

**BROOME COUNTY LEGISLATURE  
SPECIAL SESSION  
FEBRUARY, 24, 1998**

The Legislature convened at 7:00 pm with a call to order by the Chair, Daniel A. Schofield. The Clerk, Louis P. Augustini, read the fire exit announcement and called the Attendance Roll, Present-16, Absent-3 (Burger, Lindsey, Sweet).

The Chair, Mr. Schofield, let the members of the Legislature in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, followed by a moment of silent meditation.

**RESOLUTION HELD OVER FROM FEBRUARY 19, 1998 SESSION**

**RESOLUTION NO. 73** (Held over by Mr. Pasquale)

By Finance Committee

Seconded by Mr. Shafer

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AGREEMENT WITH GOVERNMENT FINANCE ASSOCIATES, INC., FOR CONSULTING SERVICES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE FOR 1998 THROUGH 2002. Resolution carried.**

Mr. Shafer moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Pasquale. **Motion to adjourn carried.** Meeting adjourned at 7:05pm.

**BROOME COUNTY LEGISLATURE  
REGULAR SESSION  
THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 1998**

The Legislature convened at 4:00pm with a call to order by the Chair, Daniel A. Schofield. Following the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and a moment of silent meditation, the Clerk, Louis P. Augustini, made a fire exit announcement and called the Attendance Roll: Present-17, Absent-2 (Howard, Hudak).

**WRITTEN OR ORAL PRESENTATIONS OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

**STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS**

Chairman Schofield, Respected Members of the Legislature and Distinguished Guests:

When I stood before you to report on the state of our County last year, I was only several weeks into the job. At the time, I optimistically reported to you that the state of Broome County was strong and getting stronger every day. Even as I presented my theme of "obstacles to opportunities" last year, I hadn't yet discovered the true depth and breadth of the many obstacles that I had inherited.

While it isn't constructive to dwell on the problems of the past, it is imperative that we learn from them. Believe me, in each of these past 368 days, I've learned a lot. I've worked hard to transform the numerous obstacles left behind by the previous administration into opportunities. With the simple goal of incorporating cooperation and common sense into County government, I was convinced we could overcome the problems of the past, and work to build a more healthy and vibrant economy for the future of Broome County.

By applying the same basic principles that we all use in our homes and businesses, like

spending less money more wisely, having faith and confidence in the people around us, and working

harder and smarter to get the job done, it wasn't long before the opportunities began to present themselves.

The first step on our road to recovery was to assemble a dedicated team of hardworking professionals, and to convey a renewed sense of pride and commitment in our existing County employees, people with a "can do" attitude who aren't afraid to roll up their sleeves and try new and creative solutions, county employees who ignore the traditional limitations of conventional wisdom and who push themselves to be better and challenge their co-workers to do more.

I've always been a firm believer that out of hard work comes good things, and it's the hard work, innovation and cooperation of these great employees that made it possible for me to present an initial budget which cut taxes and reduced spending for the first time in the history of Broome County. Now, I won't try to take all the credit for our ever-improving economic climate here in Broome County. In fact, there may even be several people in this room who would say that the efforts of my first year were coincidental to the Southern Tier's recent economic good fortune, but no one can deny that during the past 13 months, our County has experienced an unprecedented economic resurgence, and it's due in large part to the incredible cooperation of so many people in this community.

I'd like to publicly thank and commend the Legislature, particularly Legislative Chairman Dan Schofield and Finance Committee Chairman Bill Wike, for executing their oversight duty so seriously and effectively. Their diligent efforts made it possible to realize my goal of cutting taxes and spending in my first year, and it set the tone for the balance of my term.

In the 1998 budget, we cut taxes by 6%, and reduced spending nearly \$4 million dollars. My pledge to you today is that I will do everything in my power to continue holding the line on taxes and spending. Ladies and gentlemen, cooperation has made the state of our county very, very strong, and it's the continued cooperation of the elected officials in this room, our elected representatives in State and local government offices and the dedicated employees of our Broome County workforce – public and private sectors alike – that will make the state of our County even stronger !

### **Economic Development & Jobs**

Working side by side with this honorable body, we've been able to forge a strong bond between State and local officials and community leaders. It's the team approach that has catapulted Broome County to the top of the State and nation in job growth and economic development.

Broome County is now considered an extremely desirable place to locate or expand a business. As many of you know, a national marketing magazine recently named Binghamton and Broome County one of the top 20 areas in the United States to do business. We have jobs, jobs, and more jobs available right now. In fact, local industries here in the southern tier currently have more than 1,000 positions available for qualified applicants.

