

# living lackawanna

Official Newsletter and Report to Lackawanna County Taxpayers

## Promises Made and Promises Kept Create Solid Future for County



Jim Wansacz



Patrick M. O'Malley



Edward G. Staback

Lackawanna County is on rock solid ground and serves as a model for other communities to emulate.

The firm foundation is attributed to the programs, policies, operating environment and vision that was formulated and implemented by the Lackawanna County Commissioners since 2012.

The initiatives we, Commissioner Jim Wansacz, Commissioner Patrick M. O'Malley, Commissioner Edward G. Staback and former Commissioner Corey D. O'Brien, instituted have restored financial stability. We've received national acclaim for County Economic Development programs, forged community partnerships in a variety of areas, aesthetically improved the appearance of our neighborhoods and developed world-class recreational facilities all over the County.

We have worked tirelessly to enhance the operating environment, economic climate and quality of life for the County's 214,000 residents. We've made bold moves and took risks to drive our agenda.

The blueprint that we've designed has helped bring new technology to our area, upgraded our infrastructure, instituted business-friendly incentives, improved audit functions, and coordinated a number of community events to suit everyone's needs.

Our accomplishments have moved our area forward and created new opportunities with the intent of keeping our best and brightest here.

### PNC Field

The facility needed a costly facelift that was going to cost millions. It would have also placed an undue tax burden on our residents.

So we huddled with the New York Yankees and explained our ideas. They agreed to a 30-year lease with additional options and assumed a great deal of the maintenance of the facility, ensuring that the stadium will be in the same pristine condition as the day it opened, three decades later. The team also added a number of improvements, such as a modern scoreboard.

It was a great victory before a game was even played. Baseball was saved at no cost to the taxpayers, utilizing state funding, resources from the Yankees, and the proceeds from the sale of the Triple A team to Mandalay. We built it and the fans came.

The "Best New Ballpark of 2013" drew nearly 500,000 fans when it opened and had an economic impact of approximately \$47 million on our area.

### Finance

The fiscal health and stability of Lackawanna County was, and always is, in the forefront of our decision-making process. From day one, the goal was to improve the County's financial health, hold the line on taxes and not to place any more burden on the residents. And, we did that in a big way. We systematically eliminated

a \$1.8 million deficit through prudent fiscal management, budget cuts for non-essential materials, and critical thinking by our department heads to do more with less.

We also - for the first time in the County's history - had our annual audit done on time for four consecutive years.

These actions paid great dividends by restoring the County's financial health without any cuts or interruptions in programs or services, despite increased expenditure mandates from the state and federal governments, and without raising taxes in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

These sound fiscal practices have led to an \$11.2 million surplus, which is vitally important for the County moving forward in terms of getting our bond rating back. This is significant, in that it demonstrates to the financial community that we mean business.

### Small Business Development

Small businesses are the backbone of Lackawanna County and are the foundation that keeps the local economy moving. Keenly attuned to this fact, we implemented programs to fortify small businesses and to spur growth.

Our Small Business Fee Waiver Program was nationally recognized by the Small Business Administration and has served as a model for other communities to emulate.

*Continued, Page 2*

be  the know  
lackawannacounty.org

INNOVATION STARTS HERE<sup>SM</sup>  
**Lackawanna**  
County

# Commissioners' Message

## County on Solid Ground

(Continued from Page 1)



The program's aim was to help local companies expand and create jobs - and it did. To date, \$298,000 in fees were paid, leveraging \$17.5 million of private capital for 32 projects that created 142 new jobs and retained 335 existing jobs.

Neighborhoods in our communities are very close-knit and are places where traditions and values are learned and practiced. We invested heavily in these areas by establishing a revenue-neutral Community Re-Invest Program to, commit "last-mile funding" for projects that involve youth sports, the environment, veterans monuments, ADA compliance, outdoor activities, and overall quality of life. To date, 100 projects, totaling \$1,474,475 have been funded, generating \$7,450,191 in public-private investment in our communities.

We also created a Land Development Program which reimburses a company for all permit, land development and construction fees if they relocate or expand here. This year we established a Land Bank to identify, clean-up, consolidate, catalogue and ready vacant and unused parcels of land for future development.

### Family Life

Our administration believes in family time. It is important to be able to have recreational and educational facilities that allow a family to spend quality time together. So, we have ensured that our County's Park and Library systems are second to none.

All of our parks feature boundless playgrounds that enable youngsters of all ages and abilities to socialize and learn from one another in safe surroundings. There are also opportunities to fish, swim, play sports, have family get-togethers, participate in clinics or attend County-sponsored events.

