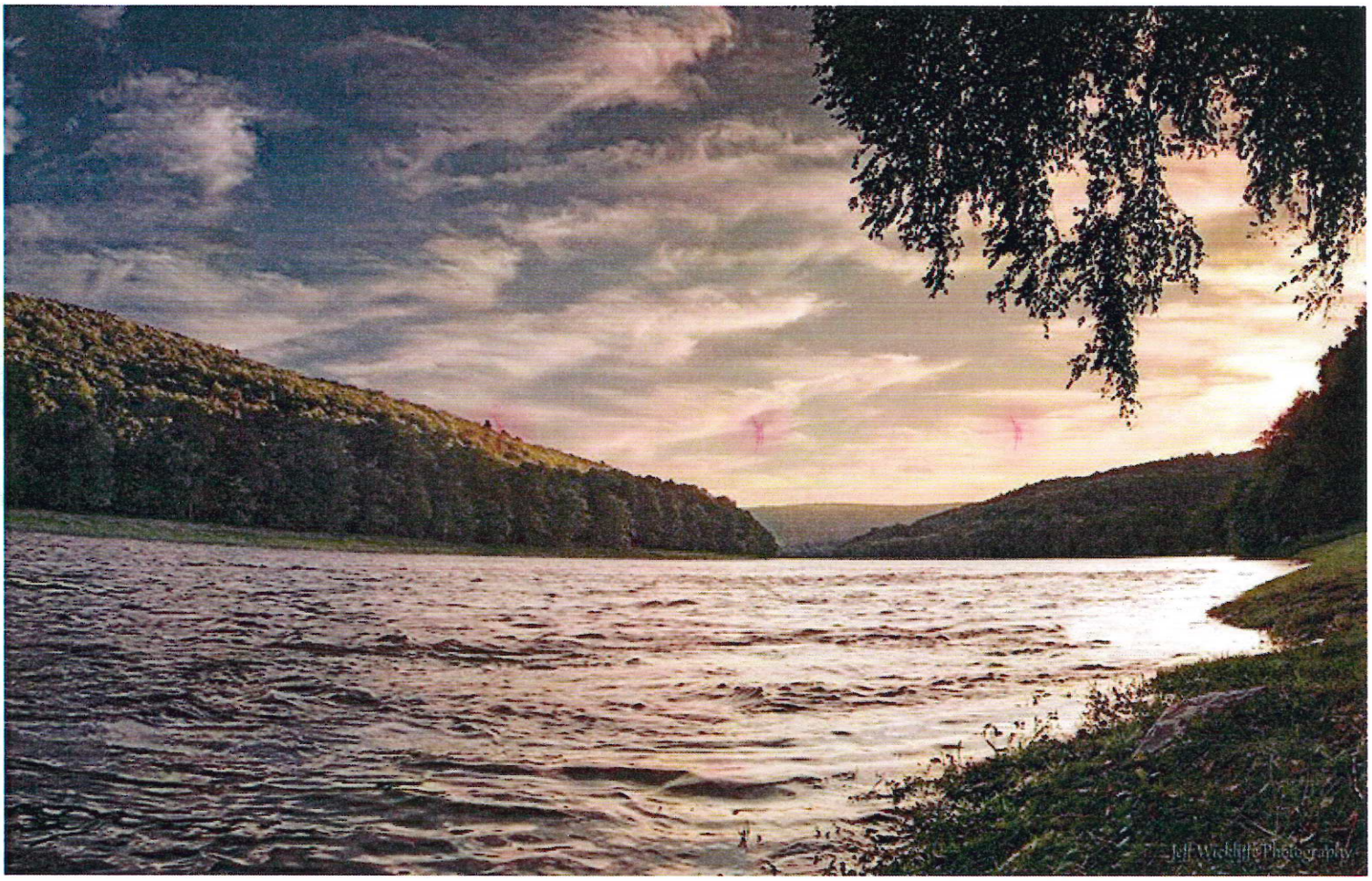

SULLIVAN COUNTY

SHARED SERVICES PLAN

Adopted by Sullivan County Shared Services Panel – November 6, 2019

for implementation in 2020

Sullivan
COUNTY CATSKILLS
Mountains of Opportunities

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FOREWARD

We have the good fortune of living in Sullivan County at a time of nearly unprecedented economic growth. The Sullivan Catskills are once again a world-renowned tourist destination – we are one of the top ten regions around the globe recommended for vacationers this year by the popular tourist guide *Lonely Planet*. Unemployment is at a thirty-year low, and Sullivan County is one of precious few counties in America that is experiencing a net increase of manufacturing jobs. Our recently established public transportation service, *Move Sullivan*, is making the job market and healthcare accessible to our most disadvantaged citizens.

