



# State of New York County of Broome Government Offices

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Executive's Office

Jason T. Garnar, Broome County Executive

**EMBARGOED** until 6:00 PM on February 11, 2020

## **2020 State of the County Address**

Good evening everyone. Thank you for being here.

Thanks to our students from Chenango Valley, Maine-Endwell and Windsor for being in our video and sharing their dreams with us. Thanks to their superintendents, David Gill, Jason Van Fossen and Jason Andrews for providing such great education and learning environments for our kids here in Broome County.

I didn't hear any of those kids say they wanted to be County Executive when they grow up. Before I was County Executive, I was a teacher. You heard my youngest son, Bennett, say he wants to be a teacher. I'm sure that's not because of me but because of the great teachers he has at Port Dickinson Elementary. Bennett is here tonight and so is the superintendent of the Chenango Valley School District, David Gill.

Bennett is in second grade. I remember being in second grade a long time ago and being asked that very question, "Jason, what do you want to be when you grow up?"

It was a big day, Career Day. We were asked to lie on the floor on a big piece of paper. They outlined us and then we had to finish the drawing and draw ourselves in the occupation we wanted to be. What did I paint myself as? A teacher? Marketing guy? Definitely not County Executive. I drew myself as a police officer.

Why? I wanted to protect people. I wanted to help people. It's a common theme from what these students shared with us. Many of them wanted to do jobs where they can help others, like be a lawyer, a vet or a teacher.

Bob Murphy said he wanted to be a lawyer when he grew up because he liked to help people too. If you ask him why he likes his job as OET Director, it's because he likes to help businesses and help people find jobs. Bob Murphy has worked hard to get to where he is and I know these kids are going to work hard to follow their dreams.

Three years ago I stood before you, a brand new County Executive, just a few months into the job, to deliver my very first state of the county address. I talked about the good things that were going on in Broome County and I also outlined the challenges that were ahead of us. I ended the speech by saying we were going to have to work hard to get to where we needed to be. I also said that we were all in this together, and that we would have to put aside our political differences and work together to get things done.

Three years later, there is no doubt that things are working in Broome County. Do we still have our challenges? Of course we do. Every community has them, and I'm not afraid to talk about them.

Just this year we are looking at a huge hit to our Medicaid cap in the proposed state budget. We need more affordable housing and more daycare for our kids. Still when you look at all the progress we have made, when you look at the over 100 new initiatives we have accomplished, and when you look at the important numbers, it's a fact that Broome works.

Don't worry, I'm not going to rattle off 100 different things tonight, but I am going to come close to it. Just look around. You are sitting in a brand new workforce development center, a place that will connect the thousands of available jobs to people who want to work, because Broome works.

Our old workforce building wasn't cutting it as it was old, dated, didn't have the best layout and didn't have a lot of parking. It was not a welcoming place for someone looking to get a job. With thousands of open jobs, we need to be in a building that's good enough to carry out the very important mission of filling every single one of them and getting people back to work.

Doug Matthews had a dream to save the Oakdale Mall so he bought a part of it. When we saw that there was an opportunity to build a brand new workforce development center at the Mall, we got to work to make it happen. It's not the easiest job to negotiate a lease for a brand new building that is cheaper than your current building, but we worked and did it. It's also not easy to construct a brand new 40-thousand square foot building and move 100 people into it in under a year, but in just a few weeks those people will be working here, right behind me.

It's not just at the workforce development center. We have Mental Health employees moving in here and some Department of Social Services employees.

On top of that, there will be hundreds more working here in healthcare jobs, and don't forget, also coming to the mall Beer Tree Brew Co. as they are expanding and building a restaurant, brewery and distribution center. With that comes even more open jobs, and this is all part of the big picture.

What we have here is a new building for our most important mission - filling our 5,000 open jobs - a building that is breathing new life into one of our most important assets and a building lease that is saving taxpayer money.

It's a win-win-win and it's a real-life example of what we can do when we work hard and work together.

Doug Matthews, his construction team, our department heads, our employees and every county legislator in this room, we all worked hard, we worked together and we are going to put a ton of people to work with this new facility.

Numbers? Let's look at the numbers. Since January of 2017, the unemployment rate has fallen, the average price of homes in Broome County is up, our fund balance is 25 times more than it was three years ago, and crime is down. The numbers show that what we are doing in Broome County is working and it is working because we are working together.