During the past 14 months, there have been more inquiries by new and existing companies who want to locate or expand their business in Broome County than in each of the last 5 years combined. Think about that, over 1,000 job openings, and our problem is we don't have enough people to fill them.

Broome County's economy is surging, and it's because of cooperation at all levels. Governor Pataki has set the tone at the State level by making New York State a better place to do business, and that attitude and philosophy is carrying through to every corner of the Empire State. We must follow the governor's lead, and duplicate the successful marketing techniques

he's used to spread the word out about the State of New York. We need to constantly demonstrate to the rest of the State, the country and the world why Broome County is such an important and vital area, such a perfect place to live, work and raise a family.

In that regard, I'd like to congratulate our Chamber President Rick Lutovsky for recognizing the importance of teamwork, and having such a clear and sensible vision of what we need to propel us into the next millenium. Over the past year, Rick has demonstrated the kind of leadership we need in the private sector, to break down walls, erase parochialism, and present a unified Broome County team.

### **1997 REVISITED**

#### **Veterans' Clinic**

As I stood here last February to report on the state of the County, we were in the midst of a crisis involving the location of a veterans' clinic. Confronted with a \$600,000 potential price tag and deadlines quickly closing in, I knew we needed a creative solution. With the cooperation of Senator Tom Libous, NYS Mental Health Commissioner Jim Stone, Binghamton Psychiatric Center Director Margaret Dugan, and federal VA officials, we found that creative solution.

Only weeks after discovering the "VA crisis", we had successfully sited a clinic at the Binghamton Psych Center, and provided a state-of-the-art facility where veterans from Broome and our neighboring counties can receive top-quality health care services. Cooperation made it possible for us to solve the immediate problem, help our veterans secure a long-term solution, and save County taxpayers hundreds of thousands of local tax dollars in the process.

#### **Progress & Justice**

In addition to my pledge for a solution to last year's VA clinic crisis, there were several other longstanding issues that I promised to act on during 1997. In January of 1997, the State of New York was threatening to withhold critical state reimbursement dollars if we didn't comply with the Court Facilities Act of 1987. It was clearly time to pull our head out of the sand and do something about our antiquated, unsafe County Justice Building.

After analyzing several alternative plans, the decision was made to stick with the original design concept that had been on hold for so many years, go out to bid, and move forward with the project. I'm pleased to report today that construction on the new Broome County Justice Building started last fall. The total construction cost of \$10.5 million dollars is well below the original \$12.5 million dollar estimate, and the project is currently ahead of schedule.

#### **A New Central Library**

Another topic that's been of great interest and concern to many people in this community has been our deteriorating Broome County Public Library. Siting a new central library is yet another example of an important issue which was largely ignored over the years, swept under the rug for someone else to deal with.

Last February, I vowed to provide the necessary leadership to get the library siting process underway, to lift the rug, and sweep the library process into action. Last week, for the first time ever, all the decision makers necessary to select, approve and construct a new central library were gathered together -- right here in this room. With the cooperation of you in the Legislature, the Library Board of Trustees, Mayor Rich Bucci, and the Binghamton City Council, we're closer than we've ever been to cutting the ribbon on a new central library.

It would've been very easy, and very politically expedient, to give-in to pressure from the people in this community, and in this room, who demanded that I present a library proposal

within weeks of taking office. A proposal which was outdated and overpriced, and a proposal which surely would've been dead on arrival when it landed on your desks. But I refused to take the easy way out. Instead, I was determined to present a realistic proposal, one that would meet our changing needs and, at the same time, cost the taxpayers significantly less money.

Last week we saw two excellent library presentations, both plans appear to meet our immediate and long-range needs, and both cost significantly less money than anything this County Legislature has ever considered before. Within the next month, I'll complete my review of all the information, and present you with my formal proposal for a new central library.

While siting and constructing a new central library is an exciting step in the right direction, we still need to develop a fair and equitable funding mechanism for all the libraries in Broome County. I hope to provide the leadership in the coming year to work with the municipalities which currently play host to their own libraries, and come up with a funding solution which will benefit us all.

#### **The Icemen Cometh**

In June of 1997 we learned that the Binghamton Rangers AHL franchise had been sold, and that the team was preparing to move out of our arena, and out of this community. Faced with the possibility of an empty building and, more importantly, no team for the loyal hockey fans in Broome County to call their own, we immediately began searching for a replacement.

