



**MARY BETH MAIO  
MAJORITY LEADER  
ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

**MAJORITY LEADER'S ADDRESS**

**MARCH 20, 2018**

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Herbert Litts, III

Mary Wawro

Craig Lopez, Majority Whip

Brian Woltman

Joseph Maloney

As Majority leader, I recognize that each of us comes to the table with our own unique experience, knowledge and expertise. In much the same way, each of us represents a community with unique features, visions and needs. While the City of Kingston or the Village of Saugerties may seem vastly different from Highland or Shandaken, there are fundamental community needs that government must ensure.

## **SAFE COMMUNITIES**

In my Majority address last year, I paid tribute to the brave men and women who act as first responders. I make no secret of my admiration and respect for law enforcement, fire fighters and EMTs who willingly rush toward danger to protect and defend the rest of us.

As Chairwoman of the Law Enforcement, Public Safety Committee, we will also look at the following matters:

-Regional Fire Training Centers: we need to ensure that our dedicated volunteers have up to date training and equipment to protect our lives and theirs. We must work with local first responders and the host communities to ensure they are compatible.

-Radio Communication for our first responders: we still have areas in the county where our emergency personnel cannot communicate with each other, sometimes this is because they are in an area lacking wireless coverage and sometimes it is because they use different types of radios, this just doesn't work, this is a problem.

Homeland security recently announced success with a platform designed for these situations that will allow users of broadband smart phones, WiFi, data terminals, and older walkie talkie radios to all communicate with each other using

voice, text, instant messages, video and data. This may be an affordable solution to examine, and we will explore it further in the coming year.

-Greater Community & School Safety: partnering with everyone on this is critical. Schools & communities need to feel safe.

We passed a Local Law to address bullying of minors on social media, but we need to discuss broader problems of school safety with other community leaders, educators and experts to address the recurring violence that we see in our schools across the nation. Potential topics of discussion include support of more community recreation programs, improvement of mental health services and a discussion of more school safety officers. Our new Minority Whip Craig Lopez has been discussing the issue of school safety with many of our colleagues, and I will be asking him to spearhead a forum where we can bring all the stakeholders together. Working side by side with one another instead of languishing in our own silos, we can find real solutions to problems facing our youth.

Community Service has been recognized as a beneficial and cost effective alternative to incarceration by NYS Department of Criminal Justice and Homeland Security. Community Service programming is consistent with the principles of restorative justice. It provides a positive means to repair property or offer other services of value and/or significance to victims, whether individual or the community at large. Further, it enables offenders to achieve a better understanding of how their actions impact the community, be held accountable for their offense, and learn pro-social behavior.

Our new restorative justice center has great potential to provide education to our youth as well as adults along with the realities of the world. This way, we give them the opportunity and tools to make the right decision.

All of this requires law enforcement professionals who know the community they serve. We are incredibly lucky to have a community-minded, caring and committed Sheriff who is always ready and willing to work with us and the County Executive. It is no secret that there is a serious opioid health crisis here and throughout the country. Sheriff Van Blarcum was there when Legislator Wawro suggested, and this body funded, a cyber-tip line to give community members greater ability to see something and say something. He was there when our advisory committee recommended the implementation of a medication assisted treatment program in the jail for inmates with addiction issues. He was there when the County Executive suggested introducing hybrid electric vehicles into his fleet. And I know that he will be there the next time we ask for his help.

## **AFFORDABLE COMMUNITIES**

Like many communities across the country, we learned the lessons of a changing economy when we lost major manufacturing businesses like IBM and more recently Schrade and Dino Nobel. Fortunately, Ulster County is growing again. This success is due to a spirit of inclusion, empowerment and community engagement. We are competing for business on a global level and we have a lot to offer. We need to enhance our partnerships and expand our resources to remain competitive.

With the support of this Legislature, Ulster County was included in the 40% film tax credit region. Acting quickly, we secured several film and television projects before other counties in the Hudson Valley. While these production companies see a savings, Ulster County enjoys a boost in tax revenue, jobs and local spending. We are just beginning to realize the potential this offers. We **MUST** work together to ensure that this tax credit is reauthorized in the coming months so that we can continue to develop this economic engine, and keep showcasing our beautiful county in major motion pictures.

Ulster County Waterways Advisory Committee issued a report in December with several significant recommendations we need to implement. One essential recommendation is for the Economic Development & Tourism Committee to liaison with the Catskill Watershed Corporation to receive regular updates on programs and funding available to business and towns located within NYC Watershed.