The growth, expansion and upgrade of our libraries, including the grand opening of the North Pocono Community Library in 2014, gives our residents learning centers that also serve as community hubs.

### Technology

State-of-the-art communications capabilities also serve as an important economic development tool. So we have made sure Lackawanna County possessed advanced communications with our Wireless Network. This system provides extensive coverage across the County, along with improved emergency radio service in hard-to-reach areas and free Wi-Fi at all of our parks, libraries, Courthouse Square and 15 County buildings.

The system has been a huge benefit to the local business community and school districts, reducing start-up and on-going technology costs. New technology also made Lackawanna County the first county in the Commonwealth to operate the Next Generation 911 call handling system, which improves response times and allows for Text-to-911 capabilities.

### Infrastructure Development

Our roads and bridges network is vital for moving goods up and down the Eastern Seaboard. We made our roads and bridges a high priority in this administration and enacted an annual plan of replacing a minimum of three bridges, while putting three bridges in the "design" phase for future construction.

To date, six bridges in Taylor, Dalton, Moosic, Jefferson Twp. and LaPlume Twp. have been completed, while bridges in Elmhurst Twp. and North Abington Twp., are under construction. Bridges in Archbald, Jermyn, Newton Twp., Covington Twp., Madison Twp., and Jefferson Twp. are in the "design" phase of construction.

### A Sense of Community

The overall community has always been in the forefront. To better serve the safety, health and recreational needs of our residents, we created public-private partnership programs such as our annual Job Fair, Senior Health Fair, Bike Safety Fair and Family Fun Days, and further developed events such as Heroes Day and 3-on-3 Basketball thanks to community partners and private sponsorships.

We are proud of the strides that we've made for Lackawanna County. Our commitment to expanding our economy, assisting businesses to grow, creating jobs and providing services bore tremendous results.

Lackawanna County is growing and expanding on a number of fronts and is fiscally healthy. Promises were made and those promises were kept for the benefit of our 214,000 residents.

We thank you for the privilege of serving as your Commissioners.

*J. Warming*      *Pat M. O'Neil*      *SESTAK*

## 'Historic' Courthouse featured in PCN Documentary



Residents of Lackawanna County can get a fascinating glimpse of the beauty and history of the County Courthouse through a documentary on the Pennsylvania Cable Network (PCN).

As part of the "Pennsylvania's Historic Courthouse" series, the documentary, detailing the architectural and historical value of the Lackawanna County Courthouse, was produced through a joint effort of the Pennsylvania Cable Network (PCN) and the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP).

The Lackawanna County Courthouse segment is approximately 30 minutes long and is jointly narrated by Lackawanna County Commissioner Patrick M. O'Malley and the Honorable Thomas J. Munley, President Judge of the Lackawanna County Court of Common Pleas.

"We were delighted when PCN and CCAP decided to feature our Courthouse as part of its excellent documentary series," said Commissioner Jim Wansacz. "We are proud to present to our residents a unique look at this amazing building."

"The crews from PCN and CCAP were very cooperative and helpful in the filming and production of this documentary," added Commissioner Patrick M. O'Malley. "It was a pleasure to be able to speak about our rich history and culture and the stature of this stately structure."

"It is a great honor for our Courthouse to be featured with many other historic courthouses from around the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in this unique series," said Commissioner Edward Staback. "This documentary will serve as a source of reference on the history of the courthouse for many years to come."

Produced at no cost to the Lackawanna County taxpayers, the segment highlights the historical significance of the many monuments around Courthouse Square, while also detailing the various architectural features of the exterior. The video explores the décor and history of the Courthouse's courtrooms and public spaces. Special attention is given to the opening hearings of the 1902 Anthracite Coal Strike Commission, which were held in the building, and the impact of the hearings on local and national history.

Visit [www.LackawannaCounty.org](http://www.LackawannaCounty.org) to view the show. A copy is also available for viewing at the Scranton Public Library.

The Lackawanna County Courthouse joins courthouses in Cumberland, Westmoreland, Warren, and Cambria Counties that are being featured in the 2015 "Pennsylvania's Historic Courthouses" series. Other Pennsylvania counties previously highlighted include: Allegheny, Armstrong, Berks, Bradford, Butler, Centre, Chester, Dauphin, Delaware, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mercer, Montgomery, Washington and Wyoming.

## Commissioners Name Land Bank Members

A major step in the creation and implementation of the Lackawanna County Land Bank was taken when the Commissioners appointed seven individuals as board members of the Lackawanna County Land Bank.

