

"STATE OF THE COUNTY
JANUARY 5, 2017

"On behalf of the Board I would like to thank Kevin Geraghty for serving as the Chairman for the past four years. All of you know that I have asked Kevin to stay on as the Acting County Administrator and I hope you are all supportive since Kevin has agreed to continue in the roll. We are thankful for his continued service on behalf of the residents of Warren County.

"Further I have asked Supervisor Frank Thomas to continue as Budget Officer which he has accepted. I have also asked Supervisor Matt Sokol to serve as the Chairperson for the Finance Committee which means Matt will be the Vice Chairman of the Board.

"We will also be making Personnel & Higher Education its own Standing Committee, and Supervisor Rachel Seeber has agreed to serve as Chair to this important Committee. All County personnel matters will shift back to this Committee including employment review and evaluations. Finance will return to its historical role as acting as the ways and means Standing Committee of County Government.

"I will be reestablishing the Occupancy Tax and Tourism Committee as two separate Standing Committees and I have asked Supervisor Dickinson to serve as Chair of the Occupancy Tax Committee and Supervisor Gene Merlino will continue to do the excellent job he has done serving as Chairperson for the Tourism Committee. Moreover I have asked Supervisor Dickinson to form an Advisory Group of Supervisors and members of the private sector to begin the process of considering how and where we spend our occupancy tax receipts. There will be much discussion regarding this subject going forward but I am optimistic that we can improve the decision making process while maintaining the broad support of this Board.

"Today in Warren County we find ourselves with an improved financial condition. A recent financial evaluation of Warren County by Standard & Poor's Rating raised the County's Bond Rating from AA- Stable to AA+ Stable which I believe all of us here played a roll in, lead by Supervisor Geraghty. Also for 2016, we are in the enviable position of having an estimated total Unreserved Fund Balance of \$21 million. We have not needed any short-term borrowing for cash flow purposes for quite some time and I expect this positive cash position to continue in 2017 and beyond. For the past four years we have been able to stay within the property tax cap, which was no easy feat, largely attributed to the fine efforts of Supervisor Thomas. Year end sales tax estimates are on track for increasing 2.4% year over year which was certainly good news for both 2016 Budget but also good news for the 2017 Budget. We have made adjustments in our employee health care plan that has reduced the amount of our overall healthcare costs. We are very interested in what we are hearing out of Washington these days about reducing health care costs; however, I believe that we need to keep a watchful eye on these developments while continuing to move forward with our own plans which could even include Self Insurance.

"I have also asked Supervisor Matthew Simpson, Chairman of the Public Works Committee, to begin the process of reviewing projected deficits in the Road and Machinery Fund and the Highway Fund which are projected to occur and take place in or about 2018. Looking ahead we need to investigate all ideas including moving to private contracting for County paving along with what we charge for these programs. Unattended the equipment and highway fund will place an impossible financial demand on our

general fund. We cannot allow the erosion of these balances which were earned with great effort over the past seven years.

“Our multi-year budgeting initiative continues to pay big dividends. We should continue the process of adding to the multi-year plan for Warren County with a Capital Plan. I have discussed this matter with Supervisor Thomas and he shares the opinion that we need to incorporate multi-year capital planning as part of our budgeting process.

“I look forward to meeting with each Committee Chair to discuss what they would like to see happen this year and beyond. Those that know me well know that I like working as a team and my door is always open. We are fortunate to have great employees here in Warren County that have worked well together and have been very supportive of our Acting County Administrator and our Committee Chairs. I have every confidence this cooperation and support will continue.

“We are presently involved in a major \$16.5 million Court Expansion Project. My message to our consultants and staff is simple, be on time, be on budget and no surprises.

“We have made great progress implementing our Shared Services Plan and I have every expectation that under the leadership of Supervisor Beaty, and with the inclusion of the City of Glens Falls, we will continue to experience increased savings in this regard. We have had suggestions regarding reducing out operating expenses at the Airport and after talking to Supervisor Girard, Chair of the County Facilities Committee, I have every expectation that his Committee will entertain all proposals aimed at reducing expenses or increasing revenue at the Airport.

“As you know we can on occasion disagree but I would rather be here with you, participating in the process of governing, as imperfect as some may find it, than sitting on the sidelines. I think Teddy Roosevelt said it best, “it’s not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man whose actually in the arena”. This Legislative Chamber is our arena. It is our watch. It is our time to write the next chapter. I have had the great privilege these past seven years of being Bolton’s representative to this great union of government, four of which was as Vice Chairman of the Board. I have come to know each and every one of you and I know you have the best interests of Warren County and its residents foremost on your mind. This chamber is where we come together to determine our mutual direction. It is not, in my opinion, a place for the timid. It is a place to deliberate, speak your mind and cast your vote. As Chairman it is my job to help set the agenda, steward the process and ensure that it is open and fair and that those wishing to speak are heard. This is the essence of our democratic system of government and you can be assured that I will perform this new role to the best of my ability so help me god.

Respectfully submitted,
Ronald F. Conover, Chairman
Warren County Board of Supervisors”