

**2013 STATE OF THE COUNTY**

*proud, inspired & hopeful*

Marcus J. Molinaro  
Dutchess County Executive  
January 30, 2013

Every day of her life is a blessing to me. Despite the love she receives from her family, compassion extended by her teachers, and opportunities presented throughout her life, she will always have difficulties. She was born with a disability. Her motor skills are slower, speech jumbled, and attention span limited. She lives on the Autism Spectrum.

Since January 2007 she's experienced seizures. She has too often visited the hospital, yet, exhibits amazing resilience. Her curious nature is only surpassed by her unyielding compassion. As she grows up, some will tell her that she can't accomplish certain things. They will be wrong. As a student, some may choose to pick on her, bully or avoid her. They will have missed an opportunity to get to know a terrific young lady.

Her name is Abigail, and she is my daughter. Abigail inspires me. She reminds me every day what it takes to confront life's challenges, to persevere, to draw on the relentless character, and hope that resides in all of us.

In the aftermath of the horrific shootings at Newtown, Connecticut, like every parent, I couldn't help but think of Abigail and my son Jack.

Like you may have for your own children, I immediately worried for their physical safety. As they learned of the news or caught glimpses of traumatic photographs or video in the media, I worried for their emotional health. As an elected official, I couldn't help but wonder how would we respond, what would be expected from us, and how might we learn from this tragedy.

Whether in Connecticut, New York, Colorado, Arizona, or Texas, the loss of life is real, the pain overwhelming and the days that follow ceaseless in their distress.

One year ago, our own community confronted tragic news – a fire in the Town of Poughkeepsie took the lives of three young college students. On that day, and in the days that followed, we witnessed the compassion and decency of Marist College, Dutchess Community College, and our County as a whole. We saw the dedication and professionalism of our emergency responders. Seamlessly, law enforcement, career and volunteer, fire and rescue from multiple agencies all responded without ego or pretense. We are grateful to all our first responders including our medical examiner and mental health professionals for their service.

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Responding to those dealing with tragic loss is as important as aiding those on the verge of emotional or mental crisis. The tragic events of the last few months have rightly called into question how we as

a society address issues of mental health. How best to support such individuals in a positive and helpful way while ensuring the safety and well-being of our citizens has been of pressing concern to Dutchess County for some time.

Last year, we confronted our first challenge in this arena... how would we transition from the State's closure of the Hudson River Psychiatric Center to an effective method of providing mental health services locally; and how will we pay for it.

We met with the New York State Office of Mental Health and delivered a plan they supported and agreed to help fund for three years. The focus of our plan is prevention, intervention, and diversion.

We are working with community partners to create an infrastructure centered on our 24/7 Helpline and new Mobile Crisis Intervention and Prevention Team. These mental health professionals provide quick response, reducing Emergency Room visits and psychiatric hospitalizations in and out of County. Although, still in its early stages, the program is working extremely well with 147 fewer total psychiatric admissions in 2012 compared to 2011.

This continuing initiative transitions us from an outdated and costly in-house clinic model to a more effective community partnership. Our Health and Human Services Advisory Team is helping frame the future with their triple aim of "Better Health, Better Care, Better Costs." This team has provided stellar leadership and valuable input. Thank you to our Chair, Dr. Jim McGuirk CEO of Astor Services, our liaison, Mary Kay Dolan, Director of our Office for the Aging, and all the members for your commitment and service.

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From these efforts "Imagine Dutchess" has emerged. This asset-based community development project is committed to transforming the current health care delivery model in Dutchess County. Through individual empowerment, personal wellness, and recovery-focused-care we seek to break down silos, optimize and integrate available resources, and maximize the return on investment.

But this isn't just about saving money. We need to enhance the quality of care for this segment of our population and those whose lives they touch.

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As part of the transformation of mental health services, this year we will begin the integration of the County Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene. Thanks to funds granted to us by the Dyson Foundation, we will engage an industry expert to help us create a holistic vision for health.

