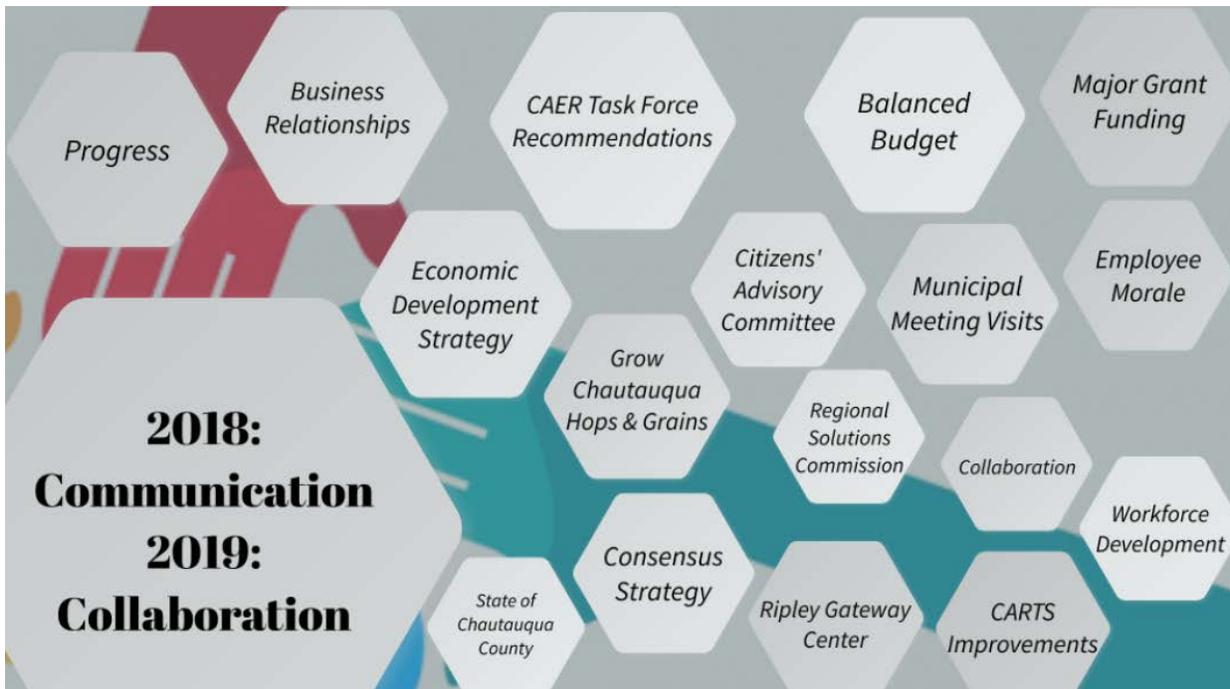
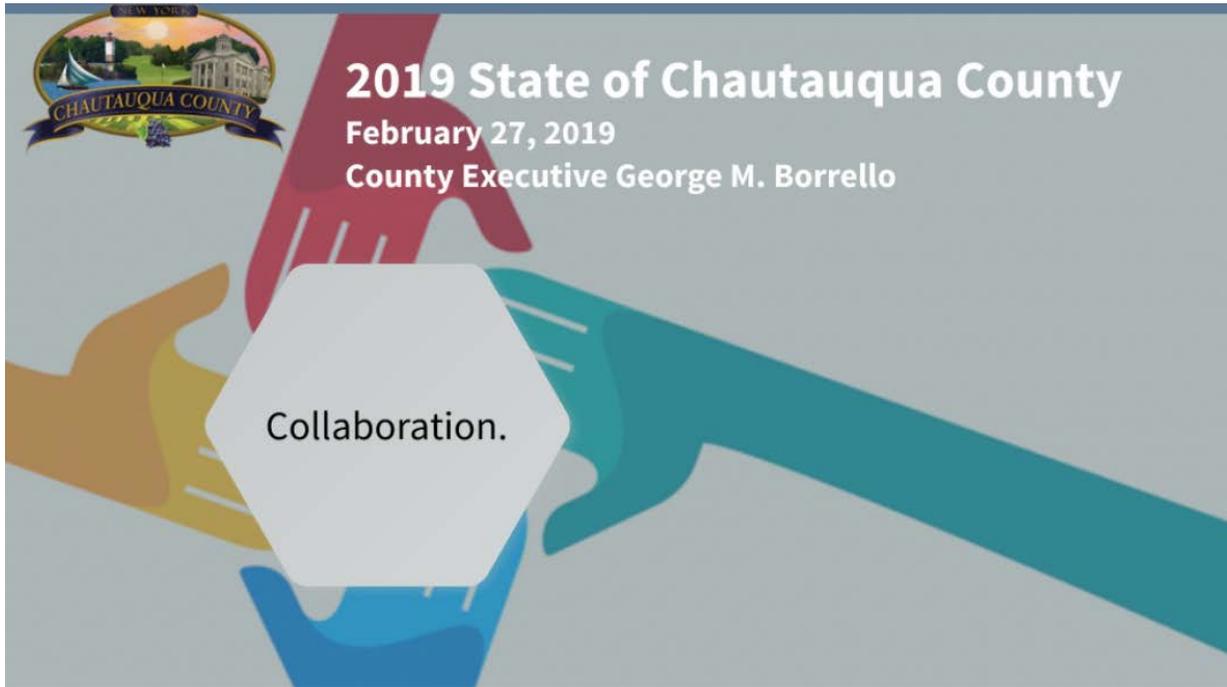


