly live on Facebook at facebook.com/svmedicalcenter and facebook.com/CAT-TVBennington. Those viewing on Facebook will be able to contribute questions through the chat function.

Medical Matters Weekly is an interactive, multiplatform guest-driven talk show. It provides a behind-the-scenes perspective on health care, including topics like behavioral health, food insecurity, equitable care and the opioid crisis.



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