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While the tragedies of recent months have fueled important national debates on a number of significant issues – Dutchess County through Imagine Dutchess, seizes this moment to acknowledge

what we all know – too many with mental illness, developmental disabilities, and addictions find themselves in emergency rooms, homeless or in jail – and that is a cost too great to bear.

So, we, together – the Dyson Foundation, our Health and Human Services Advisory Team, the talented and knowledgeable men and women of Health and Mental Hygiene departments – are confident we can innovate, inspire, and imagine a new model that is more cost effective, more efficient, more meaningful, and offers to the individual, that which we all long for... hope.

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One year ago, standing on a stage in Beacon High School, I offered to you the state of our County was challenged and, likening that to climbing a steep slope, we would face great trial and tribulation. And while, after a year of great success – one that seemed to fly by in a whirlwind – we have not yet reached the summit, we can, however, see the mountain top, and know that greater success and prosperity is within our reach.

Throughout the twenty years of my public service I have regularly turned to the Bible for inspiration and guidance. Like so many of you, my faith helps shape who I am and how I hope to live. Whether as parent or public servant, I have often found comfort in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans where he reminds us "tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance character; and character, hope..." and, hope doesn't disappoint.

There are indeed too many people dealing with too many challenges: the farmer struggling to turn a field; the business owner unable to turn a profit; the senior citizen not able to pay for their prescription; the family scared of losing their home in foreclosure; the neighborhood in a state of decay due to crime and drugs; the individual dealing with unspeakable emotional anguish; the child living in fear. But, we continue up that steep slope, together, tackling these challenges, because...

We know our community is resilient, our people inspired, and the state of our County is hopeful.

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Hope, though, is not the property of a politician, nor the product of a political party. It cannot be bestowed. It is as vast and powerful as it is humble and personal. I don't mean to oversimplify our situation – but from Red Hook to Pawling; Millerton to Beacon; New Hamburg to Wassaic; hope is what we see as we gaze across the great landscape of our County. It occupies, as Vassar College's Peter Leonard suggested in a recent column, "that shimmering territory rooted in – but going beyond rational expectations."

And, it is where we begin 2013.

On several occasions total inmate population in the Dutchess County Jail exceeded 500 in 2012. The number of inmates housed out is higher than the number of inmates housed in the Jail. This will become a regular occurrence as we must repair and maintain this aging and inefficient facility. And yet I am hopeful.

Early in 2012, having reviewed the Legislature's report on our Criminal Justice System, we asked the Dutchess County Criminal Justice Council to provide a comprehensive assessment of the current environment and their recommendations on next steps. They recommended:

- First, we continue following the suggestions provided by the National Institute of Corrections, increasing our data analysis and risk assessments, continuation of our Alternatives to Incarceration, and an ongoing review of systemic issues and changes. Many of the options discussed require housing solutions to address the needs of women and youth, those with mental health issues and alcohol or drug dependency.
- Second, the CJC recommends moving forward with the construction of a new jail facility to expand current capacity and better assist those incarcerated - since over 90% will return to our community.

The report, presented to me, Chairman Rolison and Sheriff Anderson, details significant taxpayer savings over the long-term through staff reductions, and short-term savings through the use of temporary PODS at the current jail site. The report concludes an alternate site will provide the lowest construction cost and design flexibility to ensure maximum staff savings. Such a site will allow the creation of a campus-like setting where the needs of special populations can be met.

The CJC has identified vacant land on the former Hudson River Psychiatric Center as the ideal location. We know, the mere suggestion of such a facility anywhere comes with opposition and concern. Heck, it's one of the reasons it's taken nearly 20 years and over \$33 million paid to other counties – over \$6 million last year alone – before we tackled this problem. The numbers are compelling.

The Town of Poughkeepsie and Fairview Fire District have expressed understandable concerns, but I assure you as we proceed we are committed to working with every stakeholder to address and mitigate legitimate obstacles. But we cannot afford to delay any longer.