2019 State of the County Address



Thank you Mr. Chairman. Thank you Legislators, my fellow county employees and guests.



2018 was an exciting and fulfilling first year for me as your county executive. We saw progress around the county. We saw concrete and steel rising up out of the ground in Dunkirk with construction getting underway at the Athenex pharmaceutical plant and the Sonwil Cold Storage facility. In Celoron, we saw the opening of the Chautauqua Harbor Hotel, which is the single largest investment in hospitality in our county's history. And of course, we saw the opening of the award-winning National Comedy Center in Jamestown along with many other new and expanding businesses.

There is a positive energy and attitude that can be felt in our communities throughout the county. This past year we started changing our attitude and improving our collective self-confidence and we will continue to raise the bar in 2019 and beyond.

2018 was about COMMUNICATION and now, in 2019, we will take what we learned to enhance COLLABORATION.

LAST YEAR, we strived for better communication in order to better understand the priorities of the people and businesses of the county and to learn more about their needs, concerns and goals.

Building Relationships



*Visited 107+ businesses to
open communication.*

We started off 2018 by visiting with more than 100 businesses and organizations in my first 100 days in office. We developed new relationships through better communication and gathered important information to change the conversation on economic development - and jobs- in our county.

As a result of those meetings, we shifted the focus to workforce readiness and engaged our educational institutions on the importance of their contribution to our county's future by providing the training and education needed to support our local economy.

Economic Development Alliance



*Camoin and Associates
stakeholder interviews.*

We also changed the county's economic development efforts to focus on creating a truly *unified* economic development strategy. We hired the consulting group Camoin and Associates to help us develop this new strategy and create a countywide Economic Development Alliance.

Camoin interviewed stakeholders from around the county, including municipalities and organizations that are focused on economic development. We are now working with Camoin to create a structure for an inclusive organization based on the knowledge they gathered and their experience.

We will be having our first stakeholders meeting on March 28th to share the results and take the next steps in this first-of-its kind countywide committee for a unified economic development effort. Consistent planning and **collaboration** is the key to future success. I'm proud of the progress being made and I thank Mark Geise, the Deputy County Executive for Economic Development, and Don McCord, the Director of Planning and Community Development, for their leadership and hard work in moving this effort forward.

CAER Task Force



CAER Task Force members collaborate and issue recommendations.

In early 2018, the Countywide Alliance for Enforcement and Rehabilitation – the CAER task force – was formed. It created better communication among all of the groups and organizations working on the opioid crisis and drug addiction. We are now making progress in the fight against the devastating impact of this crisis. For the first time in years, we saw a significant decrease in opioid-related and overdose deaths in 2018. Depending on the results of some pending investigations, the reduction is as much as 53% from what it was in 2017.

Our efforts with the CAER group have brought new collaboration between our two drug task forces here in the county, which will lead to better law enforcement results and proactively remove these drugs and criminals from our streets. In 2019, we will advance many of the recommendations of the CAER task force which will create more collaboration and strengthen our ability to effectively and efficiently fight this battle here in our county.