Three years ago people in Broome County wondered if the Legislature and the County Executive's office would be able to work together. I'm proud to say that when you look at all we have accomplished we are an example of how government can work when you put aside politics and come together to get things done.

In fact there are over 100 new major county initiatives we have accomplished over the past three years that wouldn't have happened without the Legislature and Executive's Office working together. Over 100 NEW things we've gotten done, and we are just getting started.

It began with fixing the finances:

- 2 straight property tax cuts
- Increased county reserves from \$250,000 to \$6.5 million
- Got Broome County off the State Fiscally Stressed list
- Reduced short term debt by 30%
- New "daylight legislation" increasing county financial transparency
- Permanently restored all sales tax money to municipalities
- \$3.1 Million in Shared Service Savings

It is working in Broome County. It's not just about fixing our finances. It's about keeping our community safe by cutting down on crime and protecting our police officers and our first responders. When we have a historic snowstorm or flash flooding, we make sure we are prepared and respond.

Our first responders need action, not words, and Broome County has taken real action in standing up for our first responders.

- Brand new communications network for police, fire, and EMS
- More Sheriff Deputies to road patrol
- More Broome Security officer positions
- Complete renovation of the 911 dispatch center
- Added more 911 dispatchers
- New Mental Health Online Dispatch Service
- New Text to 911 service
- Michael F. Aswad Emergency Services Special Operations and Training Facility

- Police consolidation in Deposit with the Sheriff's Office providing protection for our residents in Eastern Broome County
- Central Arraignment at the Broome County Jail
- New Jail Re-Entry Program
- More assistant district attorneys at the DA's Office
- New cybersecurity position
- Emergency Responder Protection Act

This year, we are also making sure our kids are safe when they are getting to and from school every single day. I watch as my three boys get on the bus to school every day and I know many of you have kids and do the same thing. We want to make sure they get there safely. I'm proud to announce that we are one of the first counties in New York State to take steps to put stop-arm cameras on our school buses. Every school that wants a camera on a bus will get one at no expense to the school district or the county.

When I first took office, one of my top priorities was to take on the heroin epidemic. People were dying, families were being broken apart, and we were in a crisis. Together, we jumped into the trenches and worked to fight this problem and we've made a lot of progress.

- New treatment center at former Broome Developmental Center with Helio Health
- One of the first counties in USA to sue opioid manufacturers
- \$75,000 in grants to grassroots organizations
- Drug treatment in jail program
- New Opioid Overdose Coordinator position at the Health Department
- 2,000 drug deactivation bags deployed across Broome County
- New Peer Response Team armed with OD MAP technology-putting boots on the ground-to get to the people who need help
- Addiction Center of Broome County Expansion in Endicott
- Compass Academy at BOCES
- New substance abuse treatment at Family Counseling Services

None of this would have happened without working together to help those who needed us.

Over the last three years, we've stepped up to help our veterans and that is not stopping in 2020. Broome County is home to more than 13,000 veterans who put their lives on the line to stand up for our freedoms. I believe that when a woman or man puts on the uniform to defend our freedoms, to possibly even give up their life for our country, a promise is made that when they come back home their community does everything they can do to support and take care of them.

That's why we're turning the old Vestal Hills Country Club into a brand new, one-stop veterans resource center opening in 2020. This will centralize care, feature a van for transportation and

provide veterans with the community support they deserve. It's going to be the model of how a community should support its veterans, and it builds upon many other veterans initiatives we are proud to support.

Out of our dedicated veterans fund, we have provided support for:

- Honor Flight Funding
- Veteran Canteens
- Hockey night for veterans
- Memory Maker project for veterans
- Southside Veteran Park monument
- Agent Orange vet monument
- Stand With Me K-9 training

The veterans center is opening this fall and the workforce development center is opening this month. These are signs that our economy is on its way up and Broome works. Broome County has a great partnership with the Agency and the Chamber of Commerce. Stacey Duncan, the Director of the Agency and the Chamber of Commerce is here tonight.

Among the many projects we've partnered on bringing jobs and economic revitalization to Broome County:

- DICK'S Sporting Goods Expansion
- Canopy Growth Hemp Industrial Park
- SUNY Broome Culinary School at Carnegie Library
- Buy in Broome Campaign
- Student Entrepreneurship Program
- Agency Broome Business Expansion and Retention Fund
- 20 Million Greater Binghamton Fund
- Clean Energy Loan Fund
- Best Value Purchasing
- Made in Broome and Broome is Good campaigns
- Buy Local Campaign

New development and housing projects throughout Broome County:

- Century Sunrise Apartments in JC
- 50 Front Street Luxury Housing
- 6 Emma Street Mixed Use Housing and commercial space.

