

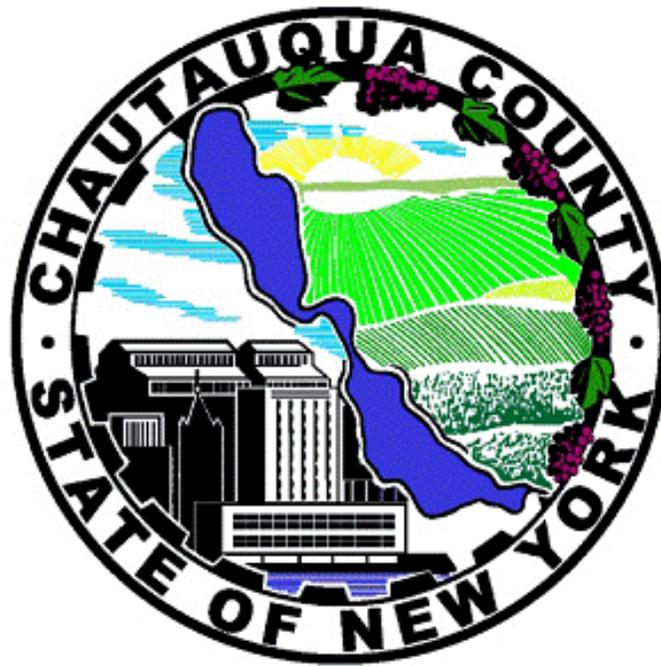
# **Chautauqua County, New York**

## **State of the County**

**February 23, 2022**

**Paul M. Wendel, Jr.**

**Chautauqua County Executive**

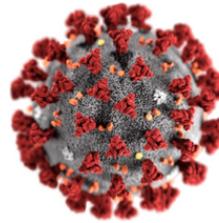


Thank you, Mr. Chairman. County legislators, department heads, and fellow Chautauqua County residents. Thank you for attending tonight's legislature meeting, and my 2022 State of the County address.

Tonight, I will highlight the successes we had over the past year, as well as discuss the challenges of 2021, and how we have met these challenges head on. Finally, I will conclude with my administration's plans that will take Chautauqua County to a more prosperous future.

## 2021 Was a Challenging Year

- COVID-19 Pandemic
- Budgeting During COVID-19
- American Rescue Plan Act



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Our main challenges in 2021 were the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, its effects on our budget process, and the understanding and navigation of a concise strategy to appropriate American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. This forced us to pivot our efforts to emerge from this pandemic while providing services to protect our residents.

# Effective COVID-19 Mitigation Strategies

- 173 COVID-19 vaccine clinics
- 40,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses
- 9,586 COVID-19 tests
- 40,000 at home COVID-19 test kits
- 48,000 KN95 facemasks
- 10,000 cloth facemasks.



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Much like in 2020, cases increased after the holidays. However, unlike in 2020, last year brought the Delta variant, increased hospitalizations, and unfortunately increased fatalities to Chautauque County residents. Throughout 2021, our county's COVID-19 Response Team continued weekly meetings to discuss our ongoing mitigation strategy. The Chautauque County Health Department held 173 COVID-19 vaccine clinics and administered over 40,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses. Clinics were held at various locations throughout the County. The largest clinic was held at SUNY Fredonia where 2,100 vaccines were administered at a single event. We provided first and second dose clinics to 16 schools and our BOCES locations.

Additionally, the Department of Health administered vaccines to homebound residents, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, senior housing complexes, senior day centers, and centers for persons with developmental disabilities. Throughout 2021, the county partnered with community organizations and schools to conduct 9,586 COVID-19 tests.

During the 2021 holiday season, we observed higher levels of community transmission. Our County Health Department, Office of Emergency Services, and COVID Leadership Team rose to meet the challenge. During the post-holiday surge, we arranged for Quadrant Biosciences to operate two free community-testing sites, one at the South County Office Building in Jamestown and one at Jamestown Community College's North Campus in Dunkirk. From January 3 to January 31, a total of 793 tests were conducted at these two sites. My office in concert with the Office of Emergency Services distributed over 40,000 at home COVID-19 test kits, over 48,000 KN95 facemasks, and over 10,000 cloth facemasks.



we have awarded funding for 33 of the 44 projects with over \$11.9 million already allocated to projects in our ARPA plan.

