

State of the County
Rick House, County Administrator

I am changing the format of my article this month to include FAQs. The questions below come from the media, emails, phone calls, personal interactions with people (generally after church and in Wegmans), questions to department heads and questions sent to me that were generated from social media.

Question: I have been a stay at home parent and am looking to go to work but day care is too expensive, and if I go to work but the cost of day care forces me to quit, what can I do?

Answer: There is Day Care Subsidy program through the Department of Social Services. There is an application process with documentation requirements, but if you are approved, it could pay up to 95% of your day care cost. Recent eligibility changes have made it easier to qualify: You can visit the website: <https://www.waynecountyny.gov/540/Child-Care> or contact our Social Services department at 315-946-4881, Option 2, Option 4, for further information or to request a Child Care Application packet.

Question: I have questions about re-certifying my pistol permit, who can I talk to?

Answer: The best source for that information is from our County Clerk, Mike Jankowski. Mike has created a Fact Sheet to answer questions related to pistol permits. Go to: <https://www.waynecountyny.gov/186/County-Clerk>. You can also get information directly from the County website: <https://www.waynecountyny.gov/>

Question: Why did the County give management huge raises this year?

Answer: Management did not receive huge wage increases as has been inaccurately reported on social media. As I spoke about last month, all 410 current 35 hour a week employees (CSEA, IUE-CWA union employees and managerial/confidential employees will be required to work 2.5 additional hours per week (37.5) to bring them closer in-line with 40 hour a week employees (Sheriff's Office, Highway Department, ALS and 911). Each employees pay will go up corresponding to the additional hours worked. This will also allow all County office buildings to be open during the lunch hour. Some offices are currently closed while employees take a mandatory 1 hour unpaid lunch. The CSEA and IUE-CWA unions overwhelmingly approved the change last month.

Question: Why did the County stop negotiating with the deputies' union.

Answer: The County did not stop the negotiation process with the Teamsters union, the union declared an impasse. The County was adamantly against the impasse because the County wants to get a fair and equitable contract in place as soon as possible. The County negotiating team will keep meeting and moving forward. The County strongly

feels that continuing to negotiate is in the best interest of all parties, especially our residents.

Question: Why is the County against paying our sheriff deputies higher salaries when the County has all kinds of money?

Answer: The County is not against paying our sheriff deputies a fair wage increase and the current fiscal status of the County should not play a role in long-term deputy contract negotiations. However, the County is seeking an agreement that provides appropriate and competitive wages and benefits to deputies while respecting our County taxpayers. The County has always taken a pro-Sheriff's Office approach when dealing with the union as shown in the following quote by Teamsters union negotiator Chris Toole in a press release to the Finger Lakes Times after the last negotiation process: *"The new agreement provides for an aggressive wage increase schedule and also generates relief with respect to excessive hours of work. The wage package is worth over \$2 million with over \$600,000 in retroactive awards. Teamsters called it "one of the most lucrative agreements Local 118 has been a part of."* (Finger Lakes Times June 5, 2019).

Question: I use the canal trail often for biking and riding. Why does it seem that it is mowed often in some areas, while in other areas it can be knee high or higher? And is there any discussion of the county taking over this operation to ensure the quality of the trail for both residents and visitors?

Answer: There are several parties responsible for the maintenance of the trail within Wayne County. NYS Canal Corp, Wayne County DPW, Town of Arcadia, Village of Clyde, etc. There has been no discussion of the County DPW department taking over maintenance of the entire trail.

For further information regarding the Canal trail please go to:
<https://www.canals.ny.gov/trails/adopt.html>

Question: Why do county roads end at village lines? Don't village residents pay county taxes as well?

Answer: Many County, Town and Village roadways are defined by municipal boundaries. Each of the various governmental agencies have their own highway department that is responsible for their roadways. Classifications are often different between County/Towns/Villages and are based on use and traffic volume.

Question: I live on Crescent Beach Sodus Point and I have not heard an update on the status of the REDI (Resiliency and Economic Development Initiative) Project. Can you give me any information?

Answer: The Crescent Beach REDI project is currently out to bid. Bids will be analyzed and a contract will be awarded in the coming months. The stone quarries in the Finger Lakes and surrounding areas will have a significant task to provide the 85,000 tons of large rock required to complete the project. Based on the Contractors abilities, the work

may start in late 2022 or early 2023, and will likely take 2 construction seasons to complete.

Question: How quickly might underserved areas receive access to high-speed broadband under the expansion project?

Answer: We have a goal of completing our agreement with Charter in the next few months, with deployment and start of service expansion almost immediately. It will take an estimated 2 years for project completion, and could take as long as three, but we are optimistic it could be completed sooner.