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The CJC proposal relies on certain assumptions which we must validate. With funds secured from the State, we are hiring an industry expert to verify their conclusions. Our final decision will be based on a thorough, focused, logical, inclusive, and fair analysis.

Much of what we are required to do for inmates is mandated by Washington and Albany. We can either ignore the problem or be a leader in solving it. And, if confronting this challenge saves tax dollars, limits our exposure to risk, protects our employees, reduces recidivism, enhances public safety, strengthens our community, and provides greater stability in the family - then we ought to do it.

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But understand this, we will not propose merely a new jail, not in the traditional sense.

If we proceed, we will propose a “Transition Center” with a plan for separate housing facilities to deal with female inmates, those with mental health issues including drug and alcohol related behaviors, and possibly juvenile offenders. This new “campus” and the saving related to it will provide a continuum of incarceration aimed at deterring criminal activity while seeking to reduce recidivism and provide individuals the tools they need to turn their lives around. And, with that, the hope we can improve the overall condition our community.

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As we’ve sought to transform mental health services in Dutchess County through partnership with community and service organizations, we have also changed the way we partner with our not-for-profit community. By working together with the Dutchess County Coalition of Not-for-Profits, we have replaced the “lobby the legislature” practice for some agency funding with our new “Agency Partner Grant.” Funding is now based on established community needs and measurable outcomes. This comprehensive effort makes our nonprofit funding process transparent, competitive, and fair. With this, we usher in a new era of collaboration with our robust not-for-profit community, and we are grateful. Please join me in thanking all those non-profit partners that share County Government’s desire and mission to make Dutchess a place we are all proud to call home.

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In Dutchess County, there is no shortage of resources available to existing and prospective businesses to help them get started, expand and succeed. Yet, there is no clearly defined starting point, and obtaining the right assistance from the right agency has become a maze of well intentioned organizations each offering a range of programs and services.

Since IBM’s massive reduction in workforce in the early 1990’s, we have benefited significantly from the efforts of these organizations and each has been part of the many successes that have maintained Dutchess County as an economic development leader. Yet, as the state of our economy has changed, our economic development model has not... and the current structure now consists of 14 non-profits and public authorities, often – and unintentionally – creating confusion, overlap and redundancy.

It is time to adjust our model to the economic reality that confronts us... and so, we will establish an alliance of these organizations... where Dutchess County government is a primary stakeholder and investor; where each principle organization focuses on its strengths; where we have a clearly defined mission; establish an honest and comprehensive means toward measuring success; and the agility and coordination necessary to compete in this challenging and complex economic environment.

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This new Alliance will bring together and focus the primary stakeholders and immediately begin developing a new consolidated structure along with a comprehensive economic development

strategy. Each community in Dutchess County, and our County as a whole, needs clearly defined economic objectives and a roadmap to achieving them. The Alliance will be tasked with developing the strategic plan, and most importantly, measuring outcomes and amending it to meet changing conditions. By this time in 2014 we seek to bring them all under one roof with one physical and digital point of contact.

As we initiate this transformation of our economic development infrastructure this year, we build on last year's success in securing project funding through Governor Cuomo's Regional Economic Development Council and Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process. Our efforts delivered exceptional results and the Mid Hudson region was awarded "Best Plan" by the Governor securing over \$92 million in project funding, 36% more than the previous year's awards.

It may have been the boat ride that convinced him?

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We are among the top three regions in New York for total funding, with nearly 25% of all projects funded in the seven county region located in Dutchess County. We are grateful to Governor Cuomo and Regional Council Executive Director Aimee Vargas for their support of our efforts; Dr. Dennis Murray for his leadership as Council Co-chair; and our Deputy Commissioner for Strategic Planning and Economic Development, Ron Hicks, for his hard work on the Council. Please join me in thanking all of them and for their efforts.

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As we begin 2013, Deputy Commissioner Hicks will continue to lead County Government's efforts to improve our response and the delivery of services to the business community; lead the creation of our new economic development infrastructure; continue representing Dutchess County on the Governor's Regional Council; supporting projects throughout the County; and ensuring we compete effectively in the region, state, nation and around the globe.