In spite of our recent progress, we remain a county with more than our fair share of challenges. Towns, Villages and local school districts in Sullivan County are all obligated to maintain aging infrastructure and to satisfy unfunded state mandates. This has placed a great deal of pressure on a shrinking tax base. In rural areas like ours around the country, 75% of homeowners are baby boomers – 30% of whom are 70 or older. Homeownership is vital to the health of our communities; homeowners have incentives to invest more in the community than renters and community success increases property values. Therefore, we must find ways to reduce property tax levies on individual property owners in order to attract a new generation of homeowners to the Catskills so that recent gains can be sustained for our families, friends, and neighbors.

The focus of our efforts in developing this Shared Services Plan was – and will always be – to provide the taxpayers of the County with services they depend on with a high level of quality while operating at the lowest practical cost. Our first plan, developed in 2017, was a solid effort and a product of significant collaboration. It has already resulted in tens of thousands of dollars in savings to Sullivan County taxpayers and put us ahead of other counties around the State. The work done in 2017 also identified that the balance between controlling spending and delivering quality service is a delicate one, often fraught with unforeseen complexities. In this year's effort, we elected to focus on building momentum for future spending reforms by selecting shared service projects which will build confidence and trust in county and municipal relationships. With all this in mind, all Sullivan County municipalities should consider these opportunities to partner with the County Government and each other on issues where it is politically feasible and fiscally advantageous to do so.

Joshua A. Potosek, County Manager
Shared Services Panel Chairman

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

<u>2019 Shared Savings Plan Goal</u>: Sullivan County and its local partners develop, approve, and submit to the State a County-Wide Shared Services Property Tax Savings Plan with new shared services actions that achieve demonstrable taxpayer savings.

With the passing of the 2017 New York State Budget, lawmakers in Albany also adopted legislation affecting all Counties within New York State. The legislation known as the "Countywide Shared Services Property Tax Savings Plan Law" requires the executive officer of each County and all of the executive officers of each municipality within the County develop and deliver a plan for additional shared services. The intended purpose of the law is to offset costs to taxpayers through local governmental collaboration. The law required that panels led by the County's Chief Executive Officer hold regular public meetings to discuss options, cost savings, implementation cost, and the distribution of the onetime dollar-for-dollar savings grants which were promised as part of the legislation. The legislation was renewed by the governor and is currently on track to continue through 2021.

Since the introduction of the New York Property Tax Cap in 2011, municipalities have worked very hard to maintain services and tighten their fiscal belts. This has been extremely difficult to accomplish due to the rising cost of state-mandated programs and the reduction of revenues normally received for operating funds from non-property tax sources. The decline and stagnancy in these non-property tax revenues was attributed to the already poor economy in Upstate New York from 2007 to 2015, but further stressed by the national economic trends after the financial and real-estate market collapse during the same period. Counties, Towns and Villages through this time have leaned heavily on shared services and other cost-reducing measures, which are not able to be counted as savings or shared services under the guidance of this law.

We identified four separate opportunities for focused collaboration and the sharing of services as we developed this year's plan. **In each case under this plan, a local jurisdiction's level of support is scalable – that is, we have developed solutions that could fully absorb a service up to the County level but we are also developing options that will allow a municipality to maintain autonomy while reducing redundancy or providing a unique service in a more cost effective manner for taxpayers. No level of participation is mandated by this year's plan.** The plan will be reviewed annually while the Shared Services Property Tax Savings Law and County-Wide Shared Services Initiative (CWSSI) remains in effect so that initiatives piloted with a single town or village in the first year may be expanded to include all municipalities throughout the County in future years when the

changes are proven effective and lessons have been learned to make larger-scale implementation more efficient and less disruptive to existing services.

