

living lackawanna

Official Newsletter and Report to Lackawanna County Taxpayers

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Commissioners Deliver 2009 Budget without Raising Taxes

Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo and Corey D. O'Brien have approved a balanced 2009 budget that averted a tax hike by reducing expenditures \$12,874,000. The Commissioners balanced the budget through workforce reductions, debt refinancing, the use of one-time revenues and other aggressive cost saving measures.

Work on the 2009 budget began immediately after Commissioners O'Brien and Washo were elected in 2007 and learned of the projected shortfall, which was the result of skyrocketing debt service payments, health care cost increases and a reduction in revenues due to economic conditions. The Commissioners, along with Lackawanna County's Chief Financial Officer Thomas Durkin and Budget Director Steve Barcoski, immediately started mapping out a plan to cut costs and reduce expenses.

The first step was a government reorganization in January 2008 that trimmed 30 county positions. The workforce was further reduced in April and again in November. With attrition, a total of 96 positions, or 6% of the county's workforce, were eliminated in 2008.

The reductions took place in 2008 so that financial savings would occur in 2009.

"The workforce reduction was a hard decision, but we were facing a fiscal crisis in Lackawanna County," Commissioners Washo and O'Brien said. "Many people told us to simply raise taxes. That would have been an easy fix, but it would have hurt taxpayers. We were elected to manage the county government and that includes making difficult, often painful, choices."

Further savings were realized through a debt refinancing plan completed in the spring of 2008. In addition, the Commissioners significantly lowered insurance costs (\$450,396), terminated hefty cleaning service contracts (\$274,560), and identified one-time revenue sources and made additional cuts (\$5,066,326) to balance the budget without raising taxes.

While Commissioner Munchak disagreed with the workforce reduction, he continued to work collaboratively with Commissioners O'Brien and Washo to suggest budget savings. The team-work approach between Commissioners Washo, O'Brien and Munchak and their financial advisors produced a lean budget with no reduction in services for county residents.

County of Lackawanna "2009 Financial Outlook"

2009 Budget Shortfall

Increased 2009 Debt Service Payments	- 3,000,000.00
Deferred 2008 Debt Service Payments	- 2,400,000.00
Expended Debt Reserve Funds	- 800,000.00
Expended Debt Escrow Funds	- 1,300,000.00
Cost of Living Adjustments <i>(less State/Federal Reimbursements)</i>	- 5,374,000.00
	- \$12,874,000.00

Cost Savings

Government Reorganization	744,886.21
Retirements & Terminations	147,162.58
Insurance Savings	450,396.00
Termination of Cleaning Service Contracts	274,560.00
Reduction in Workforce (April 4, 2008)	1,871,336.01
Debt Refinancing Plan	3,260,699.00
Surveillance Fee Reduction (S&P Bond Rating)	249,600.00
Reduction in Workforce (November 10, 2008)	831,523.54
Additional Budget Cuts	5,066,326.48
	\$12,896,489.82

2009 Surplus

\$22,489.82

Staff Reductions

Total Workforce at November 15, 2007 <i>(FT=1,390; PT=249)</i>	1,639
Government Reorganization	- 30
Reduction in Workforce – April 4, 2008	- 42
Attrition & Other Resignations	- 4
Reduction in Workforce – November 10, 2008	- 20
Total Reduction in Workforce	96
Government Workforce Reduction	6%

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INNOVATION STARTS HERESM
Lackawanna
County

in your corner

Commissioners' Message



Michael J. Washo



Corey D. O'Brien



A.J. Munchak

This year we introduced a new message to the community that speaks of our past, present and future: Innovation Starts Here. Through those words we honor our history, including the discovery of Anthracite coal here in the 1800s that served as a catalyst for the industrial revolution. We also celebrate current cutting-edge developments by local companies from pioneering DVDs to creating high-tech military gear for our troops to advances in digitized records that are fostering the paperless office.

On the horizon is The Commonwealth Medical College, which will serve as one of the greatest engines for economic development that the region has ever seen. The medical school is slated to open its

doors in 2009 to an expected 60 medical students and 30 Master of Biomedical Sciences students. College officials anticipate that number will eventually grow to 500 students and 175 faculty members.