In order to get Dutchess County residents back to work and promote economic prosperity in all corners of our community, we must also invest in our county-owned economic assets – and we have among the finest in the region. Each, managed properly and maintained, keep residents here, entice families to move here and attract new employers with new jobs. These resources are integral to any economic development strategy and we seek to maximize their overall benefit.

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In 2013, look for the completion of the Dutchess Rail Trail, including the bridge over Route 55 and the eagerly awaited connection to the Walkway Over the Hudson. Efforts led by the Dyson Foundation and US Senator Chuck Schumer to transfer lands from CSX to Dutchess County will enable us to proceed.

Route 55 Bridge construction is expected to begin this spring, with work on the Walkway connection and Rail Trail occurring concurrently this summer connecting some 25 miles of trails. The opening is expected this fall.

With the Walkway attracting nearly 2 million visitors from all 50 states and at least 42 countries since its opening and \$24 million in annual economic impact, this is a cultural and economic phenomenon we will continue to nurture and take advantage of.

As we complete the Dutchess Rail Trail, we turn again to the Harlem Valley Rail Trail, and the eight mile section linking Millerton in northeast Dutchess County to Copake in southeast Columbia County. This phase has been extremely challenging due to environmental constraints. A design report has been submitted to state and federal agencies for review. While the actual construction start date will depend on state and federal funding, we hope residents and visitors to the Harlem Valley will soon see progress.

Friends of the Irondale Schoolhouse, led by Ralph Fedele are working to relocate the historic 1858 one-room schoolhouse to downtown Millerton where it will be restored and serve as the new visitors' center and gateway. Our departments of Public Works and Planning and Development are committed to helping this dream become a reality. Having been inspired by the volunteers at the Hopewell Depot restoration at the southern entrance to the Dutchess Rail Trail, we know the visitors to the Harlem Valley Rail Trail will be equally inspired by the preservation of this schoolhouse.

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With hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors enjoying and relying on county parks, continued investment is crucial. Designs for improvements at Quiet Cove Riverfront Park are currently underway, including shoreline stabilization, pedestrian walkway along the river, non-motorized boat launch, and fishing access. Thanks to funding support by the County Legislature, work will take place this summer and Quiet Cove will rival our other great parks.

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Not only did the Hudson Valley Renegades bring the New York-Penn League Championship home to our Dutchess Stadium this fall, but the 280,000 fan attendees brought \$4.5 million in direct investment to our community and its businesses and organizations. Since 2008 the Renegades themselves spent nearly \$7 million in Dutchess County and over \$1 million in payroll last year alone.

2013 begins the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Dutchess Stadium. For those who remember, it was built fast and it was built cheap – and on some pretty wet land. Today, “the Dutch” is aging and in need of repair and upgrades. Did I mention it was built on very wet land?

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We will proceed with several short-term improvements including drainage and electrical repairs, preventative maintenance and full field replacement. To complete necessary field improvements by

Opening Day, we will seek legislative support next month for the \$1 million adopted in this year's capital plan.

In order to be sure we maximize our return on investment, we have initiated contract discussions with the Renegades' ownership group, re-establishing our Dutchess County-based advisory committee, and discussed assistance on the electrical component of our work with Central Hudson. Together, we seek to generate private investment and enhance revenues for the County.

To remain competitive with newer stadiums built in the region and ensure "the Dutch" remains a regional attraction and economic engine in southern Dutchess County we will begin developing a broader campus plan to expand opportunities on-site for a multi-use, multi-season recreational facility.

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The Dutchess County Airport may be a Department of Public Works facility, but with an annual economic impact of over \$44 million it is a major and significantly underutilized economic asset. Last year, I said we would develop a plan of action, evaluate a new management model, and put our taxpayers ahead of any private interest – and we have begun to do just that.

In the coming weeks, we will initiate an operational and financial assessment. This independent third-party analysis will develop best management and tenancy options for the airport, airport users, and taxpayers. The goal is to improve operational efficiencies, reduce the cost to taxpayers, and maximize shared economic benefit.