The four initiatives Sullivan County will pursue with local partners in the year ahead are:

- *Shared Purchasing* through training and updates to municipal purchasing policy
- *Shared Training* using County IT systems and jointly scheduled training events
- *Shared Storage of Public Records* through the use of IT systems and software purchased by County Government
- *County-provided Tax Collection Services* through gradual transition of tax collection responsibilities from towns and villages to the County Treasurer's Office.

While these initiatives are the focus of this year's plan, we are also committed to continue to develop shared services initiatives with municipalities as well as school and special districts throughout the County in any area where progress can be made toward delivering the ultimate goal – making it easier to start a business and to make home ownership more affordable for current and future Sullivan County families.

Finally, Sullivan County Government would like to express its appreciation for the dialogue and support from all participating local organizations and private citizens who contributed to the development of this year's plan. We would also like to extend special recognition to the Towns of Liberty and Rockland whose support for the 2017 plan resulted in a final combined approved savings and matching grant funds of $159,388 for Sullivan County, Town of Liberty and Town of Rockland taxpayers.

2. FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS

The 2019 Shared Services Plan's development started with a public hearing on June 26th. This was largely a brainstorming session to determine what ways to save taxpayer funds had the most interest from the public and local leaders present. The session had a mix of bold ideas for wholesale change and practical recommendations for incremental improvements. Included among the discussions were *structural change* suggestions to consolidate administrative staff at local school districts, combine fire districts and departments, and *service delivery change* suggestions which had the potential to make the "business" of local governments more efficient.

Key Reflection from Session #1: Structural changes in the organization of local governments have potential to provide major savings for taxpayers, but the school and fire district consolidations proposed also present significant risk to quality of service. County government can and should facilitate additional study, but changes can and should only happen with local support. An incremental approach to these opportunities will be the best approach for 2019 and 2020. Specific concepts were researched and discussed as follows:

- **School district consolidation**
  - Potential benefits: More choice for students in electives, more opportunities to specialize curricula, streamlined administration, reduce capital budget burden on taxpayers
  - Potential downfalls: Loss of local identity, larger class sizes, expensive new construction, longer bus rides/more expensive transportation
- **County-wide code enforcement, tax assessments and tax collection**
  - Potential benefits: Simpler, easier to understand regulations and tax calendar, fairer & more accurate assessments
  - Potential downfalls: Loss of local control, assessment increases for some property owners
- **Consolidation of fire departments, fire districts**
  - Potential benefits: Cheaper to maintain, Response times improve by drawing from a larger base of volunteers
  - Potential downfalls: Response times worsen due to decreased infrastructure, equipment

The second and third public sessions focused discussion on identifying initiatives and partners for those initiatives that would be able to make rapid progress in 2020 toward

obtaining matching funds from the State. The second session (July 24th) explained the risks of major structural change and the need for a bottom-up approach via mandate from local electorates. Research into major structural changes and dialogue with local residents and leaders made it clear there was a need to assemble a strong base of political support before moving forward, especially when changes would require abolishing positions. The third session (August 28th) clarified opportunities for both straightforward procedural changes and *incremental* structural changes that have strong potential to generate savings and matching grants from the state over the next two years. In the weeks between these sessions, several different local government representatives voiced support for the initiatives and asked for additional information on opportunities to get involved.

Key Reflection from Sessions 2 and 3: The need for local government efficiency planning is not cyclical -- it is prudent to consider shared services options throughout the year. Moving forward, the Sullivan County Manager's Office will make planning support available to towns, villages, school districts, and other special districts throughout the year, rather than simply focusing on the annual CWSSI grant. Our general approach will be as follows:

Through this approach, we are already identifying ideas that will be researched in the weeks and months after the 2019 plan is finalized. In particular, consolidation of justice courts and shared purchasing of health insurance plans are topics which will be reviewed as part of developing the 2020 and 2021 plans. County government will also look for opportunities to partner with neighboring counties in future plans as another vehicle to obtaining savings for Sullivan County taxpayers.

