

I want to thank those of you who voted for me for your support.

I wish all of you a Happy New Year.

In a neighboring County, you have a County Legislature hiring lawyers to sue the County Executive over a budget dispute.

We've got a Legislature and a Congress in Washington that almost pushed our nation off the fiscal cliff.

Look, relationships can be tough. And governmental relationships are no different.

Whatever differences some of us had last year, can either be left to frustrate this body, or we can join together and do what I heard last month, and become the policy making body we are authorized to be.

I opt for the latter, and I believe you do as well.

Together, we accomplished many good things last year:

- We led on local economic development issues for projects such as the Olympic Regional Development Authority's takeover of Belleayre;

We also pushed back against the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's inaction at Williams Lake;

And we successfully positioned the Hudson Landing project with State funding;

- We accomplished what I believe to be every major goal of charter reform;
- And we enacted the first County brine law in New York State;
- We led the effort in the Town of Wawarsing to hold the New York City Department of Environmental Protection accountable and helped secure millions for Wawarsing and began to sign the first buyouts for flood ravaged families;
- We called out the New York State DEC for their coddling of the serial polluters also known as the New York City DEP.

- We certainly had spirited committee debates and whether we liked it or not, we solved problems that have been on this County's plate for years, if not decades.

We made promises and we kept them.

We have more work to do though.

Policy-determination is the alignment of vision and goals amongst the County's elected leaders in these Chambers as well as in our Town, City, and Village halls.

I voted for . . . many voted for, an Executive branch of government to ensure greater efficiency and leadership.

Many of us have been disappointed with personality driven differences – but it is the **result** that we must look for.

As a body, we have been most successful in our policy-determining when we've worked together.

Sometimes, within this post-Charter legislative body, there has been a lack of clarity on what is policy making and what is administration.

On the night of the 2013 budget vote, Leader Donaldson highlighted that the County Executive has been setting policy through his budget recommendations.

My friends, that your choice. It is our choice.

In 2011, it was the nursing home.

In 2012, it was flow control.

In 2013, it can be a budget that administers policies as established by the County Legislature.

Otherwise, we can maintain the status quo. **It's your call.**

There will always be some overlap between policy and administration but it is up to this Legislative body to ensure the clarity of distinction on this issue.

Those without vision spend considerable energy on wrong or irrelevant issues, bouncing reactively from one topic to another.

In short, they cannot see where they are going. It is time for the residents of Ulster County to community their vision to their elected officials through the Citizen Advisory Boards; and for those elected officials, meaning us, to use that information to craft a budget where policies, as desired by the citizens of this County, are effectuated.

Most recently, we heard from the Catskill Mountain Railroad and our Trails Advisory Committee of their visions; of what they want Ulster County to be.

I know that I was not the only Legislator though, that was taken aback by the comments on the night of the budget vote.

These were voices that we needed to hear from much earlier in the process.

Many of our Boards are ***so critical to*** our County that they are mandated by the Charter; to advise the

Legislature, and the Executive on matters pertaining to their department.

The Community Services Board is described in the Charter that they shall advise the Commissioner, the Executive and the Legislature on matters pertaining to mental health.

Yet, during the budget process, we heard from numerous individuals, groups, and other Elected Officials of not being consulted or advised.

It is my view, that we should not accept policy recommendations that have not been vetted through appropriate citizen's advisory boards such as the Community Services Board or the Railroad Advisory Board.

That choice though, as I've learned, is not mine – **it's all of ours.**

These individuals were entrusted to help us enact the desires of Ulster County residents.

This year, we must increase and improve the methods of ensuring that their voices are heard.

Now, I'm willing to stand up to anyone that utterly ignores his own Citizen Advisory Boards,

but I won't do it without your help.

I'm willing to have stones thrown at me – heck, I'm use to it at this point . . .

but not unless I know you want to insist on better communication between these groups and the County government.

In visioning, we need to start with a better relationship with our citizen advisory groups, months before we receive the tentative budget.

This Legislature's financial vision must be communicated to those drafting the tentative budget for their consideration prior to the presentation of the tentative budget.