After discussions with various AHL and East Coast League officials, it became apparent that we would once again need creativity and cooperation to confront a serious challenge. We began to negotiate with a group of local businessmen who were interested in keeping hockey in Broome County--private businessmen who were willing to consider a completely different approach to the traditional relationship between a professional sports franchise and its host community.

Out of crisis and adversity we helped negotiate a three way agreement between Broome County, the local owners group, and the former Colonial Hockey League, and the BC Icemen were born. For the first time in the history of this County, we entered into a true partnership with a professional hockey franchise, and directly linked the success of our hockey team to Broome County government. As the season draws to a close, I'm happy to report that our first year together was an overwhelming success. With a loyal following already established, and ambitious regional expansion plans from the United Hockey League, we look forward to a long and prosperous relationship with our BC Icemen.

#### **Plotting for a Profit**

For many years, selling the Garden Plots property on Upper Front Street in the Town of Dickinson had been a controversial topic. With conflicting appraisals on the value of the property and different opinions about the best way to utilize and develop it, selling the garden plots was another issue that I found under that proverbial rug.

In order to resolve the issue, liberate an important and valuable piece of prime real estate, and get the property back on the tax rolls, we again needed cooperation and leadership. It was time to get all the interested parties in a room together, develop a strategy, and sell the property for the right price to the right developer. Those interested parties included County Legislative Chairman Dan Schofield, County Planning Director Jim Hackett, Town of Dickinson Supervisor Mike Marinaccio, the Town Board and Town Attorney, and the County's legal team.

With cooperation from all these individuals, and particularly the leadership and flexibility of Supervisor Marinaccio, we were able to sell the garden plots for nearly \$1.8 million dollars, that's almost double the last best offer that the county had ever received. And the best news of all is that

we sold the property to a trusted, conscientious and, professional, local developer – the Newman Development Group - who is planning a top-quality mixed use development project for the property.

These are just a few examples of what can be accomplished through common sense and teamwork. It's important to point out, however, that we've done much more this past year than just clean-up old business and react to crisis situations. The same spirit of teamwork and cooperation that helped overcome the obstacles made it possible to achieve many of my own policy goals and objectives in 1997. And it's cooperation and common sense that will allow me to continue advancing my own aggressive policy agenda in the coming year.

**RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FUTURE**

The word cooperation is used a lot by politicians. In fact, I've already used it numerous times during this speech, and I'll say it many more times before I'm through. But to me, the word cooperation has true meaning. The people of Broome County have benefited tremendously during this past year through a renewed spirit of cooperation in County government.

Like most good things, that spirit has transcended the boundaries of our own County operations, and has brought us support and assistance from people and businesses in the private sector, and from representatives at every level of government. Since the day I took office, I've demanded that teamwork and common sense become second nature within County departments and among County employees. But I knew that in order to foster the kind of relationships necessary to get Broome County back on track, we had to reduce our span of control and get departments and employees working more closely together. We needed leadership from the Executive's Office to accomplish this. We needed to reinstate the three deputy system.

Last year, my proposal to add two additional Deputy County Executives to my office was met with great skepticism and opposition by many of you in this room. Let me just say that I'm grateful to you in the Legislature for giving me the opportunity to prove that the three deputy system was necessary and that it works. The results have been obvious.

When employees begin to communicate more effectively within their own departments, and work more closely with their colleagues in other departments, something very exciting happens. Morale improves, people start taking more pride in their work, malaise turns into momentum, and critical mass is achieved. Largely as a result of the hands-on management approach that a multiple deputy structure allows for, cooperation and teamwork have become the rule rather than the exception. In short, things are getting done. And I'll give you some examples.

When it was time to make good on a promise from 10 years ago, and build a baseball field at Broome Community College, the interdepartmental cooperation was apparent. Parks employees worked side-by-side with public works employees, and equipment and expertise were contributed by workers from the landfill. With county employees working together and ignoring the traditional limitations of their job descriptions, the baseball field was built at a minimal cost, and in record time.

When our fellow New Yorkers in the northernmost corner of the state were faced with the devastation of brutal ice and snow storms earlier this year, we were there. Mike Aswad and our emergency services group quickly formed an "Emergency Disaster Response Team" which acted as a clearinghouse for personnel and equipment to aid in the relief effort. Workers from our Highway Division banded together with employees from Parks and Solid Waste, and they traveled 8 hours northward to share our resources and lend a helping hand.

And when I called on managers and employees from the Health Department, Office for

Aging, CASA, and Veterans' Services to join forces and develop a plan to physically co-locate their departments, there wasn't a moment's hesitation. Even now, we're preparing to present the Legislature with a co-location plan that capitalizes on the natural synergies between these departments. The goal is to maximize the services these departments provide and eliminate any duplication of efforts. It's time to make these departments more convenient and accessible to our elderly, handicapped and infirmed customers, and to give our employees a more comfortable, efficient, ergonomic work environment. And we're doing it together, with common sense and cooperation.