3. KEY MILESTONES

NYS Law mandates that three public sessions be held in support of the development of a county's Shared Services Plan. These sessions were held, with greater than one week of public notice given prior to each session, on June 26th, July 24th, and August 28th. Each of the three sessions were attended by members of County government, town and village officials, candidates for local public office, school superintendents and board members, and members of the general public.

The draft 2019 Shared Services Plan was fully briefed to a meeting of the Sullivan County Town Supervisors Association at their regular monthly meeting on September 4th. Members of the Association were asked to respond to a survey gauging their support for the draft plan created from the input gained during the first three public sessions prior to public presentation of the draft plan to the Sullivan County Legislature on September 19th.

After review by the County Legislature, additional research into potential cost savings was conducted by County Government staff and local partners. The final plan was approved by the Shared Services Panel on November 6th, 2019 with total anticipated savings in 2020 and 2021 provided to the County Manager and certified for submission to the Department of State, as required by the December 31st, 2019 deadline.

4. SHARED PURCHASING INITIATIVE

Over the course of developing this plan, we identified inefficiencies in purchasing at local jurisdictions (esp. towns, villages, and fire districts) which have evolved from outdated policy or a lack of awareness of available resources. This month, County Government will provide training to municipal personnel around the County on purchasing policy and on how to take advantage of County-wide and New York State Office of General Services (OGS) bids to enable cost savings and to reduce the kinds of errors that lead to overpayments and undesirable audit results.

Not all of the savings identified through this training will be eligible for matching CWSSI grant funds as they will simply capture savings for taxpayers through the use of OGS resources and the use of more competitive vendors. Nevertheless, we believe these savings will be significant and worthy of ongoing research and implementation.

Eligible savings identified during and after the training which take advantage of economies of scale through joint purchasing will be added to this and future Shared Services Plan grant applications and redistributed back to local communities. Savings will be eligible for this grant if municipalities enter into agreements with each other or County Government to purchase goods or services together on a recurring basis. The savings obtained in the first year would be provided back to the jurisdictions via the Shared Services grant as delineated in Inter-Municipal Agreements (IMAs).

- ***Next Steps*: Personnel responsible for purchasing/contracting in many Sullivan County jurisdictions will attend County-provided training on November 20th at 5:00pm in Sullivan County Government Center.**
- ***Potential Savings*: To be determined – we anticipate there will be a wide range of savings realized through both consolidation of purchases and through training and refining purchasing policies.**

5. SHARED TRAINING INITIATIVE

Personnel employed by municipalities throughout Sullivan County must attend state-mandated training and would benefit from leadership and management training. Training cannot always be developed and provided in-house due to limited staff capacity.

County Government is bringing new software online to support internal document management, workflow, and training processes. After bringing the software fully online internally, County Government will offer towns, villages, and school districts the opportunity to complete state-mandated annual training at minimal or even no cost to taxpayers[1]. This will enable employees to conveniently complete training online and also provide an electronic record of training completion, making corporate compliance efforts much more efficient by cutting down on time spent on face-to-face training, generating paper rosters, and data entry after training is completed.

County Government is also purchasing leadership training for supervisors from our Employee Assistance Program provider and is planning to hold quarterly seminars. If several municipalities participate, we intend to use grant money we obtain through the Shared Services program to fund additional leadership training courses for County, Town and Village personnel in 2020 and beyond.

- ***Next Steps*: County government has contracted for leadership training with ESI Group[2] and will seek an appropriate venue to include organizations interested in participating. Municipalities opting-in to this initiative will enable the County to obtain grant money to continue this training on an annual basis. County government will develop training presentations in-house for NYS-mandated training and make available via IT solution at a later date. Computer-delivered training will be developed throughout the rest of this year and a detailed list of shared training savings will be submitted with the 2020 Shared Services Plan.**

- ***Certifiable Savings*:**
  - ***Leadership Training cost avoidance = $5,000/participating municipality***
  - ***Online Sexual Harassment Training webinar = $1800/session***
  - ***Total Savings based on interest expressed by 6 towns = $40,800***