I am asking Legislators Gerentine and Gregorious to report to the Ways and Means Committee how they feel we can best accomplish improved communication with

our citizens groups and I am prepared to offer my own ideas to them for their consideration as well.

This is not the only part of our budget process that is backwards. Currently, New York State Town Law, Section 106 requires the Town Budget Officer to file the tentative budget with the Town Clerk on or before September 30th

Ulster County's tentative budget is not filed with the Clerk of the Legislature until on or before the first Friday of October;

That is a full week after the Town tentative budgets have been filed by Town Boards and presented to their communities.

The Counties of Monroe and Westchester have already addressed this issue for their tentative budgets.

They are the only Counties in New York, that by state law, file their Town budgets on or before October 30th – instead of September 30th– enabling them the benefit of knowing what their County's budget is going to actually be before they present their own budget.

A budget is always an educated guesstimate.

But, we want our Towns to be able to make the best educated decisions that they can make when formulating their budgets; not for them to have to guess what Ulster County's budget is going to be.

All of our local government budgetary visions should be aligned.

An alignment of vision also requires an alignment of our budget process, and this is an issue that we should petition the State Legislature to fix for Ulster County, if not for the entire State.

Next, while far more prominent than a mere advisory group, we must remain united in our vision to address the gaps at the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency and obtain full disclosure regarding the New York State Comptroller's Audit.

I am asking Legislators Carl Befiglio and John Parete, if they are willing, to attend RRA Board meetings and brief the full Legislature monthly on RRA activities and ask that the RRA Executive Director do the same.

Next, we must address the massive increases in Safety Net costs that, regardless of who pays the bill, will continue to impact the local tax-payer.

One issue that cuts across every community in New York State, is the problem of drugs.

Our substance abuse experts tell us drug addiction can start with drugs legally prescribed by a doctor or recreational drug use by normal, rational people.

I am sad to say that I know of several families that look “normal” to the outside world but are devastated with a loved one's addiction.

It's easy to write these people off for getting what they deserved, for breaking the law.

But it's not just a few people anymore, the problem is becoming far too widespread for us just put them all away.

Our common goal must be to lower the number of drug arrests and recidivism, to lower the need for social services, and to improve the quality of life for Ulster County residents.

I am asking the Legislature to set up a special committee to examine how we can reduce drug abuse, including prescription drug abuse, and develop a strategy to reduce drug related crimes.

I am asking Legislator Richard Parete to lead that special committee along with Legislator Mary Wawro. These two colleagues chair the Law Enforcement and Social Services Committees which will help create a policy on curbing drug abuse in Ulster County.

I am asking them to examining everything from treatment of drug addiction, the URGENT task force, to Social Services to our Courts to our prosecutorial abilities, I want to make Ulster County the most drug free County in the Nation.

Economic development must also be our common vision to have any impact on the quality of life goals.

Governor Cuomo declared New York is “open for business”. We have projects in Ulster County that are trying to get “open for business”.

We as a Legislature must continue to advocate, support, guide, and fight for these projects.

One of the things that I am pleased about in the budget, is the re-alignment of our economic development operations.

We have long needed a singular point of contact for job creation efforts in Ulster County.

Now, we need to ensure that this office is effective, with clear legislative oversight.

We also need to continue to focus on a few key projects for our County.

For that reason, I am asking you to help resolve to ensure a positive reality for four key projects in 2013. I'm calling it 4 for 13.

If we can achieve success in these 4 projects in 2013, we can create hundreds if not thousands of jobs in Ulster County, and change the County for the better for years to come in the area of tourism.

- First, we need to ensure that the Williams Lake Project has a shovel in the ground this year by continuing to hold the DEC's feet to the fire – retail growth and jobs will follow;
- Second, now that Belleayre's operation is secure, we need to take steps to push the DEC to advance the Crossroads project;
- Third, now that we've helped the Hudson Landing project advance, we need to ensure that we continue to be supportive, and encourage the State agencies involved to move the grants ahead;
- And last, I would like to see a concerted effort to focus on resort development. The desire for casino gaming that some have is nice, but the reality is we cannot depend solely on helping one resort. I would like to see a concerted effort to promote some of our destination and non-destination resorts in the Towns of:
 - Lloyd,
 - Rochester,
 - Wawarsing,
 - Saugerties, and
 - Shandaken and

- also to lobby the State for Video Lottery Terminals (or VLTs) for no more than three of those resort areas if they want them – and just to be clear, I said support all of them, but only VLTs for those that want them –no VLTs in Saugerties - I know.