## Economic Successes

- Lowest Unemployment Rate since the 1990's
- \$164,000,000 Investments in Chautauqua County
- Create 314 New Jobs
- Retain 1,750 Existing Jobs
- CCIDA Projects



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Last year at my State of the County, I stated our comeback would be greater than our setback. Tonight, I am proud to announce that our comeback has indeed been far greater than our setback. 2020 was marked with high unemployment and businesses closing their doors due to the raging COVID-19 pandemic and its ensuing shutdowns. In December of 2021, due to our efforts and the resiliency of the residents of Chautauqua County we recorded an unemployment rate of 3.5%-- our lowest rate since the 1990s.

Throughout 2021, our County of Chautauqua Industrial Development Agency (CCIDA) was involved in projects, loans, and grants that will result in \$164,000,000 being invested in Chautauqua County. This investment is projected to create 314 new permanent jobs while retaining more than 1,750 current jobs. Some of these projects included incentives for:

- The \$13 Million Love's Travel Stop and Country Store in Ripley;
- The \$18 Million Webb's Chautauqua Resort in Mayville;
- The \$41 Million Americold Freezer in Dunkirk;
- The \$1.4 Million Hideaway Bay Glamping Resort in the Village of Silver Creek on the shores of Lake Erie;
- The \$11.6 Million redevelopment of the former Welch's Headquarter Building in the Village of Westfield;

- The securitization of loan/grant funding for Jamestown Container Corporation and Jamestown Advanced Products in the amount of \$4.6 Million; and
- And the sale of CCIDA-owned land for the purpose of developing a new YMCA facility in Jamestown.

Our CCIDA also approved the transfer of Athenex’s tax incentives to the pharmaceutical manufacturing company ImmunityBio. Over the next five years, ImmunityBio has pledged to create 450 jobs and invest over \$1.5 billion into the facility. This will truly be a world-class pharmaceutical manufacturing facility that will create vaccines for cancer, TB, HIV, and COVID-19.

I am proud of our efforts here in county government that helped pave the way for this economic recovery.

## Economic Recovery: Address Population Decline

Address Economic Development and Population Decline:

- Business Development
- Community Development
- Workforce Readiness and Development
- Housing Development
- Tourism and Destination Development
- CCPEG & CCIDA partnership to hire marketing/communications director



When I began my first term as County Executive, the Chautauqua County Partnership for Economic Growth (CCPEG) was formed to address the issues of economic growth by focusing on: Business Development, Community Development, Workforce Readiness and Development, Housing Development, Tourism and destination development. While there is no silver bullet that can change the outcome of population decline, our approach addresses the economic development issue in a holistic manner and will be the key to our success. It is critical to have incentives and sites for business development, safe walkable communities, appropriate training and educational curriculum for our workforce and students, quality housing, and fun and exciting opportunities for people who choose to make Chautauqua County their home. To advance our efforts and “sing our county’s praises,” the CCIDA and CCPEG hired a marketing and communications director. This position will develop and implement a marketing strategy in

conjunction with a myriad of countywide stakeholders, which will result in population retention, and out of county relocation to fill available job positions. As a result of our continued efforts and support of the Partnership and the CCIDA, we will enhance our county and begin to reverse the trends of population decline of the last several decades. While this isn't going to happen overnight, we are making great progress towards achieving this goal.

## Infrastructure Investments

- South & Center Chautauqua Lake Sewer Districts' Westside extension
- Further Sewer Expansions around Chautauqua Lake
- Storage Tank in the North County Industrial Water District
- Broadband Expansion
- Shovel Ready Sites



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In 2021, Chautauqua County took active steps investing in our infrastructure. In August, we broke ground on the \$16.8 million South & Center Chautauqua Lake Sewer Districts' Westside Sewer Extension project. This expansion project will provide public sewers on the west side of Chautauqua Lake along Route 394 up through Stow. Phase one will eliminate 375 onsite wastewater septic systems and phase two will eliminate 400 systems. Together they will divert over 54 million gallons of wastewater per year to the SCCLSD's wastewater treatment plant.