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[1] Among others, this effort will avert cost of online sexual harassment training provided by private contractors such as https://www.operationsinc.com/training-development-services/new-york-state-workplace-anti-harassment-training-compliance/?creative=264458937591&keyword=workplace%20harassment%20training&matchtype=b&network=g&device=c&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIuMnQqLTP5QIVDZSzCh0cCAvAEAAYASAAEgIGPfD_BwE

[2] Leadership Training Services, Executed Agreement (RFP# R-19-20), July 17, 2019

6. ELECTRONIC STORAGE OF PUBLIC RECORDS

Maintenance of paper records is time consuming and requires expensive infrastructure. Paper records are also at increased risk of loss due to fire and natural disaster than records prepared, stored, and backed up electronically. The idea to have County Government provide electronic storage of records for municipalities throughout the County was brought up during the 2017 round of Shared Services discussions. Now that County Government has nearly completed network transitions to Windows 10, we are ready to move forward with providing electronic file storage for municipalities around the County. Grant money on this initiative will go toward contracts that enable digitization of records, and has the potential to save significant sums of money on document storage costs in future years.

Interested municipalities will enter into inter-municipal agreements with the support of the County Clerk's Office. Sullivan County Government's IT services (ITS) division will ensure the security of electronic records via licensing agreements established with electronic document storage providers. Local governments will have complete access to files secured by ITS and will have the opportunity to make some or all of their stored documents accessible to the public, as appropriate.

- ***Next Steps**: This initiative is being piloted with the Town of Thompson via the Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund (LGRMIF) grant program. When the pilot program is successfully completed, additional municipalities and districts will be afforded a chance to participate and savings generated through those efforts will be submitted for grant consideration in 2020 and 2021 via LGRMIF and/or CWSSI as applicable.*

- ***Anticipated Savings**: $150,000 can be obtained from LGRMIF through competitive grant applications to facilitate an ongoing cooperative, permanent relationship between governments that result in sustainable programmatic change.*

  Savings in 2020: $150,000 (LGRMIF grant-supported pilot program with Thompson)

  Savings in 2021: $150,000 (LGRMIF grant support to incorporate additional towns)

  Office space made available for rental (Neversink) - $14,700

  Document storage space cost avoidance (Lumberland) - $28,000

  Total Savings anticipated savings over the life of the plan: $342,700

7. PROPERTY TAX COLLECTION SERVICES

Municipalities are paying employees to collect tax payments at Village and Town Halls, adding an extra layer of labor costs when County Government already supports tax collection for towns and villages. As mentioned above, participation in this effort is optional for municipalities and the level of participation would be scalable – especially on this issue because assessment and collections are conducted differently in virtually every town and village across the County for a variety of fiscal and political reasons. Participation in this initiative will make paying taxes much simpler for taxpayers by reducing the number of different points of contact who participate in tax collection. This should also reduce workload for many clerks around the County (County Treasurer personnel will support collection and would provide some towns and villages with access to funds collected sooner than current practice.

This initiative will not include tax *assessment* services. While the County is willing to work with municipalities who desire to reform their tax assessment practices, property tax assessments are fundamental to all town and village revenue and policy decisions and are best retained at the local level.

- ***Next Steps*: As towns and villages decide that eliminating redundancies in tax collection is in the interest of their staff's productivity, effective customer service, and/or would reduce a burden on taxpayers, County Government will support a transition of tax collection services to the County from the local tax collector/clerk's office. We anticipate piloting the initiative with at least one town starting in 2020 and will support additional towns when Town leaders elect to move forward.**

- ***Anticipated Savings*: Approximately $20,000 annually for a part-time employee, smaller amounts for stipends provided to clerks. Actual savings will be calculated when municipalities enter into agreements with the County. Though it would not necessarily yield additional savings, quick access to funds collected by the County would provide significant cash flow benefits for some jurisdictions.**

  Savings in 2020: $20,000 (Pilot Program with one town)

  Savings in 2021: $40,000 (Integrate two additional towns into County-wide collection)