To do these things, and focus on these issues, I am asking the Legislature to form a Special Committee on making **4 for 13** a reality.

I am asking 4 Legislators to serve on and jointly lead that Special Committee.

Those Legislators are: Peter Loughren, Robert Parete, Jim Maloney, and Mary Beth Maio.

Legislators Robert Parete and Peter Loughren also work in Albany and have access to some of those who will help make these decisions. Legislator Maio has experience in banking and finance and Legislator Maloney has always done a great job leading our economic development initiatives.

I am asking those four Legislators to be the tip of the 4 for 13 spear in pushing our State agencies for

accountability and working to ensure that those major projects have shovels in the ground and pay checks in peoples pockets this year in the case of Hudson Landing, Williams Lake, and Crossroads and to join with me in working to expand and promote traditional tourism resorts.

Together with the County Executive, we have pushed back against the New York State DEC's allowing the New York City DEP to pollute our community.

We didn't need to litigate last year because the administrative process relating to the consent order has not been exhausted – something I am advised is typically necessary before litigation ensues.

However, despite the \$12.5 million in new assistance for Wawarsing, we need to ensure the DEC is aware that their efforts to coddle the DEP will be met with resistance.

To that end, I continue to pledge our full support to efforts of the Executive in taking on the DEP.

I am asking Legislators Craig Lopez and Ken Wishnick to serve as a tag team on behalf of this Legislature; working

with the Director of Planning to review any revisions to their initial consent order and recommend a strategy to the Legislature based on any revisions or, in the worst case scenario, the failure of the DEC to revise their initial proposal.

Last year, I promised our committees would be places of substantive deliberations. They were.

One thing that has frustrated me, and I know I'm not alone, is the fact that our rules have not been consistently applied or followed.

Last year, we had a group of Legislators, led by Legislator Kevin Roberts, working on the Rules of the Legislature. Then, schedules and personal circumstances stopped that work; which had been proceeding in good faith.

I am asking Leaders Donaldson and Ronk to designate one person from each of their caucuses to sit down to finish this work, which was well underway.

And I am directing Legislative Counsel and asking Leader Donaldson to ask Minority Counsel to work with those Legislators and finish this so we can have a first reading

preferably at the February meeting but no later than the March meeting.

I never want to have a situation where we become disagreeable over process; when it is the policies being considered, that should be our focus.

AGING SERVICES

To Legislator Provenzano, you served with distinction on the Golden Hill Local Development Corporation Board.

From all reports I heard, I know your compassion for that facility served all of Ulster County well.

I also want to thank our two non-legislative appointments, Michael Bernholz and Dr. Michele Iannuzzi for their tremendous expertise.

The sale of Golden Hill is closing in on us. We clearly need to ensure that the promise of patient quality is fulfilled and that workers are respected.

I am asking Legislator Provenzano to work with Legislator Fabiano as a special committee for Golden Hill oversight during the transition process and after the

transition to ensure that our seniors are cared for and that our workers respected.

As we shared in our successes, we also shared in our frustrations.

Communication has been difficult at times and nonexistent at others.

Government cannot be about the personalities on the 6th floor, it has to be about the people.

Our citizens are desirous of better communications; as we heard, for example, from our friends at the Catskill Mountain Railroad.

For all of us, excellent service is our goal.

It is not just my goal, but all of ours. I know it.

While politics is sometimes the reality for all Legislatures – from Congress to local boards, I remember, and I know you do as well, that it is public service that brought us here.

If ever there was a year to put the politics aside and move the mountains that block good government, now is the time.

Whether you voted for me or not, I am honored that each of you are my colleagues and look forward to partnering with you for the people of Ulster County.

Thank you.