The county also approved \$7 million for additional sewer expansion projects to further our goal of having municipal water and sewer around the entirety of Chautauqua Lake. These projects will open up new land for commercial development and continue our county's economic revitalization. The County also approved over \$800,000 in ARPA funding to replace a water storage tank in the North County Industrial Water District to adequately meet the needs of our growing manufacturing center in the North County.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have recognized the critical importance of access to reliable high speed internet services. It allows students to learn remotely, residents to work

remotely, and is critical to our businesses. That is why in 2021 we approved \$2.5 million in ARPA funding to expand broadband to unserved and underserved communities.

## Reimagining County Government

- Safety Coordinator
- Full Time Airport Manager
- Telework
- CARTS Rebranding
- Restructure Finance Department
- Restructure Department of Public Facilities



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Over this past year, Chautauqua County has taken numerous steps to reimagine county government, increase efficiency, and improve services to our residents.

In 2021, I hired our first ever safety coordinator. This position will create a safer work environment for our staff and residents, while also reducing the county's liability.

I also began the process to hire a full time manager of airports to give our county airports the proper attention they need to take them in new directions, spur economic development, expand services, and generate revenue for the county. I am pleased to have recently appointed Shannon Barnhart to this position. She will follow in the footsteps of local aviation pioneer Lucille Wright who held the position of airport manager in the early 1950s. Shannon's experience and ambition will be key factors in elevating our county airports to regional prominence.

After several long months, and due to the hard work of our Human Resources Director Jean Riley, we have instituted a Telework policy. Our hope is that this new policy will help reduce Chautauqua County's office space footprint, which in turn will save the county money on future lease agreements.

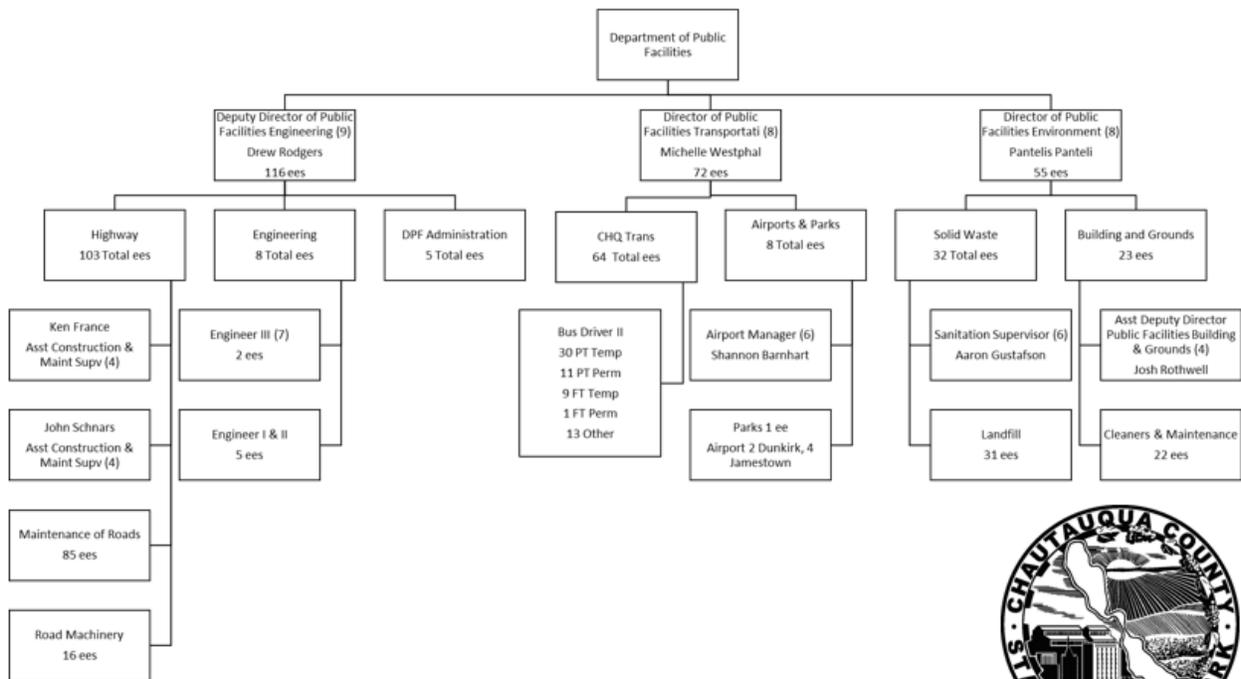
Under the direction of Michele Westphal, Senior Project Coordinator of the Chautauqua Area Regional Transit System (CARTS), Chautauqua County began the process of rebranding and