The implications are huge. Medical school officials expect that the college will add 425 qualified diverse practicing physicians to this part of the state over the next 20 years. The new doctors will address a regional shortage of physicians that is only expected to grow as over one-third of practicing physicians retire over the next decade. Economically, the school anticipates pumping \$70 million annually into the local community once it is open and creating 1,000 new jobs both directly and indirectly.

To us, Innovation Starts Here is not just a slogan. That's why we are supporting The Commonwealth Medical College in 2009 by allocating \$40,000 for two scholarships. We will also administer \$35 million in state government funds that have been designated for the construction of the college, helping to ensure the school's successful completion. In addition, we intend to encourage creation of a medical-related business corridor to complement the medical college and further drive economic development in the county.

Increase the region's quality of care. Spur creation of high-paying jobs. Assist in attracting practicing physicians to our county.

That's what we call Innovation.



innovation starts here

General Dynamics Land Systems: Scranton Operations



General Dynamics Land Systems (GDLS), Scranton Operations is located in Eynon. GDLS headquarters is in Sterling Heights, Michigan.

In operation since 1957, the Eynon plant currently employs a highly skilled team of an estimated 240 people. The company manufactures high-quality parts for land and amphibious armored combat systems for the United States military and its allies.

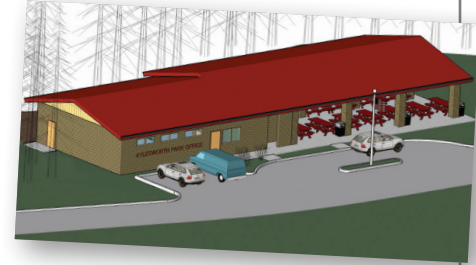
"Team Scranton" is focused on growth through lean principles, continuous improvement, employee empowerment, and customer satisfaction.

Scranton takes pride in providing a safe and healthy facility for its employees. The facility was awarded the 2008 Governor's Award for Safety Excellence. In addition, the plant won the GDLS Divisional Safety Award in 2006 and 2007.

GDLS Scranton recently hosted the Whole Systems Architecture Production, Delivery and Support annual meeting at the Radisson Lackawanna Station Hotel. GDLS sites from across the U.S. and Canada attended the meeting to present each plant's strategic vision for business growth. Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo

in aylesworth park Hudson Street, Archbald

Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo, Corey D. O'Brien and A.J. Munchak are addressing a need for more athletic fields in the upper valley through improvements at Aylesworth Park that also include construction of additional amenities.



Aylesworth, a 252-acre county park located in Archbald, already boasts picnic areas and swimming facilities including a four-acre lake and a beach.

Development of a new park office and pavilion complex is currently underway. The structure will provide a facility for park staff operations as well as restrooms and a pavilion for events.

Aylesworth was also selected by the Commissioners as a starting point to address the lack of athletic fields across the county. The Lackawanna County Parks and Recreation Department will break ground this spring at the park for construction of a new multi-purpose field and a new softball field.

In addition, work began this fall on a walking trail that will circle the lake. New site furnishings including benches, message boards and graphic maps of the park are coming soon. A new playground facility is on the drawing board.

The various projects will be funded through a combination of state grants and recreation programmed dollars, not county tax dollars. The Commissioners believe that the improvements will significantly broaden the recreational opportunities at Aylesworth Park for county residents now and in the years to come.

and Corey D. O'Brien attended the conference to welcome the attendees.

Scranton team members give back to the community by supporting several organizations, including The United Way, Toys for Tots, Friends of the Poor, the Gino Merli Veterans' Center and the Archbald Community Ambulance and Rescue Squad.

General Dynamics, headquartered in Falls Church, Va., employs approximately 85,000 people worldwide and anticipates 2008 revenues of approximately \$29.5 billion. The company is a market leader in business aviation; land and expeditionary combat systems, armaments and munitions; shipbuilding and marine systems; and information systems and technologies.

More information about the company is available on the internet at www.generaldynamics.com. Information about the Land Systems Division can be found at www.gdls.com.

in the news

Commissioners Sponsor High School Recycling Competition



Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo, Corey D. O'Brien and A.J. Munchak, in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania, sponsored a five-week recycling competition this fall called "Greensylvania" between Dunmore High School and Scranton High School. Scranton High emerged as the winner, recycling 4,640 pounds of school and office paper or 2.34 pounds per person. An awards ceremony for the event was held on Friday, November 14, 2008 to coincide with America Recycles Day on Saturday, November 15, 2008.

