

Chairman's video comments May 12, 2022

Chairman Weatherup reports on resolutions passed during a special meeting of the Legislature on April 26, as well as the group's regular May meeting. He gave a highlight of his State of the County Address and showcased the County's water resources as the "Tourism Tip" of the month. Come out to the Lake Ontario Waterfront Festival at the H. Lee White Maritime Museum in Oswego on Saturday and Sunday, May 21 and 22! The free, family-friendly event is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days.

As today's video does not include a translator, the video script is available for viewing here:

Good afternoon. I'm Jim Weatherup, chairman of the Oswego County Legislature. Since our last update, the Legislature has met twice. During a special meeting on April 26, we unanimously passed three resolutions.

The first temporarily suspends the county tax on gas and diesel fuel over three dollars per gallon. This cap aligns us with similar measures approved by Onondaga County and the state of New York. It will be effective from June 1 to December 1 of this year.

The second vote approved a proposed local law on mass transportation in Oswego County. Its passage allows us to contract with transit providers to enhance transportation services for residents across the county.

To close out the special meeting, the Legislature approved a resolution to donate surplus bullet-proof vests to humanitarian workers helping Ukraine citizens in the face of an unjust invasion.

Our regular May meeting was equally productive.

Among other items, we passed a resolution to renew an intermunicipal agreement with the city of Oswego for leachate treatment and sludge disposal; another to adopt a local law that will permit and regulate ATVs on portions of certain county roads; and one to set up a public hearing on a proposed local law to establish fees and guidelines for tow services dispatched by the County.

That public hearing will be held at 7 p.m. on Thursday, June 9 in the Legislative Chambers of the Legislative Office Building, 46 E. Bridge St., Oswego.

I also had an opportunity to speak to my fellow legislators, County staff and public citizens to present the annual State of the County Address.

As we learn to live in this COVID-19 age, our health department continues to fulfill its mission of protecting the health and safety of all residents. Staff have responded to thousands of calls on the COVID-19 Hotline and administered even more vaccinations in communities across the county.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll on us, we continue to look forward. Our sales tax revenues grew in 2021 – increasing almost 5% from the year before and close to 9% from pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

The Legislature approved a 7% tax cut for property owners in the 2022 budget, following a nearly 3% reduction the previous year. I'm proud to say that this has created the lowest county tax rate in more than a decade.

Despite the continued pressure of unfunded mandates and cost-shifting from Albany, our county is on solid footing financially. We strive to continue this momentum and move into a new era of prosperity.

Last year, we created the Office of Strategic Initiatives to help advance this objective, thanks to the \$20 million Oswego County received in federal pandemic relief funding. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and we have been moving forward very carefully to ensure that our investments will strengthen our communities for generations to come.

In other County news, the Legislative Office Building, 46 E. Bridge St., Oswego will adopt summer hours beginning June 1. The building will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. through September 2.

With summer on the horizon, I'll take this chance to remind you about our extraordinary water resources. We have the largest shoreline along Lake Ontario of any other county in the state – AND – we are home to Oneida Lake, the largest lake located entirely within New York State. Our large variety of lakes, ponds, rivers and streams not only provide beautiful panoramas, but endless recreational opportunities.

This month's "Tourism Tip" is to explore the fun activities and serene beauty of these natural resources. The Lake Ontario Waterfront Festival at the H. Lee White Maritime Museum in Oswego is a great place to start! The free, family-friendly event is open from 10 to 5 on Saturday and Sunday, May 21 and 22.

It features exhibits, displays and demonstrations – along with music and food, kids' crafts and other activities. Representatives will be there from the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Oswego Fire Department, Boating Industries Association of Upstate New York and New York Sea Grant.

In addition, NOAA staff and local advisory council members for the proposed Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary will talk about the proposal and give people a chance to explore underwater resources using Oculus headsets.

Stay safe and healthy; and thank you for doing your part to prevent the spread of COVID-19. If you haven't been vaccinated, and wish to do so, call the COVID-19 Hotline at 315-349-3330 – or call your medical provider – for more information. Look for our next video update on Monday, June 13.