Reinstating the deputies was the right thing to do. It was necessary, it made sense, and things are getting done.

**NEW INITIATIVES**

**Terminal renovation**

In spite of spending a lot of time on old news and unexpected crises, we still managed to accomplish a significant amount of new business in 1997.

As you may recall, one of my top priorities for 1997 was to focus on the Airport Terminal Renovation Project. While my goal was to get the project off the ground, I never imagined we'd make as much progress as we have in the course of just one year. With the assistance of Commissioner Bill Shea, we were able to accelerate the timeframe of the renovation project by more than a year.

Our new state-of-the art airport terminal will signify much more than just a cosmetic improvement. Airline operations will become much more efficient, and the new design will enhance our ability to attract new and expanded service into Broome County. Some have criticized the plan to improve our airport, and have even stated that our existing service is grossly inadequate. As we continue to work hard to improve service to certain destinations, I'm proud of the flight selections we're able to offer the people of the Southern Tier today. In fact, according to nationally renowned aviation experts, air service at the Binghamton Regional Airport exceeds the level of service provided by most other regional airports of its size. Other opinion leaders in the community obviously agree, and they recognize the value of investing in the future of our airport.

Governor Pataki and Senator Libous have once again exemplified that spirit of cooperation by contributing \$3 million dollars each to the overall cost of the terminal renovation project. The combined assistance from these State leaders -- an unprecedented \$6 million dollar contribution -- has all but ensured the realization of my goal to complete the project without the use of any local tax dollars.

Another benefit of a modernized flight terminal with improved airline service is the potential for a spectacular new industrial development zone adjacent to the airport. Our County Economic Development Team, led by Commissioner Jim Hackett, is tirelessly investigating every potential funding source in an effort to improve the water and sewer capacity at and near the airport facility, and make the corridor a viable economic development zone.

Again, I'm convinced that we can achieve this goal without the use of local tax dollars.

**Sewer & Water**

Broome County's sewer and water concerns aren't just limited to the airport corridor. With the Binghamton-Johnson City Joint Sewage Treatment Plant already far exceeding capacity, it's time that we as a county make a concerted effort to help alleviate this unpleasant problem. Future economic growth and development, not to mention our quality of life, depend in large part on how effectively we handle the treatment and disposal of our sewage. It's important to the businesses who want to move into the area, existing industries that want to expand, and the businesses and residents who are affected by the failing plant.

It's our duty as a county to help solve this problem and solve it quickly. That's why we're currently studying the feasibility of establishing a County-Wide Sewer and Water District to address the problem of diminishing capacity and outdated facilities.

**Arena**

A tremendous Broome County asset that has served us very well over the past 25 years is the Broome County Veterans' Memorial Arena. As we celebrate the arena's silver anniversary this fall, it's time to reinvest in this great building, which has hosted thousands of events and millions of

visitors, and has been a fitting monument to our veterans.

Although a dramatically escalated cost forced us to scrap the skybox project, there are many other ways we can improve the venue and help it realize its maximum potential. We're currently investigating the possibility of significantly increasing the seating capacity of the building. Under the direction of our talented new Arena Manager, Pete O'Donnell, we're attracting capacity crowds to exciting new events.

I'm pleased to announce today that on October 24<sup>th</sup>, for the first time ever, the arena will play host to an NBA Exhibition Game between the New Jersey Nets and the Boston Celtics. This professional basketball event, and other recent sell-out shows like "Lord of the Dance" and "Superstars on Ice" have passed-up bigger venues than the Arena because of the excellent reputation of quality service that our building provides.

However, several acts of this caliber have indicated that they won't be able to return to the Broome county arena if we don't increase our seating capacity and make our building more profitable. It's my intention to include resources in the capital program to make the necessary improvements. I also intend to vigorously pursue other potential funding sources from New York State government and the private sector. Enhancing the arena's capacity and making significant improvements to its general appearance will also help us host more community activities.

### **Sales Tax**

During my campaign, I vowed to tirelessly pursue the complete and permanent elimination of sales tax on clothing and related items in Broome County. As I spoke to retailers, store owners and business leaders in this community, there was a clear consensus that a tax break was needed to compete with Pennsylvania and other neighboring New York counties.