The local high school competition was a pilot program for EPA's Region 3, which includes Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington, D.C. Organizers documented the event with the hope of involving more schools in the future.

Ring in the New Year with First Night

The streets of historic downtown Scranton will come alive on December 31st for the 10th anniversary of First Night, a non-alcoholic celebration of arts and culture. The event offers a wonderful selection of musical talents from folk singers and swing bands to rock-and-roll and polka. In addition to great music, all ages will enjoy numerous other venue-hopping events. Many restaurants will be open during the festivities. The evening ends with a spectacular fireworks display.

Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo, Corey D. O'Brien and A.J. Munchak provided county support to the Scranton Tomorrow-sponsored event by appropriating \$25,000 to First Night.



From left: Donald Rinaldi, Scranton Tomorrow board president; Commissioner Munchak, Leslie Memolo-Collins, Scranton Tomorrow executive director; Jennifer Battista, Scranton Tomorrow director of communications and special projects; Laurie Cadden, Scranton Tomorrow board member; Commissioner Washo; Commissioner O'Brien.

Winter Golf Clinic to Be Held

Lackawanna County's Winter Golf Clinic will be held at South Scranton Intermediate School from February 23 through March 20, 2009. Youth and adult sessions are available for \$35. For more information, call 570-963-6764 or visit www.lackawannacounty.org



New State Park Bridge Connects Trails

Mountain bikers and others are eagerly anticipating the opening this month of a new pedestrian bridge in the Lackawanna State Park that will connect existing park trails in North Abington and Benton Townships. The old bridge has been closed to vehicles for about 10 years and was closed to pedestrians several years ago. The span connects Benton Road and Austin Road over the south branch of the Tunkhannock Creek. Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo, Corey D. O'Brien and A.J. Munchak allocated \$173,000 from the Landfill Trust to fund the project. The old steel truss bridge was removed this fall to make way for the new structure.

Help Available for Heating Costs

Pennsylvania's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, commonly known as LIHEAP, helps low-income families pay their heating bills through energy assistance and crisis grants. The maximum amount of assistance is \$800 per household. It is not necessary for families to be on Cash Assistance, and a family of four earning up to \$44,443 annually can qualify.

Additional assistance may be available in emergency situations where families are in jeopardy of losing their heat. Specific examples of such emergency situations and other information about LIHEAP guidelines can be found on the Pennsylvania Department of Public Works website (www.dpw.state.pa.us) or by calling the Scranton-Lackawanna Human Development Agency in Lackawanna County at 570-963-6836.

did you know?



Lackawanna County collected **152,129 pounds, or 76.06 tons, of televisions, monitors, CPUs, peripherals and other material at its e-Cycling day in September.**

in the spotlight

Veteran Landscape Designer Creating Excitement at County Parks

Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation Bill Davis is putting his 15 years of landscape architecture and landscape construction experience to good use

within Lackawanna County's three parks - McDade Park in Scranton, Merli-Sarnoski Park in Greenfield Township and Aylesworth Park in Archbald.

"In the last several months, the staff and I have been working hard on a variety of projects to improve the overall use and aesthetics of the parks,"

Mr. Davis said. Projects to date include landscape improvements at all parks; new picnic and event pavilions at McDade and Merli-Sarnoski; a new boat launch at Merli-Sarnoski; and the replacement of a pedestrian bridge, a new playground, and fresh paint for the pool house and existing pavilions at McDade Park.

Mr. Davis and his staff have expanded and improved existing programs including fishing derbies, an adult golf tournament, and tennis and basketball clinics. The department has also created new programs such as soccer clinics and a children's golf tournament. As a result, the number of children participating this year in the parks' recreational programs has doubled.

"To me, a strong parks and recreation system is a quality of life issue," Mr. Davis said. "It's our goal to provide facilities and programs that will engage families in recreation activities that contribute to a stronger community."

There are many projects slated for 2009, including new recreational programs, playgrounds, and walking trails; soccer field improvements; and the installation of benches and message boards with graphic maps of the parks. Development of Covington Park, which was recently added to the county park system, will begin in the spring. In Lackawanna County, we're committed to providing our residents with more opportunities for fun and play.



in your town

Relief in Sight for Montage Mountain Road Drivers

Heavily trafficked Montage Mountain Road will receive a much-needed facelift from a road widening project that will begin in the spring of 2009.