Additionally the report recommends that Ulster County work with communities along the Esopus Creek, Rondout Creek and Wallkill River to explore inter-municipal agreements similar to those in place in Orange County. This will allow us to make flood hazard mitigation a priority by sharing the equipment and expertise necessary to provide proactive monitoring and maintenance of these waterways. Then, working with trusted partners such as Ulster County Soil and Water, we may be able to reduce the irreparable losses to business, homes, farms, and infrastructure caused by flooding.

## **SUSTAINABLE & GREEN COMMUNITIES**

Ulster County Government has had great success achieving and surpassing many of the goals for sustainable initiatives established by legislative policy and we need to build upon this success to do more. This is an area where the traditional community boundaries disappear.

The effort of our Department of the Environment and Public Works has clearly exceeded our expectations regarding a green fleet. This year I would like to update this policy and continue to monitor the use of electric vehicle charging stations. The availability of EV charging stations is literally putting Ulster County on the map as more and more electric and hybrid vehicles come into use.

Some of you may have driven on Frank Sottile Blvd and noticed the huge solar array that is being built on the former Town of Ulster Landfill. This 8 acre array will open soon and is just one step toward lowering our carbon footprint.

Currently, the Ulster County Law Enforcement Center represents about 40% of Ulster County's energy costs. Tonight we will be doing something about that. First we will be voting to accept a \$250,000 grant from the Clean Energy Communities program. We were awarded this grant because Ulster County was the very first Clean Energy Community in New York State. We will also be voting on Capital Project 519 to use some of this grant to upgrade lighting at the Ulster County Law Enforcement Center. The Department of Environment also leveraged funding from Central Hudson for this project.

I am also excited about the future of solid waste...Ulster County is poised to take a giant step toward controlling our own destiny. The initial feasibility presentation on a partnership with Greene and Sullivan Counties was very promising and we may finally see our way to a long term and sustainable solid waste solution. GUS would create economies of scale that offer cost savings right from the star - but the true potential of this alliance would be in diversion of municipal solid waste – keeping it out of landfills altogether. I applaud the UCRRA for bringing this forward. We have talked about this long enough – it is time to act.

And finally, to the members of my Caucus...

The members of the Republican Caucus do not need to be micromanaged or given homework assignments. I know all of you are already working on a variety of issues that will impact the safety, affordability and sustainability of Ulster County. I do want to encourage all legislators and especially our newest members to look beyond your committee assignments and take advantage of opportunities that will be presented to you.

I will be scheduling tours of the Ulster County Law Enforcement Center and our new restorative justice center in the coming months. I want to arrange another

demonstration at one of our fire training centers that several of you attended last year.

Mary Wawro, Chairman of Energy and Environment will be scheduling a tour of the Resource Recovery Agency and our new 8 acre solar array when it opens. In December we let legislators drive our new all electric vehicle and we should do that again for new legislators.

Craig Lopez, Chairman of Public Health is planning a tour of Social Services.

I am sure that other opportunities will present themselves such as a tour of the U&D Corridor and the expansion of the trail in Highland when the weather is nicer.

As County leaders, it is incumbent on us to learn more about the departments that report to our committees. We will be holding more committee meetings at the Departments themselves, so we can meet with staff and department heads, ask questions, and learn more about the operation. Folks, how can we properly exercise oversight during budget time if we don't open a line of communication with them now.

As community leaders, it is incumbent upon us to take part in events in our own community as well. In the Town of Lloyd, for example, Police Chief Waage holds an 8 week Civilian Police Academy once a year that I was invited to attend. This program opened my eyes to many issues from gang violence to school shootings. If your community doesn't have a similar program, be proactive and contact your Local Police Chief or even Sheriff Van Blarcum and ask to do a ride-along.

There are dozens of other opportunities to get involved in your community. For example: on January 9 this year I spearheaded a local effort for "Thank an Officer Day". This is a nationwide grass roots opportunity to reach out to law enforcement in our own backyard, our own community, our own county. This

lead to other occasions to work with Chief Waage from Lloyd and Chief Coccozza from Marlboro, to support local efforts and take part in other hometown events. I will be happy to speak to you about how to promote this and similar events in your towns.

These opportunities are open to all Legislators and you can always gain new insights and understanding that will serve you well whether you are here 2 years, 12 years or 20 years...

The Republican Caucus is determined to look beyond the little things that divide us and work toward building communities of mutual respect and cooperation. Safe communities, affordable communities, sustainable communities – that is what Ulster County is all about. It is about all of the communities within Ulster County and today, it is about Ulster County as part of a larger Hudson Valley Community and beyond.

It is an honor to serve again this year as Majority Leader and I thank you for this opportunity.

Mary Beth Maio, Majority Leader  
March 20, 2018