

living lackawanna

Official Newsletter and Report to Lackawanna County Taxpayers

inside this issue

- in your corner
- in the news
- innovation starts here
- in your parks
- in the spotlight
- in your town
- in our past
- information

No Property Tax Increase in 2010 Budget

In spite of spiraling health care costs, wage hikes mandated by union contracts, cuts in state human services funds and the state of the economy, Lackawanna County Commissioners Michael J. Washo, Corey D. O'Brien and A.J. Munchak approved a 2010 budget with no increase in property taxes.

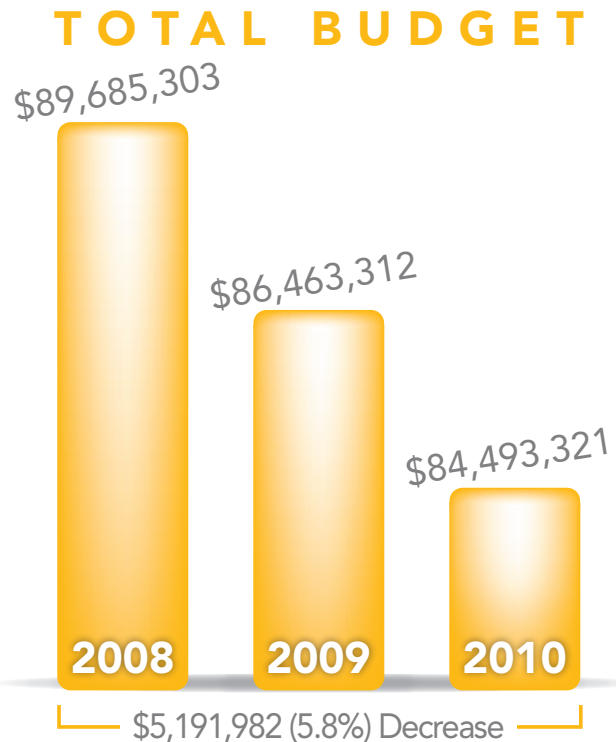
The Commissioners accomplished the difficult task of balancing the budget without raising property taxes through a reduction in force, the elimination of vacant positions and the use of one-time revenue sources to offset expenses, including the anticipated sale of the Lackawanna County Health Care Center. Beyond those major efforts, the Commissioners are keeping county costs down through additional belt-tightening such as scrutinizing office supply purchases and using the county's fleet of new hybrid vehicles to reduce gas costs and mileage reimbursements.

"This is not the time to be raising taxes on a population that is already hurting from the great recession that has spread across our nation," Commissioners O'Brien and Washo said. "Just like average families across the county, we are constantly reviewing our expenses."

In 2010, the administration will continue to follow the policy of fiscal restraint that it implemented upon taking office in 2008, which includes making the tough management decisions that are necessary to reduce expenses. Success is clearly evident in the fact that the 2010 budget is \$2 million less than the 2009 budget and approximately 6 percent less than the 2008 budget.

Despite keeping a firm eye on spending, the Commissioners remain committed to providing services. For example, investments continue in the county park system, including new fields and pavilions; low-cost sports programs for children, youth and adults; and a planned expansion of the popular inclusive Boundless Playground program. Funding will come from local Landfill Trust money and various state sources.

"No matter how difficult the economic reality, we are going to continue to use creative ways to move the county forward and think strategically about the resources that are available to get the best value for taxpayers," Commissioners Washo and O'Brien said. "We need to create an environment that will attract businesses and improve the economic climate in Lackawanna County."



be  the know
lackawannacounty.org

INNOVATION STARTS HERESM
Lackawanna
County

in your corner

Commissioners' Message



Michael J. Washo



Corey D. O'Brien



A.J. Munchak

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Washo".

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Corey D. O'Brien".

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A.J. Munchak".

