

## **Chairman's video comments July 18, 2022**

Hi, I'm Jim Weatherup, chairman of the Oswego County Legislature. I'm here to update you on some recent developments in Oswego County and the Legislature's July session.

Last week, the county reconvened the Community Safety Initiative, or CSI, a committee established in 2018 to improve public safety and increase training opportunities related to mass casualty events. Meetings were halted in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the committee met Thursday to reorganize and continue its important work, which prior to the pandemic led to the expansion of the school resource officer program in area schools, spearheaded by Sheriff Don Hilton.

The CSI committee brings together police, firefighters and other stakeholders to develop best practices, identify security gaps and ultimately create community prevention measures, preparations and response plans for violent threats to our community.

Legislator Marc Greco, who serves as chairman of the Public Safety Committee, will lead the CSI and has been directed to specifically look at improving safety in our schools, but will examine other areas as well. I assure you, there is no higher priority than the safety of our community.

The county is also continuing to evaluate applications for American Rescue Plan funding. We've so far allocated \$3.3 million to 19 projects, including funds for Oswego Health, NOCA Ambulance, Fulton Block Builders and the Oswego Renaissance Association. Applications continue to be submitted and reviewed by a small task force and legislators, who will vote to approve or deny each of the eligible funding requests. In addition to funding private businesses and nonprofits, the county is determining the best uses for \$10 million set aside for internal projects. County leadership is beginning to review department head requests for those funds.

Distributing the American Rescue Plan funding is likely to be a lengthy process, and we're still in the early stages. We'll continue to provide updates as we move forward.

I want to provide a quick update on our investigation and assessment of the Department of Social Services' response to the Jordan Brooks case. Those inquiries are ongoing, and we will share the results with the public as soon as the findings are available. We ask for your patience as we continue to gather all the facts. In the meantime, we have already taken action to bolster our child protective unit, creating four new positions at the July meeting that were recommended by the Child Protection Advisory Council and DSS leadership to enhance case review and decision-making processes.

We wrapped up our July session on Thursday, approving a number of important resolutions, including the appointment of new directors at our Solid Waste and Highway departments. Solid Waste Director Carl Schmidt and Highway Supervisor Shawn Walker are both experienced and capable leaders, and I'm confident they'll serve our community well.

The legislature also approved the 2022 county property tax auction, which will take place online August 18. As in previous years, several tax delinquent properties were pulled from the auction list and transferred to the Oswego County Land Bank. The Land Bank has been successful in its mission to improve neighborhoods by renovating or demolishing problematic properties across the county, and we're proud to support them in their efforts.

I also want to address the smoldering grain silo fire at the biofuel plant in the town of Volney. State authorities are monitoring the air quality near the plant and have determined the smoke and smell does not currently cause a threat to public health. We do recognize, however, it is a nuisance for nearby residents and are working to have the situation resolved. We will continue to closely monitor the situation in partnership with the state and take action if necessary.

Lastly, I want to point out a welcome service improvement at the county's Department of Motor Vehicles office. The Oswego DMV is now open until 6:45 p.m. on Wednesdays to offer more convenient access to the hardworking residents of our county.

Thank you for taking the time to listen and stay informed. We'll be back next month with more updates.