After my election, as I spoke with other county leaders around New York, it was clear that the idea had statewide appeal. In fact, I was able to convince Governor Pataki about the merits of my proposal, and it looks like New York State is well on its way to adopting a sales tax relief plan which was born right here in Broome County.

### **Emergency Services**

During 1997, Broome County Emergency Services completed the successful consolidation of 911 dispatching for several municipalities. Police and fire departments from the Village of Endicott, the Union Volunteer Emergency Squad, and most fire dispatching responsibilities in the Village of Johnson City have been assumed by Broome County. This year, we plan to continue the trend of service consolidation by taking-on the City of Binghamton's dispatching responsibilities. I sincerely hope that other municipalities in Broome County will seize this opportunity to save money and utilize their limited manpower more effectively.

To assist in the consolidation effort, I'm forming an Ad Hoc Committee on 911 Consolidation and Emergency Services. The goals of this committee will be to aggressively pursue the consolidation of 911 dispatching County-wide, and to increase the availability of emergency medical services throughout the County. As part of this effort, I've directed that all interested County employees who work in rural areas be given the opportunity to receive advanced first aid training. By making as many people as possible available as "first responders" more lives will be saved in emergency situations.

### **Public Safety & Corrections**

On the topic of public safety, the time has come to begin the process of consolidating police services county-wide. As criminals become increasingly sophisticated and dangerous, the job of the law enforcement officer follows suit. We can no longer afford to have a parochial view when it

comes to fighting crime. Being reluctant to, or technologically incapable of, sharing information with fellow officers gives the criminals a distinct advantage. Crime doesn't recognize any municipal borders within Broome County, and neither should law enforcement.

The most effective way to accomplish police consolidation is to establish a new set of rules, a new framework to organize and oversee all law enforcement activities in Broome County. I'm recommending that this framework be headed by an appointed Commissioner of Public Safety, a law enforcement professional selected by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Legislature.

Our County correctional facility is another area where it's only logical to institute professional oversight. We need an appointed Commissioner of Corrections at the Public Safety Facility.....a professional jail administrator who reports directly to the County Executive and is confirmed by the County Legislature. In the very near future, I will submit the necessary legislation to change the duties of the Sheriff and establish these two professional law enforcement positions.

### **CONCLUSION**

Ladies and gentlemen, the state of Broome County truly is strong, and it's getting stronger every day. I appreciate this opportunity to report to you about the many accomplishments of the past year, and to articulate my vision and goals for the future.

I realize that this State of the County Message is literally packed with information, and yes, there's even a bombshell or two. But I didn't run for County Executive because I needed a job, I was elected to make a difference. And I'm committed to making that difference by enhancing County services, stimulating economic development, and improving our quality of life.

Again, my pledge is to realize all these goals and still cut taxes and hold the line on County spending. With the hard work and dedication of all our county employees, the cooperation of you in the Legislature and the support and approval of the citizens of Broome County, we are making a difference.

Thank you.

The following petitions, communications, notices and reports were presented to the County Legislature:

- A. Petitions: None
- B. Communications:
  - 1. Minutes from:
    - a. EMC Solid Waste Committee
    - b. Cornell Cooperative Extension
  - 2. Information provided by Broome County Council of Governments for Highway Cost Advisory Team.
  - 3. 1997 Equalization Rates: City of Binghamton (Homestead, Non-Homestead Class)
- C. Notices: None
- D. Reports:
  - 1. Annual Reports (Financial Statements):
    - a. Soil and Water Conservation District
    - b. Veterans Services Center
    - c. Cornell Cooperative Extension

2. Monthly Report: Broome Community College (Above Minimum Hires, to 2/13/98)
3. Cornell Coperative Extension (Solid Waste Education Report, January 1 to February 13, 1998)
4. Department of Audit & Control
  - a. Follow-up review of Youth Bureau Program Vendor Compliance Audit
  - b. Follow-up review of Highway Division Motor Vehicle Repair Parts Inventory Audit
  - c. Payroll-Payout Audit of Law Department and Coroner

**WRITTEN OR ORAL PRESENTATIONS OF THE COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

Letters from the Chair, Daniel A. Schofield:

1. Appointing Wanda Hudak as voting representative for Arthur J. Shafer, Personnel Committee, February 19, 1998.

Mr. Brunza moved, seconded by Mr. Shafer, to receive and file the above referenced report(s) and to authorize and direct the Clerk to index said report(s) in the 1998 Journal of Proceedings and to publish pertinent portions of said reports as may be directed by the Chair.

Mr. Shafer moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Whalen. **Motion to adjourn carried.** Meeting adjourned at 4:45pm.