Lackawanna County's Children and Youth Services, Juvenile Probation office and the Court system, with the support of the Commissioners' Office, are taking services for families, children and troubled youth to a higher level. The new programs emphasize building on the strengths of families, keeping children and youth in their own homes and out of institutions or foster care whenever possible, and intensive monitoring of cases, often on a weekly basis or more, to produce better results.

In June 2008, the state designated Lackawanna as a Phase I county for the Permanency Practice Initiative, which acts as an umbrella for several Children and Youth Services programs. The first is Family Group Decision Making, in which families in crisis are empowered to develop their own court-approved action plans with the guidance of a county facilitator. The goal is to keep children safely in their own homes or transition children from out-of-home placement. The program adheres to the philosophy that it is better for children to be raised by their own families in their own communities. It has the added benefit of reducing placement costs.

Intertwined with Family Group Decision Making is Intensive Reunification Court, also for children who are at risk for out-of-home placement or who are already out of the home. Treatment teams that include providers from various services such as drug and alcohol, mental health, job placement and parenting, along with Children and Youth Services staff, work with the families on goals that are reviewed weekly by the courts. Normally, these families would only go to court every six months. Twenty-one families have successfully graduated since the program began in July 2007. Again, the program reduces out-of-home placements and returns children to their homes more quickly.

Other Children and Youth Services programs included in the initiative are Family Finding, which reaches out to the extended family of foster children for support or placement, and Family Development Credentialing, in which service providers, case workers and foster parents are trained to work with the strengths of a family to get results.

On the Juvenile Probation side, a variety of specialty courts have been developed to get troubled youth the help they need to get back on track. Treatment Court, for those with serious substance abuse problems, and Intensive Court, for high-level or high-risk offenders, requires court appearances three times a week, a strict regimen of drug tests and enrollment in various treatment services depending on need. Lower-level offenders are enrolled in a program in which they are seen every other week. Community-based probation officers work closely with the schools, police and others to ensure success. Progress in all three levels is monitored through a computer-based Juvenile Case Management System.

As a result of the new approach, juvenile petitions have dropped by 27.5 percent over five years and costs for out-of-home placement are down over \$5 million since 2004. Recidivism remains consistent with state averages. We salute the hard work of those involved in strengthening Lackawanna County families, which improves the quality of life for us all!

in the news

Library System Administrator Honored



Lackawanna County Library System Administrator Mary Garm was recently honored by the Pennsylvania Library Association with its 2009 Distinguished Service Award in recognition of her exceptional and meritorious service to the libraries of the Commonwealth.

Ms. Garm oversees a vibrant system that includes nine member libraries. Last year, county residents made over 750,000 visits to county libraries and borrowed 1.3 million items. In addition to loaning materials, the county's member libraries offer a wide variety of programs for all ages.

Lackawanna County residents have supported the library system since 1983 with a dedicated tax. More so than ever in these difficult economic times, county libraries provide a valuable service by offering free lending materials, free access to information and free stimulating programs for all ages. For additional information and branch locations, go to www.lclshome.org. Check out a library near you today!

Intergovernmental Forum Purchasing Project to Save Money for Municipalities and School Districts

The Intergovernmental Forum project started by Lackawanna County majority Commissioners Michael J. Washo and Corey D. O'Brien in February of 2009 will begin a cooperative purchasing project this spring for county municipalities and school districts. The project will kick off with a series of workshops held by the Northeast Pennsylvania Alliance to educate users on how the program will work.

Inclusive Boundless Playground Opens in the Abingtons

Lackawanna County majority Commissioners Michael J. Washo and Corey D. O'Brien recently joined with Lackawanna County Department of Parks and Recreation Deputy Director Bill Davis, Abington area officials and state Rep. Jim Wansacz at the Abington Area Community Park to open the second of three inclusive Boundless Playgrounds that are being built in Lackawanna County.

On Boundless Playgrounds every child can reach the highest play deck, pathways and surfacing are universally accessible, equipment like swings and bouncers have back support, and elevated sand tables



and activity panels allow children of all abilities to play together.