I thank everyone who is participating in the CAER task force and a special thanks to Tom Tarpley for taking on the challenge of coordinating this effort which is already making a difference for the people of Chautauqua County.

County Budget

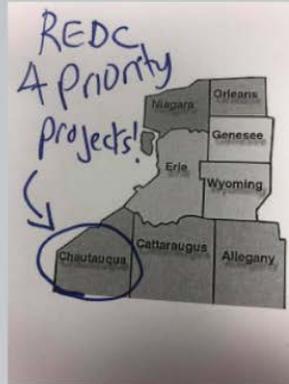


*Structurally balanced budget
for 2019, fifth consecutive
property tax rate decrease.*

In 2018, we worked with department heads and the legislature as we continued responsible budgeting in county government. I tasked each department with targets to reach in their budget and challenged everyone to find savings, efficiencies, and revenues wherever possible to deliver a structurally balanced budget for 2019. No amount of savings or increased revenue was too small as we filled our “bushel full of pennies” to deliver a balanced budget, while not sacrificing services and having a *record-level of investment* in infrastructure and equipment.

Thanks to great collaboration with my colleagues in the legislature, we have now delivered a tax rate cut for the fifth year in row and our county tax rate sits at \$8.37 per thousand of assessed value, which is lower now than it was back in 2003. We will strive to continue that trend going forward.

Grant Funding Success



\$5,601,150 through CFAs for 21 projects along with many other programs.

In addition to a sound budget for 2019, we were also very successful in funding important projects by attaining a substantial amount of grant awards. In fact, four out of the sixteen priority projects in Western New York, under the Consolidated Funding Application process, were awarded here in our county, along with many other awards through the CFA process totaling over \$5.6 million.

We also captured grant funding for more regional efforts like creating an innovative countywide water and wastewater treatment cooperative. This \$1.2 million grant, attained through the state's Municipal Restructuring Fund, will help us create a multi-district cooperative group among local water and wastewater treatment facilities to share resources, group purchasing and address the shortage of trained and certified workers in that industry by regionalizing staff. This groundbreaking project will not only create a better, more efficient water and wastewater service, it will also serve as a model regionalism and shared services.

Improving Morale



Installed water bottle filling stations, developing food truck day and other initiatives.

Chautauqua County government is made up of dedicated, hardworking people that deliver services for the people of this county. That's why we have strived to keep improving morale by listening to suggestions and making changes and improvements to support our team. In 2018, we looked for ways to improve the workspaces we all share. With a generous grant from the Chautauqua County Health Network (CCHN), we installed filtered water bottle filling stations here in Mayville, at the north county and south county offices, and at the airport in Jamestown. These new stations will not only encourage more water consumption but they will also reduce the usage of disposable plastic water bottles. We also adopted a new healthy meetings policy to encourage healthier food options at county government meetings and events. I thank CCHN and former Executive Director Ann Abdella for their generous support which allowed us to greatly expand the number of water bottle filling stations we were able to install.

In 2018, we had our first-ever food truck day here on the Mayville campus. Three C's Catering brought their delicious food to our parking lot and we received rave reviews and requests to do it again. This year, we plan on bringing in a variety of food trucks regularly. In addition to these and other changes, we are also looking to improve options for vending and other conveniences for our employees and visitors alike. A happy and healthy workforce is also a good and productive workforce.

As I said previously, 2019 is all about collaboration. By working together throughout the county, we can make great strides and achieve some lofty goals. True collaboration means more than just getting together and talking about things. It means taking decisive action to coordinate our efforts and ensure that we are making significant progress.

Municipal Meeting Visits



*Building relationships to
increase collaboration.*

As we work toward more collaboration, I have started a new effort this year to visit each municipal meeting in Chautauqua County. I have attended several meetings already this year and I am humbled by the great reception I have received so far. The purpose is to introduce myself, encourage an open dialogue, and address any questions they may have. We are inviting legislators that represent those municipalities along with staff from our department of Planning and Community Development. I look forward to getting to every city, town and village meeting to introduce myself to the elected and appointed officials that work hard each day for the people of this county.