6 Emma Street is a building we owned that needed some help. So did 1 North Page in Endicott. That was another county-owned property in disrepair. This one was unsafe and needed to come down. We made it happen and had a huge celebration with legislators and neighbors. Now it will be the national headquarters for National Pipe and Plastic.

Other demolitions:

- Kirkwood, Former Travel Inn
- Endicott, Former Endicott Inn
- Binghamton, Former Phillips Foundry building

Coming this year, the demolition of another property in Binghamton is happening, 6 1/2 Sturges Street. I know the Lindsey family is appreciative and we worked together to do this for them.

Tons of investment is happening in our infrastructure across the county, from the campus at SUNY Broome to Dorchester Park where we are building a brand new accessible park.

- Arena Master Plan
- Forum Improvements
- SUNY Broome Science Building Renovation
- SUNY Broome Student Services Building
- SUNY Broome Health Center Expansion
- New Bus Shelters across Broome County
- New Stage at Otsiningo Park
- En-Joie Improvements
- Art parks, murals, and mosaics
- Mobile DMV Unit
- Disc Golf Course at Cole Park

I cannot say enough about how great it is to work with our municipalities. We have many of our municipal leaders with us here tonight. Soon we will be traveling to every town and village in Broome County to do a mini state of the county speech just like we do with the budget. It's a great chance to meet public servants in their hometown, meet their constituents, learn more about where they live and what's important to them.

If you go throughout our communities here in Broome County, you see new things we've brought to these neighborhoods over the last few years, a lot in part to my Small Community Grant fund. In the Town of Binghamton, we have flood mitigation at Jackson Park. In Endicott, major improvements to the Little Italy Heritage Center kitchen. We demolished an old smokestack to pave way for the new Deposit Park, had park improvements in Vestal, helped with expanding the Fenton Free Library, brought EMS service to Eastern Broome County, connected natural gas to more residents and businesses in the Town of Maine.

There's also the opening of a huge STEM Park at Kopernik and a special playground being built in memory of Super Cooper Busch in the Town of Chenango. I hope all of you can join us that day in May for the opening of that park.

All of these things are bettering Broome County. Making a better Broome was my theme for my State of the County two years ago. I think we've worked together to make Broome County a better place for us all to live.

- Every new baby born in Broome County gets a new book thanks to my Books for Babies program
- Broome Includes initiative
- Age Friendly Community
- Funding for 10,000 tick kits
- 3 Star rating at Willow Point
- Clean Energy Community Bronze Rating
- Movies in the Parks
- Broome County Counts Census Initiative
- New and improved food service for seniors
- Funding for GiGi's Playhouse
- LUMA
- DICK'S Sporting Goods Open.
- Bringing back the air show at the Greater Binghamton Airport
- The first ever Broome County Winter Festival at Nathaniel Cole Park.

We all want to see things happen in our community. Events, tourism, family-friendly activities and action. It's happening in Broome County because Broome works and we work because we work together.

I may have thrown a lot at you tonight, but I think everyone in this room can agree, we have a lot to be proud of. That doesn't mean there still isn't work to do. Rolling up our sleeves and taking action to get things done. We all have the same goal in mind: make Broome County the best it can be. We can do this by taking chances, building, investing in our kids, investing in our infrastructure, protecting the taxpayers, and promoting tourism.

This is what is going to keep those kids in that video earlier here in Broome County to fill those open jobs and raise their own families here. With these 100+ initiatives tonight, I am sure I could add a lot more and together with the Legislature, we're going to do that in 2020.

I'm going to end on this tonight. You heard Bob Murphy say in the video that he thought the biggest thing in life was the journey, strive to be the best at whatever you do and enjoy yourself along the way.

I've been County Executive for three years now and I've strived to do the best I can do. I've enjoyed everything that we have done together. It works in Broome when we work together, get things done and enjoy it together. I want to thank my family for being here tonight, my wife, Amanda and my three boys Nolan, Miles and Bennett. Thanks for being with me on this journey and I can't wait to see how we together, all of us here in this room, can make Broome Work even better. Good Night and God Bless.