The overriding goal of the Land Bank is to deter blight by using available resources to facilitate the return of vacant, blighted, abandoned and tax-delinquent properties to productive use. This will combat community deterioration, create economic growth, strengthen the tax base, and revitalize neighborhoods.

The seven Land Bank Board members all have the relevant expertise and experience to guide the startup and ongoing direction of this important tool, aimed at revitalizing our communities.

The members are: Commissioner Patrick M. O'Malley; Linda B. Aebli, Executive Director of the City of Scranton's Office of Economic & Community Development; Henry E.

Deeke, Jr., Real Estate Broker and Appraiser; Marion E. Gatto, Past Secretary, Treasurer and President of the Greater Scranton Board of Realtors; George Kelly, Director of Planning & Economic Development for Lackawanna County; Terrence McDonnell, Dunmore Zoning Board; and Steven Pitoniak, Transportation Planning Manager for Lackawanna County.

The Land Bank's initial actions are to develop plans, practices and procedures. An intergovernmental agreement is key to working with communities and school boards, and it will be a priority to move the Land Bank into operation.

The Land Bank will hold community information and outreach sessions to discuss the many benefits of what a land bank can achieve in Lackawanna County. In addition, feedback and dialogue will be used to verify that the priorities and direction meet the needs of the communities interested in working as part of this newly formed initiative.

## County Providing Services During Impasse

Lackawanna County's Human Services Department continues to provide its full array of programs and services without any interruption despite the State's budget impasse and not receiving its funding allocations. This is due to the County's fiscally responsible policies and practices.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has been without a budget for over 100 days.

Lackawanna County, to date, has provided reimbursable services in excess of \$4.1 million to help families, the elderly, and those with cognitive or behavioral disabilities.

"The importance of having a fund balance and prudently managing the County's financials is key when situations arise that could affect normal operations. The situation we are presented with now, the lack of a State budget, is a prime example of the funding challenges that County government faces and needs to be prepared to handle," explained Commissioner Jim Wansacz.

"Families, youth, the less fortunate and those with cognitive challenges are the most vulnerable members of our community. They rely on our programs and services. Thankfully, to date, we are in a solid fiscal position to continue to provide assistance.

We will continue to serve them, but we cannot predict the long-term future of how we will be able to continue," said Commissioner Patrick M. O'Malley.

"We have to help these individuals. It is our mission and thankfully we have been able to do so, so far. But we need to have the State pass a budget and provide counties across the Commonwealth with their much needed allocations," stated Commissioner Edward G. Staback.

According to William Browning, the County Human Services Executive Director, Drug & Alcohol, homeless prevention, Meals on Wheels, Children and Youth, early intervention, day care and other initiatives are being provided.

The County has remained current with its Human Services vendors. As the budget impasse continues, County officials will monitor the situation on how to proceed going forward.

The County's 2014 budget surplus is a testimony to sound fiscal practices and decisions. The State's budget impasse is a perfect example of why counties need to have a surplus so they can operate effectively and efficiently in difficult times.

## 'Document Shop' debuts on website

County residents, who are seeking to access blank forms and documents from County offices and departments, now have a handy, free "one stop" resource at their fingertips.

The "Lackawanna County Document Download Shop" is an information portal that allows all County offices and departments to list any forms or specific documents that are of use to the public in one central location.

The download shop is similar to a page that was part of the County's previous website, which was revamped in 2012. The document resource section coincides with the services other municipal, state and federal offices have available for public access.

Visitors to the County's website ([www.lackawannacounty.org](http://www.lackawannacounty.org)) can access the Document Download Shop by scrolling down the homepage and then clicking on the pink "Document Shop" button on the right side of the page. The button takes users to a listing of all County offices and departments.

People can access the documents by simply clicking on the name of the office or department that hosts the information they need. A list of documents will be displayed so that the user can just click on the desired item to download a PDF or Word version to their computers. In the case of several offices, clicking the office name will direct users to the specific homepage, where they can access all relevant documents and information.

The "Document Download Shop" is an open resource, available for all County offices and departments to list any forms or data that they see fit. The offices and departments involved in this program are: Area Agency on Aging, Arts and Culture, Assessor's Office, Clerk of Judicial Records, Commissioners' Office, Controller's Office, Coroner's Office, Courts, District Attorney, Domestic Relations, Economic Development, Elections, Emergency Services, and Environmental Sustainability.

Also, Family Court, Highway Safety Program, Human Resources, Human Services, Office of Youth and Family Services, Parks and Recreation, Prison, Purchasing, Recorder of Deeds, Register of Wills/Clerk of Orphans Court, Sheriff's Office, Tax Claim Bureau, Treasurer's Office, and Veterans Affairs.