expanding our public transportation services. This process will not only expand our services, but will also provide riders a way to optimize their riding experience with the following:

- a new logo and new name, CHQ Transit;
- the construction of a transportation hub in downtown Jamestown;
- the addition of new technology including a rider’s app and cashless fare system, and
- the addition of three trolleys to our fleet.

In an effort to increase efficiency, I worked with Director of Finance Kitty Crow to begin the process of restructuring the county Finance Department. Instead of each department having its own fiscal staff, we will create one single streamlined and efficient county finance department. This effort will increase efficiency, mitigate the strain on smaller departments with limited fiscal staff, and increase productivity.

# Rethinking County Government

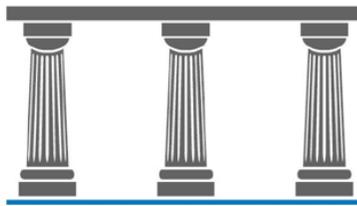


In my continued effort to create efficient County Government, we are also in the process of restructuring the Department of Public Facilities (DPF). Our plan is to elevate existing DPF leadership to deputy director positions, and form a DPF cabinet. This restructuring will save the county money, and increase the efficiency of DPF. Instead of overwhelming one DPF director

with the multiple departments that were under their control, our deputy directors will only focus on their areas of expertise. The current plan is for a deputy director of Public Facilities in the following areas: Engineering, Transportation, and Environment.

## Going Forward

- Strengthen Our Communities
- Grow Our Economy
- Invest In Our Future



We will continue focusing on the three pillars of:

- 1.) Strengthening communities;
- 2.) Growing our economy; and
- 3.) Investing in our future.

# Strengthening Our Communities

- Behavioral Health Services
- Lake Shore Hospital
- Brooks Hospital
- Crisis Intervention Team
- Strong Starts Chautauqua
- Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Prevention Program



I offer my special thanks to UPMC Chautauqua, who was able to maintain healthcare services in Chautauqua County when other area healthcare facilities were strained.

Going forward we will continue to strengthen the wellbeing of our communities. One way will be to expand behavioral health services in northern Chautauqua County to help alleviate additional strain on our healthcare system.

Secondly, we will continue to work with DHHS, Chautauqua County Department of Mental Hygiene, Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office, and our local partners, and providers to address the concerns of the behavioral health needs and the drug epidemic here in Chautauqua County.

Thirdly, the anticipated sale of the former Lake Shore Hospital and its investment to provide health care to residents ensures we continue to take steps to provide physical and behavioral health services accessibility for north county residents.

In addition, I recently signed a letter of support that was sent to New York State Governor Kathy Hochul asking for her to include in her budget the funding for the Brooks Memorial Hospital project. This project of relocating the current hospital has been slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but with the Governor's support we will see this new facility become a reality.

As a member of the Chautauqua County Association of Chiefs of Police, I am committed to the ongoing and increased collaboration among all of our law enforcement agencies to create a safe and healthy county.

The Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office was awarded Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program (COSSAP) grant to confront the drug epidemic in a Smart on Crime holistic approach. The Sheriff's Office will be working with a variety of service providers and

organizations in the county to address and reduce the issues associated with the drug epidemic. Chautauqua County was also awarded a New York State Senate grant to implement Crisis Intervention Team training in the county, including a Sequential Intercept Mapping of current services.