Question: Many people complain about high taxes in Wayne County. Is the Board of Supervisors looking to raise taxes under the 2023 budget?

Answer: The County is still early in the budget process and the tax levy is based upon the amount of funding necessary to balance the budget at the end of the formulation process. Department Heads have done a good job thus far in keeping their budgets in-check and not putting the County in a position of having to increase the levy on tax payers. Many other factors play a role, such as loss of federal/state revenue, a turn in the economy causing lower sales tax revenues and increased County appropriations. Increased appropriations include, in part, higher personnel costs and infrastructure projects. This year, due to the higher amount of revenue received from sales tax and a healthy fund balance, we should be in the position of not having to increase the tax levy in order to balance the budget. That final determination will be made by the Board of Supervisors prior to the submission of the Tentative Budget in November.

Question: What is the long-term fiscal outlook for Wayne County?

Answer: Again, numerous factors play a role in our long-term fiscal viability. The County is fiscally strong today, however; is looking at large expenditures in the near future, such as the County-wide Ambulance Project (potentially \$8-10 million). The County will also be entering into discussions with the Town of Lyons regarding disposition of the Health Services Building on Nye Road. The County has been a tenant of that building for the last 30 years and the lease agreement expires at the end of 2024. The building, under the original agreement, reverts back to the Town of Lyons and discussions as to its disposition are forthcoming and the County is working on contingency plans. Other long-term infrastructure costs include potential cost overruns of the Lake Ontario REDI projects, County building renovations, large equipment purchases and other capital projects. However, even with large appropriations on the horizon, the County should remain strong if it maintains the sound fiscal practices that it has all along.

Question: Many municipalities now regularly post their meetings on YouTube, including next-door Seneca County, as a way to ensure residents have an opportunity to follow what's going on with their government. Any plans for doing this for Board of Supervisors meetings and committees?

Answer: We currently have the ability to either live stream or record and post after a meeting and have done so with the Industrial development Board (IDA), which takes place in a smaller conference room. The Board of Supervisors has not yet decided to go “live-meeting.” and discussions to do so will be forthcoming. IT has requested funding in the 2023 budget for AV upgrades in the large Supervisors committee room and Board chambers to accommodate live streaming. Public notifications will be made if/when any changes occur.

Question: If I have moved, should I notify the Board of Elections?

Answer: Yes, you should make the notification to make certain of your polling place.

Question: I am a democrat and want to vote in a republican caucus, can I do that?

Answer: No, you can only vote in a caucus for the party in which you are enrolled.

Question: Can I get help with transportation to my VA appointments?

Answer: Yes, Our Veterans’ Office offers handicap accessible transportation to Canandaigua VA on Mondays and Wednesdays, and to Syracuse VA on Thursdays and Fridays. We do ask that you call at least two weeks in advance of your appointment. If you have any questions about transportation, call our driver at 315-946-5995.

Question: Are there burial benefits available for dependents of deceased veterans?

Answer: There are many potential benefits available to surviving spouses or dependents of deceased veterans. If a veteran was in receipt of service connected compensation or a pension, their dependent may be eligible for up to \$2,000.00 reimbursement for burial expenses. In addition to burial reimbursement, honorably discharged veterans are eligible for a headstone or marker, and potentially eligible for burial in a veteran cemetery. For more information, you can call our Veterans’ Office at 315-946-5992 and ask for John.

Question: I have a relative who has mental health issues. What kind of services does Wayne County provide?

Answer: Wayne County provides a multitude of services through our Behavioral Health Services Department. These services include:

- Care Management and Referral Services / Single Point of Access
- Comprehensive Assessment and Evaluation: psychological, psychiatric, emotional, or substance abuse-related issues
- Integrated Treatment: Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
- Medication-Assisted Therapy provided by our physicians and nurse practitioners

- Narcan Training
- Open Access Center / Crisis Services: Immediate access to treatment/care
- Opioid Treatment Clinic
- Psychological Testing: including Forensic Court Services
- Psychotherapy: in-person, telephone, or video conference
- School Based Clinics: located in elementary, middle and high schools throughout the county
- Self Help and Peer Services: provided by our Certified Recovery Peer Advocates
- Substance Abuse Services / Group Therapy:

Our Mental Health staff want you to know that people often experience anxiety, fear, and helplessness during an emergency - Know the signs and get help - Every Life Matters. You can read more about [mental health resources on the OMH website](https://omh.ny.gov/), <https://omh.ny.gov/> or call Wayne Behavioral Health at 315-946-5722

I hope the FAQ format has been helpful and if so, I will continue this format in the future.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate contacting me at my office; rhouse@co.wayne.ny.us or 315-946-5480.