Citizens' Advisory Committee



*Engaging the advisory committee
to discuss initiatives and ideas.*

Collaboration also needs to include people who may not have a voice in government. Often times, as elected officials we get myopic. We listen only to those people around us and we *sometimes* make decisions without understanding the broader impact. This is why I formed the Citizens Advisory Committee. It's made up of people with diverse backgrounds from around the county. These are people who are actively engaged in their communities but without direct ties to county government. I am engaging with these volunteers by presenting ideas, initiatives and challenges for their feedback. They are already providing me with valuable input and advice on issues ranging from recreational marijuana to how we can improve CARTS operations. When I first thought of creating this committee, I contacted my friend Mike Ferguson, who graciously accepted the role of chairman and facilitator for this committee. We worked together to reach out to people asking for their help by serving on the committee. Mike is here tonight. Mike, thank you very much for being a part of this effort to bring new voices to county government.

Regional Solutions Commission



*Reinvigorate the Regional
Solutions Commission to assist
with municipal collaboration.*

In 2016, my predecessor, Vince Horrigan created the Regional Solutions Commission to assist municipalities around the county with shared services and consolidation. I was proud to chair the commission as we assisted with efforts for dissolutions and consolidations and developed 14 projects for the state's Municipal Consolidation and Efficiency Competition. The efforts of the Regional Solutions Commission helped improve government operations and Chautauqua County is now recognized as a leader statewide in efficiency.

This year we will reinvigorate the Regional Solutions Commission to continue the work of improving how government operates in our county. The commission will assist with other potential government restructuring projects. Also, it will assist with the development of the water and wastewater treatment cooperative and will update the Countywide Shared Services Initiative Plan. I look forward to the county continuing its leadership role in creating better, more effective government throughout the county.

Workforce Development



Refocusing our training and education for local needs and jobs of the future.

Last year we discussed that the key to growing our local economy and helping businesses to prosper is workforce development. This year we are taking steps forward by engaging with Jamestown Community College and others to develop new training programs that support our growing hospitality industry as well as agriculture and manufacturing, the largest industries in Chautauqua County.

As we promised last year, we are shifting away from the false political narrative that there are no jobs here in our county and instead we are now focusing on addressing the real issues of workforce development and recruitment so we can truly improve our economy and support our local businesses first.

Our economic development team is working with our local foundations, and others, to develop Workforce Readiness Scholarships, so that people can get the training they need to qualify for the jobs openings we have here in our county. Also, we are collaborating to focus on recruiting people to our county with the skills and talent to fill positions and become part of our community by not only working here but also living here. We are taking a multi-pronged approach that includes incentives and also more effective marketing and public relations for our county. **We need to lead the narrative so other people understand what most of us already know – that Chautauqua County is a great place live, work, own a business and raise a family.**

CARTS Improvements

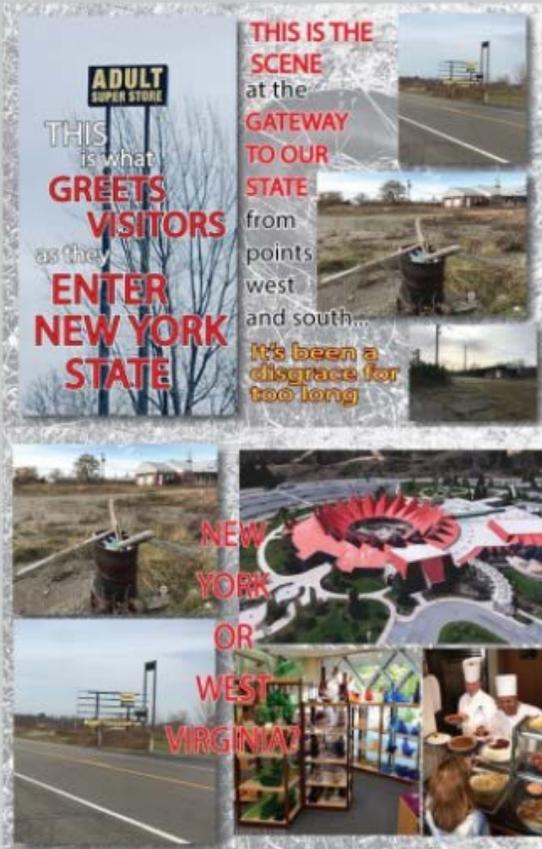


*Free Fixed Route Fridays,
Saturday service test, and Re-
branding efforts.*

When it comes to economic development and quality of life, transportation is an important issue. Whether it's getting tourists around to the many attractions and events in our county or giving people the opportunity for a better life by providing them with a reliable option for getting to work each day, public transportation is a key part of improving our local economy. That's why I am working with our Department of Public Facilities to improve, expand and rebrand our CARTS transportation service.