"For the first time, a child confined to a wheelchair will be able to play on the same playground as a sibling or a neighbor, and they will realize that they are no different from one another, despite the disability," Commissioners O'Brien and Washo said. "It's one step towards erasing misconceptions and bringing children together."

COLTS Route Analysis Underway

The County of Lackawanna Transit System has hired Clear View Strategies, a Pittsburgh-based public transportation consulting firm, to analyze the county bus route system. The study will look at changing and streamlining the bus system's 28 routes, identifying underserved areas and potentially creating new bus routes, COLTS Executive Director Bob Fiume said.

Lynn Colosi and other Clear View consultants have been riding COLTS buses to collect data, make observations and review all the routes. Input is also being sought from current riders, local officials, planning agencies, senior citizens, major employers, colleges and COLTS employees.

Completion of the study is expected by the end of March 2010, with possible implementation July 1. COLTS received a state grant to pay for the bulk of the study. Suggestions for the route study can be e-mailed to Ms. Colosi at lcolosi@clearviewstrategies.com.

did you know?

The Lackawanna County Office of Environmental Sustainability partnered with 10 county municipalities to recycle 59,960 pounds of tires during collections held in the spring and fall of 2009.



In September, the Forum offered a presentation from ChamberChoice OnDemand Energy Solutions, a partnership between the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce and Pittsburgh-based OnDemand Energy Solutions that uses collective buying power to obtain less expensive electricity rates. The program is open to all Chamber members.

For more information on joining the pool, contact the Chamber.

The Commissioners will continue offering possibilities for municipalities and school districts to save money through sharing resources, group purchasing and other avenues.

innovation starts here

Beacon Summit
at Scranton, LLC



A visit from the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce two years ago to Beacon Medical Real Estate, an elite real estate development partnership based in New Jersey, led to a ground breaking in early November 2009 for the first building to be located at the Scranton-based Mount Pleasant Corporate Center.

"The recent development in the Scranton area, specifically The Commonwealth Medical College, was what initially attracted our group to Scranton and this site," Daniel Siegel, Beacon Medical Real Estate, said. "This is an ideal location for a professional office building, and we are hoping that this is the first of many development opportunities here."

Beacon Medical Real Estate is constructing a 30,000-square-foot, two-story medical/professional services building at Mount Pleasant to serve the medical and professional community in Scranton. In operation since 1990, Beacon has designed, developed and managed over 1.5 million square feet of facility space in New Jersey and New York.

Lackawanna County majority Commissioners Michael J. Washo and Corey D. O'Brien praised the leadership of Chamber President Austin Burke for attracting a project like Beacon that signals the beginning of the end of Scranton's recession.

"Scranton is back. Lackawanna County is back," Commissioners O'Brien and Washo said. "This project is a great example of an innovative approach to local economic development that is a direct result of the establishment of The Commonwealth Medical College. We're going to do all we can to ensure Beacon's success."

in your parks The Lackawanna River Heritage Trail

The Lackawanna River Heritage Trail is a multi-use trail now in development that follows the Lackawanna River for 40 miles, starting at Union Dale in Susquehanna County and passing through 15 Lackawanna County communities. The trail uses abandoned railroad corridors, flood control levees, access roads, municipal parks, public sidewalks and streets.

Currently, 14 miles of the trail are open to the public. The Downtown Scranton Riverwalk portion will be open in spring 2010. The remaining sections of the trail are in various stages of pre-development.


The Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority (LHVA) is the developer of the trail in partnership with the Lackawanna County Commissioners. The Commissioners recently allocated \$750,000 of County Environmental Initiative Funds to be used towards the trail's construction. This funding comes through the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Growing Greener II program, and it will be a vital part of the future development of the trail.