Chautauqua County DHHS continues to support the ongoing progress of Strong Starts Chautauqua (SSC), a universal system that will promote health, well-being, development and school readiness of all children aged birth-5 through an evidence-based Screening, Assessment, Referral and Treatment model. Chautauqua County is the **first** in New York State to develop this universal system. The program is made possible through multiple funding streams, including the County's ARPA funding, and foundation grant support with over 50 partner agencies.

The Health Department, in partnership with the City of Jamestown Department of Development, was awarded a \$2 million Healthy Homes HUD grant. This grant will assist city homeowners and rental property owners with improving their properties and eliminating health and safety issues in their homes. The Healthy Homes program coupled with our \$3 million HUD grant for Lead Hazard Prevention, which was initiated in 2021 in partnership with Chautauqua Opportunities, will go a long way towards making our aging housing stock safer for raising families.

## Investing in Our Future

- Expand Sewer and Water
- Broadband Expansion
- Public Transportation
- Tourism



As we invest in our future I will focus on expanding sewer and water around our lakes to help promote development. I will work to expand our tourism industry and promote Chautauqua County as the premiere travel destination in the region.

In an effort to meet our broadband needs, we have begun meetings and collaborative efforts to expand broadband throughout the County. This will address our unserved and underserved

communities. Chautauqua County will be partnering with ECC Technologies to conduct a survey, which will accurately map the broadband needs of the county.

We will also focus on revitalizing our public transportation systems. My goal is to return passenger rail to Chautauqua County, expand and enhance the new CHQ Transit, and give our airports the necessary attention by bringing in a full time airport manager. These efforts will provide transportation for those wishing to work in our county, and provide new means to grow our tourism industry.

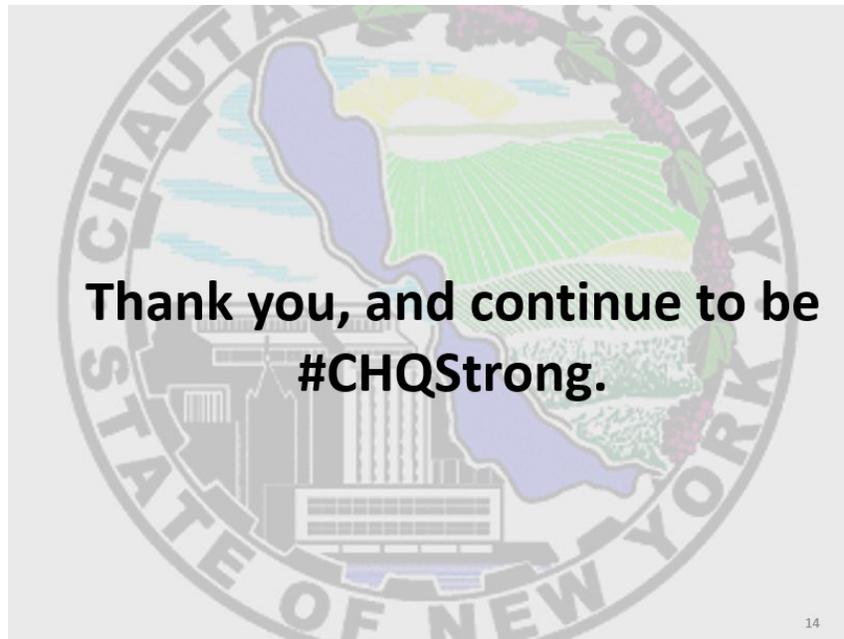
## Growing Our Economy

- Shovel Ready Sites
- Re-Activate High Profile Buildings
- Address Population Decline
- Workforce Development



Going forward our CCIDA has goals to acquire large parcels of land for expansion of shovel-ready sites. They are also in the process of re-activating several high profile buildings, including: the Furniture Mart Building, White Inn, former Silver Creek High School, ConAgra Building, and former NRG power facility.

We will also continue to work with our partners to expand our workforce development initiatives to ensure that our residents have the necessary skills to fill the jobs available here in Chautauqua County.



The path to a thriving county demands economic growth, workforce readiness, strong communities, an effective and efficient county government, and investment in our county infrastructure. My goal is to make Chautauque County the best place to live, raise a family, work, start a business, and visit. We are on the path to greatness, with our continued efforts, I am determined to achieve success. Together we will be #CHQStrong.