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Solid Waste Management begins a new era in 2013 with our 10 year Local Solid Waste Management Plan (LSWMP) in the public comment phase and our expectation to have it approved by the County Legislature as well as the DEC in the next few months.

Lindsay Carille has done an excellent job overseeing the new solid waste management group established in 2012 and I am confident that she will direct our efforts to successfully increase our recycling rate in pursuit of the 60% goal established in the plan, and in the next few years help turn our RRA Net Service Fee into a positive revenue stream for the County. Thank you Lindsay for your efforts.

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Economic vitality means different things to different people and shows itself in different ways in different communities. Since inception in 2000, the Dutchess County Partnership for Manageable Growth helped preserve and protect nearly 2,500 acres of active farmland and over 400 acres of publicly accessible open space. In 2012, Sunset Ridge Farm in Northeast, Bos Haven Farm in Union Vale, Greig Family Farm in Red Hook, and the Young Morse Historic Site & Locust Grove in the Town

of Poughkeepsie received the funding committed to them some time ago, protecting 545 acres of critical lands.

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Just as every other segment of our economy has changed, so too has farming and the challenges farmers face. Despite tight budgets and our own fiscal realities, we can match our efforts to develop – with new ways to preserve farmland and open space. Scenic Hudson, County Planning, and the Dutchess County Water and Wastewater Authority have begun dialogue with the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation to creatively link infrastructure development with the preservation of open space and farmland.

It is crucial we build on this model of collaboration in the year ahead to create an innovative partnership that will bring State and other resources to bear in funding water and sewer systems in our downtown business districts and corridors. This month, we – with Scenic Hudson – will meet with the CEO of the state Environmental Facilities Corporation to lay the groundwork for an initiative to fund both wastewater and our green infrastructure – our open space and farmland – to achieve win-win environmental and economic victories.

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We will also develop with and submit to the Legislature, language to amend the Partnership for Manageable Growth to adjust thresholds and make more effective this tool for infrastructure and other main street revitalization efforts.

One of our most effective tools for infrastructure enhancements is the Community Development Block Grant and HOME Program. Dutchess County Government has directed millions of dollars to municipalities for many worthwhile infrastructure, housing and handicapped accessibility projects. In 2013 we become the administrator for the City of Poughkeepsie’s CDBG program, resulting in, for the first time, all twenty towns, eight villages and two cities being affiliated with our program – an accomplishment that will provide financial benefits for our municipalities.

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With housing at the core of community revitalization and economic growth, this year the Dutchess County HOME Investment Partnership will support the creation of 90 new housing units in the Town of Wappinger and City of Poughkeepsie.

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Frank Lloyd Wright, said American Architect Daniel Hudson Burnham “made masterful use of the methods and men of his time...” In the midst of 19<sup>th</sup> Century urban disorder, Burnham powerfully imagined what an American city could look like and was quoted as saying, “make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work...”

It's not too politically correct to suggest that government do big things any longer. So many equate bold vision and use of imagination with waste and unsustainable cost – and admittedly, for good reason. But government's tired adherence to mediocrity has also too often produced failure, folly and abuse of tax dollars. If we are to overcome the economic realities of our day, we must imagine what may be possible, live within our current financial means, accept that not all our plans may be achieved – but set out to achieve something.

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Dutchess County has a long history of successful collaborations, both public and private. In 2012, thanks to the partnership we established with Mayor John Tkazyik and the City Council, Dutchess County is no longer a silent partner in Poughkeepsie. Instead, we have taken a leadership role and like every resident, imagine a rebirth of sorts and new day for this city.

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Just last week, we hosted the first of a series of public workshops to generate dialogue and input for the *Waterfront Redevelopment Strategy and Rezoning Project* – an unprecedented partnership of public and private stakeholders coordinated by the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development, funded by the Dyson Foundation.