The Chautauqua Area Regional Transit System, CARTS for short, is the only countywide public transportation system. It provides vital transit options for many people in our county. But after closer examination, and spending some time actually riding the buses and talking to people, we have realized that CARTS needs a fresh look and broader reach to truly serve the needs of the communities throughout our County. I am working with DPF Director Brad Bentley, as well as Michele Westphal, Project Coordinator, to improve access and technology along with expanding hours of operations, including evenings and weekends, and creating new routes for tourist attractions and special events. We are vigorously pursuing grant opportunities that will allow us to make substantial improvements and enhancements to CARTS so it can become an easy and more convenient option for residents and visitors alike.

Ripley Gateway Center



THE TOWN OF RIPLEY is the gateway to New York State from points west and south. Each day thousands of people from across the country enter our state and THIS is what welcomes them to the Empire State. For far too long, this highly traveled area has been ignored and allowed to degrade creating a black eye for not only our county, but also Western New York and the entire upstate region.



Several years ago, while traveling south by car, I was inspired by a place in West Virginia called Tamarack.

Tamarack is an amazing complex filled with so many things to experience. It features the best that West Virginia has to offer. They transformed an area that was just a place you drove past on your way to the Carolinas or Florida and made it into a must-see destination. After experiencing what had been done in West Virginia, and realizing all we have to offer here in Chautauqua County, I spoke with others who also had visited Tamarack and shared the vision of developing our own version of it, which would properly represent who we are and what we have to offer.



Let's pause for a moment and take a look at these two images. Imagine if we conducted a nationwide survey of people. If we showed them these two images and asked them to identify which is West Virginia and which is New York. If they didn't know better, how many people would actually get that right?

In 2018, we partnered with this legislature to finally take a meaningful step forward in creating a Gateway Center in Ripley that would not only highlight the best of our county and our region, but would also be a self-sustaining tourist attraction and a destination for travelers and local residents. Along with the County of Chautauqua Industrial Development Agency's help, we created an RFP and chose a firm, Clark Patterson Lee, to conduct a feasibility study for a Gateway Center worthy of the entrance to our state.

As we continue our efforts toward regionalism and collaboration, this gateway center concept is something that we will seek support for from our neighboring counties and other areas that will benefit from having a place at the front step of our state that encourages visitors to not only stop at this gateway center, but also to explore all there is to do and see in our region.

The concept we are pursuing is unlike any proposal seen before. This will not be a place where you simply stop to use the restroom and get a coupon book or a map. It will be a truly functional and fantastic place that will feature the best of what Western New York and the

Southern Tier has to offer. From local artisans showing and selling their wares to a place where many of our region's agricultural and manufacturing are not only represented but will have their products available for sale. It will be a place where our prospering beer, wine and spirits businesses can feature their brands and encourage people to explore our breweries, wineries and other unique food and beverage options. This Gateway Center will be a place where the history and natural beauty of our county and region is highlighted for those who have never experienced all there is to do and see in the beautifully unparalleled place that we call home. From the sandy beaches of our Lake Erie shoreline and wooded recreation areas, ski resorts and snowmobile trails of our expansive rural region to the active year-round cultural life in our cities and towns and the fantastic communities that come to life each summer around our many lakes, waterways and other attractions, this gateway center will be the key that unlocks every door to all that we have to offer. It will be the welcoming ambassador that we have lacked for so long. If we all work together, and bring in partners, including our state and federal government, along with the private-sector, we can achieve this goal and create something truly wonderful for us all to be proud of.



Talking about attractions that bring people to our county, Chautauqua Lake is truly one of the gems of our county. It attracts people from around the world to enjoy not only the lake itself but the lifestyle that surrounds it. Chautauqua Lake, like so many others, is challenged by invasive species of weeds and harmful algal blooms that have threatened not only the water quality but the quality of life around this important economic engine for our county.

