

Investing in *Our* Future



Lackawanna  
County

Commissioners

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## The County of Lackawanna's 2019 Budget Message

### 2018 Lackawanna County Budget-Funded Accomplishments

Calendar year 2018 can appropriately be described as a period of growth, preserving history, concern for the welfare of others, and technological advances.

All of those elements were accomplished via the policies undertaken by the Commissioners to safeguard, improve and enhance the area's quality of life and economy. All of the actions initiated were for the "common good," but all of them contained an eye towards fiscal responsibility.

Lackawanna County's ongoing stability can be attributed to the "cost containment" mode that the staff constantly operates under. The County continues to provide top-flight services, while doing more with less.

In order to provide the elements necessary to spur new programs and innovations, financial resources are necessary. To that end, the County, through Ordinance 254, borrowed \$15 million to upgrade its land records management software, improve several roads and bridges, purchase new equipment for its facilities, and buy a building to serve as a new Court Center.

The Lackawanna County Government Center at The Globe continues to progress at a smooth pace with a target of the end-of-the-year/early 2019 occupancy. The sale of the current Administration Building to a private developer paves the way for it to be put back on the tax rolls and offer new retail, living quarters, food, and office opportunities.

Protecting our residents is of the utmost concern. To that end, significant upgrades were completed for the 911 Emergency Services Center along with the installation of a new CAD System to more accurately target locations for first responders.

Human Services continue to be a vital requirement for helping those in need. Many agreements have been approved to assist the elderly, youth and homeless and educate the public on the perils of opioid addiction.

Preserving the area's history, through the Arts & Culture Department's programs, serves as a link to our past. The monuments on Courthouse Square will be getting a facelift to restore their grandeur. Volunteers are working to rehabilitate Trolley Car 505, as a tribute to the strength of our past. The initial County Heritage Fair will provide a new leisure outlet for local and out-of-town folks. Several grants continue to fund free arts, crafts and recreational programs for youth, the underprivileged and area organizations.

### **Debt Position**

The County has been able to mitigate its annual expenditures for debt service by taking advantage of favorable interest rates. The savings from the refinancings of 2016 and 2017 allowed the County, without extending the maturity of any of the refinanced bonds, to maintain its annual debt service in a manageable range.

The County will continue to be diligent when seeking further opportunities to restructure its long term debt.

### **Financial Policies of Lackawanna County for 2019**

In 2019, the Administration will continue to be conservative and demonstrate fiscal responsibility, restraint and management when addressing the County's financial challenges.

The Administration will continue its commitment to addressing the constant challenges facing County government on numerous fronts, especially in the area of its workforce. Personnel-related expenses (salaries, wages and health care) comprise 64.46 percent of the County's general fund budget, net of tax transfers out.

### **Important Features of the Budget**

The 2019 general fund budget includes no property tax increase.

Many man-hours went into the preparation of the County's 2019 fiscal blueprint. Its goal is service to the 214,000 residents. The budget also reflects no cuts in programs or services that our communities and people rely on.

The budget also contains provisions for our parks, Human Services programs, Aging initiatives, environment, with spraying for gypsy moths and black flies along with monitoring for Zika and other viruses. We continue to meet the challenges of an ever-changing society by doing more with less in a fiscally responsible manner.

It is vital to secure public input on this financial plan. The budget hearings are the perfect venue for the public to provide the Commissioners with ideas that they can review and implement, where possible, to help cut expenses further and generate additional revenue.

The cost to run County government and its various programs is substantial. A prime example is the Prison. A great deal of revenue is expended for staff, programs, medical treatment, supplies and other ancillary services. This is part of our mission, and we will continue to do so as efficiently as possible.

### **Reasons for Major Financial Policy, Expenditure & Revenue Changes from 2018 Budget**

Due to continued pressure from shrinking Federal and State funding, collectively bargained wage and benefit increases, and rising law enforcement costs, the County's 2019 budget will exceed the 2018 budget.

During 2018, the County was able to capitalize on a significant surplus in its debt service fund. Since the County depleted the debt service fund surplus, the County will need to transfer additional funds from the general fund to the debt service fund.

The Human Services area will continue to be a hallmark of the programs offered by the County government. In addition to Human Services, emergency response, the court system and other vital functions will comprise the majority of the County's 2019 expenditures.

**Budget Overviews**

The 2019 general fund budget totals \$126,607,429. The 2019 capital budget totals \$13,916,483. The 2019 debt service budget totals \$20,371,725. The 2019 special purpose funds budgets total \$48,440,489.

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*This Budget Message is respectfully submitted this 15th day of October 2018 pursuant to  
Section 1.12-1203 of the Lackawanna County Home Rule Charter.*

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