While the *Waterfront Redevelopment Strategic Plan* centers on the Hudson River shoreline around the Metro North train station, between the Mid Hudson Bridge and Walkway Over the Hudson, this transit oriented effort will seek connections to the future Walkway elevator, north and south into the Town of Poughkeepsie, Mt. Carmel neighborhood, and east to lower Main Street. This bold and sweeping *Redevelopment Strategy* includes big plans for major park improvements, green infrastructure initiatives, an economic feasibility and financing analysis, and draft waterfront rezoning. Grand in scope, the goal is to build upon recent successes and set in motion a strategy to develop a world class riverfront in our County seat.

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No community, however, can thrive if only one neighborhood succeeds. As part of our ongoing Poughkeepsie partnership, a Dutchess County planner will be assigned to manage and assist with outstanding grant as well as development and strategic planning projects throughout the City. Dutchess County Planning currently provides general land use, planning and development assistance to all our municipalities. This groundbreaking inter-municipal agreement will broaden our role and help move important community projects bringing new resources and revenue.

Alleviating concerns about pedestrian and public safety, you undoubtedly noticed, the decayed annex to the former Nelson House is now removed from Market Street. As promised, our focus turns to a new County Government campus plan serving as the centerpiece of Market Street's redevelopment. Through our new planning partnership with Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County will lead the Market Street revitalization project, creating a new multi-use, pedestrian oriented plan that celebrates the

rich history of this entire block, the historic nature of the property, and architecture of the original Nelson House.

By bringing community stakeholders together we seek to create a sense of place and an economic engine through a public-private partnership.

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Whether economic, community or individual renewal – we have a great deal to celebrate.

Thanks to the efforts of Legislator Mike Kelsey, the Dutchess County Historical Society, and Tourism and Promotion Agency Executive Director Mary Kay Vrba, we launch the celebration of our County’s 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of democracy. To aid in this and other efforts to celebrate and preserve our rich heritage, we welcome full-time County Historian, Will Tatum.

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Beginning just a few months ago, Will has been doing a tremendous job. A newsletter and lecture series, an exhibit to recognize the former Nelson House, a County Government display on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor – “the people’s floor” – of the County Office Building, and a book produced by *The Poughkeepsie Journal* commemorating our 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary are all in the works.

To bolster these, and our economic development efforts, we launch an aggressive promotion and business attraction campaign. A two-year, \$400,000 annual commitment by the County’s Industrial Development Agency will support a multi-faceted outcome based effort. Traditional marketing, web and social media, television and international campaigns will all be employed to increase our visitor counts, encourage visitor spending and business investment, and drive up visitor length of stays.

Accounting for approximately 9,000 direct service jobs and \$467 million in local spending in 2011 alone, tourism remains vibrant with room for growth. Additionally, this funding partnership with the IDA results in \$100,000 in direct taxpayer savings, while preserving funding for the Dutchess County Arts Council and this historic Opera House.

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By bringing together funding for tourism and the arts we appropriately link the two structurally and financially, optimize the synergies that can be achieved and elevating both to principal players in our economic development efforts.

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In his Budget Address last week, Governor Cuomo said this about economic development: “The best thing we can do for local government... let them run their governments.” I couldn’t agree more!

Despite all our efforts, it is critical to understand that of our total net county costs ONLY 28% is within the County's control. Yes, 72% of net county costs are mandated by Washington and Albany!

So, to my friends and former colleagues in Albany, the time has come to let us "run our governments." Let us decide what programs our community needs; let us work with our residents to determine with them what services they require – and, while you're fighting for meaningful mandate relief – in the meantime, at least, let us decide how best to pay for them.

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To my friends in the County Legislature, together, we made the difficult choices overcoming a \$40 million budget gap, staying within the property tax cap, and balancing taxpayers' expectation for service with their ability to pay. Building a smaller, smarter and more successful government takes time. In 2013 we took significant steps to 'right size' County Government: Our workforce is now 103 positions less, making it the smallest in thirty years – saving you nearly \$7 million this year and \$38 million over 5 years.