County government and our many partners have always been focused on the long-term strategy of treating the flow of manmade nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen into the lake from its tributaries in the watershed. These high levels of nutrients are what have caused the

disease that our lake suffers from. So treating this complex disease has always been our mission versus trying to merely manage the symptoms. However, responsible management of Chautauqua Lake must also include short-term mitigation along with a good long-term strategy.

Not long ago, I announced that we, the county, would take a leadership role in this effort to bring about a Consensus Strategy for Chautauqua Lake. I promised that we would deliver the details of this strategy by the end of March and we are on pace to do so. Despite the divisiveness we may see among the passionate lake organizations, I've found that there is more common ground than it may appear, especially after personally meeting with these groups, individually, and listening to their concerns. What I saw was a series of puzzle pieces that could make up a strategy to break the gridlock and move us forward. So we enlisted the help of the firm Ecology and Environments to come in and conduct formal interviews with the major stakeholders and help us assemble those puzzle pieces into a picture of the Consensus Strategy for Chautauqua Lake.

The Consensus Strategy will involve a series of action steps and tenets that will be outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding. We will be asking all of the major stakeholders to sign onto this M.O.U., which will essentially be a "ceasefire agreement" that the lake groups and municipalities would participate in so that we can move forward, together, with an action plan for in-lake weed management while not losing sight of the long-term strategy needed to truly cure the disease that the lake suffers from. Any funding from the county, and from many of the local foundations, for efforts dealing with in-lake projects will flow through the Chautauqua Lake and Watershed Management Alliance. The executive board of the Alliance has preliminarily agreed to only fund those organizations who participate in the Consensus Strategy by the signing the Memorandum of Understanding. Each stakeholder is not going to get 100 percent of what they want, which is the nature of compromise. But this agreement and strategy will allow us to take meaningful steps forward without the threat of lawsuits or other actions that ultimately lead to further unproductive conflict and inaction. This consensus strategy will be important to the future health of Chautauqua Lake and to the economic future of Chautauqua County. I strongly encourage everyone's support and participation.



Chautauqua County has a long history of agriculture and as I mentioned previously, it's still our number one industry. As we are all aware, many of our farmers have struggled recently with the increasing costs of maintaining a farm and the sagging prices of commodities like Concord grapes and milk. Typically, when government gets involved, it's in the form of some kind of subsidy or temporary assistance, but having grown up with agriculture in my background, I know that our farmers are not looking for a handout. They simply want a market for their products at a fair price that keeps them in business and able to feed their families.

That's why I am excited about moving forward with a concept I have been advocating for since before I took office – **developing a hops and grains cooperative here in Chautauqua County.** This initiative will create new opportunities for our farmers along with other new businesses involved in processing, distribution and marketing for these in-demand agricultural products. It will allow our farmers to be part of creating a premium '*Chautauqua Grown*' brand of high-quality products made right here with their crops. This is a big idea that has potential to be a game-changer for the future of agriculture and our economy.

In late 2018, we were able to pitch this concept to Chris LaCorata, a successful manufacturing executive with a background in the consumer beverage industry who has roots here in our county. He took the idea and did a deeper dive to see if it was fundamentally feasible and came back with some amazing information and analysis. Now with project name "Grow Chautauqua," we presented his findings to the Planning and Economic Development Committee last week and outlined the potential for developing a vertically integrated business that is unlike anything else currently in the nation. The next step for moving this forward will be a feasibility study and action plan. Mr. LaCorata has already invested his time and money to get us to this point and

he will continue his investment by agreeing to pay for half of the feasibility study. We are engaging some of the county's local foundations for support and we will also be coming to this legislature for funding to move this groundbreaking effort to the next level. This is an opportunity for us to take on a proactive and transformative economic development initiative that will support not only our farmers but create a new industry and new opportunities for businesses across our county and region.



I will close tonight with a quote from Henry Ford - "Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success." It speaks to where we are here in our county now and where we are headed. With better communication, we were able to come together to identify the needs of our businesses and communities. Then, together, we turned those needs into ideas and goals.

We will build on that momentum and **collaborate together** on a plan of action to achieve success and make Chautauqua County a better, more prosperous place now and into the future.

Thank you all very much.