Lackawanna County sought out the improvement to relieve congestion on the mountain that has ballooned in recent years with the growth in commercial and residential development. The county made its case to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation by conducting traffic counts on the busy road.

The state-funded project, which has a price tag of nearly \$790,000, will increase the number of lanes from three to five from the Interstate 81 ramp to the intersection with Glenmaura National Boulevard.

It will also include drainage improvements, new guide rails, and updated signs and pavement markings. In addition, changes will be made to the timing and phasing of the existing signal at the I-81 ramp and Montage Mountain Road intersection to improve traffic flow and reduce delays. The project is set to be completed in the summer of 2009.



in our past

Anthracite coal is an integral part of the history of Northeast Pennsylvania. Northeast Pennsylvania contains the largest deposits of anthracite coal in the world, making Lackawanna County a mining center during the height of the Industrial Revolution.

Immigrants to Northeast Pennsylvania came from more than three dozen different countries, often bringing their families with them on the long and arduous journey by sea. Despite the dangers, millions of immigrants still made the journey in search of a better life.

This "better life" that they searched for was filled with the dangers and difficulties associated with the mining industry. Men, teenagers and young boys worked for the mining companies, with the boys above ground in the breakers, and the men and teenagers deep in the mines. The wives and daughters of the miners often worked in silk mills, which played an important role in the economy of Northeast Pennsylvania until the 1970s.

Anthracite mining saw a decline after the end of World War I, when oil and natural gas became more readily available, and the need for coal was reduced. Coal was able to make a brief comeback during World War II, but, by 1960, the mining industry had all but disappeared in Lackawanna County.

To learn more, visit the Pennsylvania Anthracite Heritage Museum in McDade Park. Hours are Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m.

information

- :: Airport
(570) 602-2000
- :: Adult Probation
(570) 963-6876
- :: Area Agency on Aging
(570) 963-6740
- :: Arts & Culture
(570) 963-6590
- :: Assessors
(570) 963-6728
- :: Child Care
Information Services
(570) 963-6644
- :: Children & Youth
(570) 963-6781
- :: Coal Mine Tour
(570) 963-6463
- :: COLTS
(570) 346-2061
- :: Commissioners' Office
(570) 963-6800
- :: Controller
(570) 963-6726
- :: Coordinated
Transportation
(570) 963-6795
- :: Court Administrator
(570) 963-6773
- :: District Attorney
(570) 963-6717
- :: Domestic Relations
(570) 963-6721
- :: Drug & Alcohol
Commission
(570) 963-6820
- :: Emergency Services
911
- :: Housing Authority
(570) 342-7629
- :: Human Resources
(570) 963-6771
- :: Judicial Records
(570) 963-6723 - Civil
(570) 963-6759 - Criminal
- :: Juvenile Probation
(570) 963-6887
- :: Nursing Home
(570) 489-8611
- :: Parks & Recreation
(570) 963-6764
- :: Penn State
Cooperative Extension
(570) 963-6842
- :: Planning & Economic
Development
(570) 963-6830
- :: PNC Field
(570) 969-2255
- :: Public Defender
(570) 963-6761
- :: Purchasing
(570) 963-6767
- :: Recorder of Deeds
(570) 963-6775
- :: Recycling
(570) 963-2017
- :: Register of Wills
(570) 963-6702
- :: Roads & Bridges
(570) 496-7733
- :: Sheriff
(570) 963-6719
- :: Tax Claims
(570) 963-6734
- :: Toyota Pavilion
(570) 961-9000
- :: Treasurer
(570) 963-6731
- :: Trolley Museum
(570) 963-6590
- :: Veterans' Affairs
(570) 963-6778
- :: Visitors' Bureau
(570) 963-6363
- :: Voter Registration
(570) 963-6737

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Lackawanna County Attraction Hours



Lackawanna County Visitors Center and Whistle Stop Shoppe

99 Glenmaura National Boulevard, Scranton

1-800-22-WELCOME

Open daily 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Electric City Trolley Museum

Cliff Street on the grounds of the Steamtown National Historic Site, Scranton

570-963-6590

Open Wednesday through Sunday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. after October 31.

Closed Christmas, New Years Day and Thanksgiving.



Lackawanna County Convention & Visitors Bureau

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For more information on area attractions, hotels, and restaurants, please visit

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or call

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