We are grateful to the leadership of all our bargaining units, friends at CSEA, including President Liz Piraino and her leadership team, but especially our entire dedicated workforce.

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We consolidated and reorganized departments to enhance efficiencies and reduce spending by \$7.5 million. For that, I am grateful to our Budget Office, Department Heads, and senior staff.

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We also preserved shared services for our municipalities and did ask for significant sacrifice in sales tax revenues. I am grateful to Mayors Tkazyik and Casale as well as all the supervisors, mayors, and local elected officials of Dutchess County for your partnership, your leadership, and your appreciation for the steep slope we climb together.

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You have my commitment we will continue this climb together –with sales tax growth coming to you in 2014.

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In addition to major cost cutting we also committed \$2 million for an unprecedented "Municipal Consolidation and Shared Services Grant" to support local government efforts to improve efficiency, reduce costs, share services, and consolidate government. While incentivizing municipal collaboration, we also launched major efforts to centralize services and provide cost-cutting through a public employee health insurance consortium, workers' compensation partnership, renewed emphasis on a shared public transportation strategy – including a Poughkeepsie merger and service

expansion into Beacon – law enforcement summit to improve collaboration and reduce redundancy, and a county-wide Fiscal Analysis and Strategy Team (FAST) led by Comptroller Jim Coughlan to help cities, towns, and villages save tax dollars. County Government wants to give municipalities the tools it needs to be smaller, smarter, and more efficient in its delivery of services and programs.

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Yes, through unprecedented community dialogue and municipal collaboration, we and the County Legislature worked together to achieve a fair, balanced and workable budget. Chairman Rob Rolison, Majority Leader Dale Borchert, Minority Leader Barbara Jeter-Jackson, Assistant Majority Leader Angela Flesland, Assistant Minority Leader Alison MacAvery, Budget & Finance Chairman Jim Miccio – and Sheriff “Butch” Anderson, County Clerk Brad Kendall, District Attorney Bill Grady, and Comptroller Jim Coughlan – it is not an exaggeration to suggest that this year, we set in motion a multi-year transformation of this County Government and, in the process redefined how local government can function. For that we should all be commended.

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Ronald Reagan said the “status quo, you know, is Latin for the mess we’re in.” The dictionary defines it as the “existing state or condition.” In either case – I did not come to this office, nor seek public office as an 18 year old to be a defender of the status quo. And, I don’t believe many of you did either. Instead let us be the disturbers of the status quo our constituents expect us to be.

The public wants us to work together. At all levels of government, partisanship, point scoring, and personal attacks have poisoned the public discourse. Everyone must understand sacrifice is necessary and accept that we are “all in this together.” On December 29, 2011, having been granted this great honor of serving as County Executive, I suggested that our time together would be defined by how we treat one another and answer two important questions: who are we as a people and how do we hope to live?

If tonight’s presentation seemed a little personal – I accept the criticism. It is.

I’ve always been fascinated by the off handed retort so many offer in a heated debate or argument – you know the one... “don’t worry, it’s nothing personal.”

To those we serve – taxpayer and resident, employee and business owner, senior citizen, veteran, community volunteer, sportsman or woman, farmer, family and child – our work is intensely personal. And if we want to deliver to our constituents a better quality of life, stronger economy, cleaner environment, clearer sense of place, vibrant community character – we owe them civil, earnest and honest public service. Because, for them – as it ought to be for us – this is not a game – the decisions we make and actions we take have a lasting impact and are personal.

So, let there be no question – in 2012 we began to transform our government, reset expectations and reshape the dialogue. In 2013, we continue our climb together, committing to one another, to live within our means and provide responsible fiscal stewardship, while leaving for our children, and the

generations that follow, markers of success and monuments of achievement they will proudly defend, seek to protect and use to build a better future.

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Yes, our work, for all those who call this great County home, is personal; and for them let the state of our County be proud, inspired and hopeful. And, imagine where we can go from there.

May God bless you, Dutchess County, and the United States of America.

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