LHVA is conducting a survey of people who use local parks and trails, including the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail. The survey results will be available in spring 2010. For more information about the trail, including maps, or to complete the survey, visit www.LHVA.org or contact LHVA at (570) 963-6730.

in the spotlight

Children and Youth Director Uses New Approach To Strengthen Families



In the five years that he's been with Lackawanna County, Children and Youth Services Administrator William Browning's novel approach has reduced costs, decreased out-of-home placements and brought needed stability to the lives of countless children

in need. But Mr. Browning, who earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Penn State and worked at various criminal justice positions involving children in New York City, is quick to point out that the success is a group effort.

"I've never seen an area that is so interested in helping families," he said. "Here, it's a total partnership, from the Commissioners' Office to the judges."

Under Mr. Browning's leadership, the philosophy has changed from one that

relied heavily on outside providers with little control of outcomes to more in-house programs that demand results. The changes are based on common sense. Build on family strengths. Use extended family members for support. Meet basic human needs like housing before expecting more complicated goals.

Placements, which used to be one of the highest per capita in the country, are now dropping. The emphasis is now on safely keeping children in their own homes. Meanwhile, Mr. Browning is delivering new programs like ARTS Engage!, a concept initiated by majority Commissioners Michael J. Washo and Corey D. O'Brien that involves placing at-risk youth in arts programs. Approximately 900 children went through ARTS! Engage in its first year. The program is run in cooperation with Lackawanna County Deputy Director of Arts and Culture Maureen McGuigan.

"We've heard some tremendous stories, like a former Lourdesmont student who is now on the honor roll," Mr. Browning said. "There's a lot of self-esteem building. It's encouraging."

in your town

County Joins Downtown Scranton Revitalization Effort

Lackawanna County is partnering with Scranton Tomorrow to assist the organization with its Main Street Scranton revitalization initiative. Four county officials in arts and culture, parks and recreation, economic development and communications are working with the volunteer-driven effort that has attracted over 50 local business and government leaders. The Main Street Program is a comprehensive downtown development program, which will provide for anchor building and façade improvement grants and downtown reinvestment programs.

The mission is to establish Main Street Scranton as a driving force in fostering and supporting economic revitalization.



The Main Street model has earned national recognition, having been used successfully in over 1,600 communities across the county. The approach has generated public and private reinvestment of \$15.2 billion, with an average reinvestment per community of over \$9 million.

in our past



Located in Scranton's Nay Aug Park, the Everhart Museum of Natural History, Science and Art was founded in 1908 by Dr. Isaiah Fawkes Everhart. A skilled taxidermist, physician and businessman, Dr. Everhart conceived the idea of assembling a comprehensive collection of Pennsylvania's native birds and animals. He announced in 1907 that he would provide funds and guidance for the creation of a museum. The original building primarily housed Dr. Everhart's ornithological specimens. Trustees added two wings to the museum in 1928, and a small gallery was built in the basement in 1962.

Today, the Everhart is the largest public museum in Northeastern Pennsylvania, with a diverse collection of objects spanning natural history, science and the fine arts, including the most extensive collection of birds in the region. In addition, the collection features works from around the globe ranging from Native American and pre-Columbian to South American, African and Asian objects. The Everhart also includes a changing exhibit schedule featuring a range of visual artworks, both historic and contemporary. For more information, including hours of admission, go to www.everhart-museum.org.

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


Rediscover Scranton
we're electric!

WWW.REDISCOVERSCRANTON.COM



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. Closed Christmas, New Years Day and Thanksgiving.

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

www.visitnepa.org
 or call
1-800-22-WELCOME



Lackawanna County Convention & Visitors Bureau

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

LIVING LACKAWANNA
 IS THE RECIPIENT OF THE
2009 COMMUNICATION AWARD
HONORING CREATIVE EXCELLENCE
 AS JUDGED BY
THE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY OF THE VISUAL ARTS

Winter Golf Clinic to Be Held

Lackawanna County's Winter Golf Clinic will be held at South Scranton Intermediate School from February 22 through March 19, 2010. Youth and adult sessions are available for \$40. For more information, call 570-963-6764 or visit www.lackawannacounty.org