# Our Cornerstone Community Events



Community events have been one of the cornerstones of our administration. We have made sure that our events serve a wide variety of Lackawanna County's population.

Most recently, our Senior Health Fair and Heroes Day provided unique opportunities for the 214,000 residents of the County.

Staying healthy is certainly on the minds of Lackawanna County residents. Our fourth annual Senior Health Fair provided over 300 seniors with free health screenings and access to 57 health-care related vendors at beautiful PNC Field. Over 19 sponsors supported the program, which included 75 flu shots dispensed to individuals by the Visiting Nurse Association of Lackawanna County.

The fourth annual Heroes Day honored Lackawanna County police officers, firefighters, military personnel, sheriffs, EMS workers, 911 dispatchers and other "blue" officials who are truly "everyday heroes" in both our community and nationwide.

At the event, safety, disaster, road and SWAT equipment from throughout the County were on display along with booths for residents to pick-up literature to utilize when the need arises. The day also included free refreshments, giveaways, tours of the 911 Center and children's activities.

Over 200 County residents were on hand to see canines and the Mounted Unit from the County's Sheriff's Department and the public safety units of area municipalities presented valuable information on County services and the programs offered by area community and social service agencies.

The two events wrapped up our summer smorgasbord of free offerings our administration has provided and fostered for Lackawanna County residents. Our events do not stop with the changing of the leaves though. The annual Festival of Trees will take place at the Mall at Steamtown this December, as does the Holiday Market. The Lighting of the County Tree at Courthouse Square kicks everything off and the month finishes with Santa on the Trolley.



# County Parks Have Something for Everyone

## McDade Park

Inclusive Boundless Playground  
Swimming pool with bath house  
Children's fishing pond stocked several times a year

Basketball and tennis courts  
Softball field  
Two pavilions

Outdoor picnic areas with charcoal grills  
Two-mile cross country running course and hiking trail system

Lackawanna Coal Mine Tour Complex with concession stand and gift shop

Pennsylvania Anthracite Heritage Museum and gift shop  
Cancer Memorial Garden and arboretum

Bocce courts  
Multipurpose field for soccer and lacrosse

Free sports equipment rentals  
Large, open fields for Frisbee or cross country skiing

## Covington Park

Inclusive Boundless Playground  
Little League field  
Pavilion

Baseball and soccer fields  
Basketball and volleyball courts  
Fishing/Seven-acre lake

## Merli-Sarnoski Park

35-acre lake stocked by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Two pavilions  
Large handicap accessible fishing pier

Beautiful sandy beach area with bath houses

Boat launch (electric motors only)

15 miles of hiking, mountain bike and nature trails

Picnic areas with tables and charcoal grills

Two playground areas with basketball and volleyball courts  
Regulation soccer fields

Lackawanna County Sheriff's Department horse stables

## Aylesworth Park

Four-acre lake with beach

Fishing in lake stocked by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Playing fields  
Inclusive Boundless Playground

Pavilion complex than can be reserved for groups of up to 150 people

Lake trail  
Numerous hiking trails  
Picnic tables and grills

# Upcoming Events

Santa on the Trolley	November 29
Lighting of the County Tree at Courthouse Square	December 4
Festival of Trees at the Mall at Steamtown	December 4
Holiday Market at the Mall at Steamtown	December 4-5
Santa on the Trolley	December 5-6
Santa on the Trolley	December 12-13
Santa on the Trolley	December 19-20



## Lackawanna County Attractions



### Lackawanna Coal Mine Tour

McDade Park, Scranton | 570-963-6463  
Open Daily 10am-3pm | April 1st - November 30th  
Closed Easter & Thanksgiving



### Electric City Trolley Museum & Station

Cliff St. on the grounds of Steamtown  
National Historic Site, Scranton | 570-963-6590  
Open Daily 9am-4pm | May 1st - December 31st  
Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas & New Year's Day



### Lackawanna County Visitors Center and Whistle Stop Shoppe

99 Glenmaura National Boulevard, Scranton  
1-800-22-WELCOME x5  
Open Daily 9am-5pm



### Lackawanna County Convention and Visitors Bureau

For more information on area attractions, hotels and restaurants, please visit [www.visitnepa.org](http://www.visitnepa.org) or call 1-800-22-WELCOME

*This newsletter is paid for by the Hotel Room Rental Tax.*

be in the know  
[lackawannacounty.org](http://lackawannacounty.org)

Commissioners' Office  
200 Adams Avenue, 6th Floor  
Scranton, PA 18503

COMMISSIONERS:  
JIM WANSAGZ • PATRICK M. O'MALLEY • EDWARD G. STABACK