  Total Savings anticipated savings over the life of the plan: $60,000

APPENDICES

Appendix A

County of Sullivan			
County Contact: John Liddle, Deputy County Manager			
Contact Telephone: (845) 807-0450			
Contact Email: john.liddle@co.sullivan.ny.us			
Partners			
Row 1 – 0 Cities in Sullivan County			
Row 2 – 15 Towns in Sullivan County, 15 Participating (9 provided votes on final plan)			
Participating Towns		Panel Representative	Vote Cast (Yes or No)
1.	Bethel	Daniel Sturm	YES
2.	Callicoon	Tom Bose	YES
3.	Cochecton	Gary Maas	YES
4.	Delaware	Edward Sykes	
5.	Fallsburg	Steve Vegliante	
6.	Forestburgh	Dan Hogue	YES
7.	Fremont	George Conklin	
8.	Highland	Jeff Haas	
9.	Liberty	Brian Rourke	YES
10.	Lumberland	Jenny Mellan	
11.	Mamakating	Bill Herrmann	
12.	Neversink	Chris Mathews	YES
13.	Rockland	Robert Eggleton	YES
14.	Thompson	Bill Rieber	YES
15.	Tusten	Carol Ropke Nelson	YES
Row 3 – 5 Villages in Sullivan County			
Participating Villages		Panel Representative	Vote Cast (Yes or No)

1.	Jeffersonville	William Thony	
2.	Liberty	Ron Stabak	
3.	Monticello	Gary Sommers	
4.	Woodridge	Joan Collins	
5.	Wurtsboro	Jay Thompson	

Row 4 – **15 Participating School Districts, BOCES, and Special Improvement Districts***

	Participating School Districts, BOCES, and Special Improvement Districts	Panel Representative
1.	Sullivan BOCES	Robert Dufour
2.	Fallsburg CSD	Ivan Katz
3.	Liberty CSD	Georgia Gonzalez
4.	Livingston Manor/Roscoe CSDs	John Evans
5.	Monticello CSD	Lori Orestano-James
6.	Sullivan West CSD	Stephen Walker
7.	Tri-Valley CSD	KeriAnn Poley
8.	Rock Hill Fire Dist	Brian Soller
9.	Lake Huntington Fire Dist	Mike Pomes
10.	Forestburgh Fire Dist	Todd Petrowsky
11.	Loch Sheldrake Fire Dist	Mike Ward
12.	Youngsville Fire Dist	J. McGibbon
13.	Narrowsburg Fire Dist	Art Hawker
14.	Roscoe/Rockland F.D.	K. Travers
15.	White Sulphur Fire Dist	Tim Fink

* Sullivan BOCES, School Districts and Fire Districts were not required to participate, but Sullivan County Government wishes to acknowledge the support and participation of all districts listed above.

Row 5

2019 Local Government Property Taxes	The sum total of property taxes levied in the year 2019 by the county, cities, towns, villages, school districts, BOCES, and special improvement districts within such county.
	$530,828,216.52

Row 6

2019 Participating Entities Property Taxes	The sum total of property taxes levied in the year 2019 by the county, any cities, towns, villages, school districts, BOCES, and special improvements districts identified as participating in the panel in the rows above.
	$525,002,649.42
Row 7	
Total Anticipated Savings	The sum total of net savings in such plan certified as being anticipated in calendar year 2020, calendar year 2021, and annually thereafter.
	$443,500
Row 8	
Anticipated Savings as a Percentage of Participating Entities property taxes	The sum total of net savings in such plan certified as being anticipated in calendar year 2020 as a percentage of the sum total in Row 6, calendar year 2021 as a percentage of the sum total in Row 6, and annually thereafter as a percentage of the sum total in Row 6.
	.08%
Row 9	
Anticipated Savings to the Average Taxpayer	The amount of the savings that the average taxpayer in the county will realize in calendar year 2020, calendar year 2021, and annually thereafter if the net savings certified in the plan are realized.
	$6.70
Row 10	
Anticipated Costs/Savings to the Average Homeowner	The percentage amount a homeowner can expect his or her property taxes to increase or decrease in calendar year 2020, calendar year 2021, and annually thereafter if the net savings certified in the plan are realized.
	0.001477%
Row 11	
Anticipated Costs/Savings to the Average Business	The percentage amount a business can expect its property taxes to increase or decrease in calendar year 2020, calendar year 2021, and annually thereafter if the net savings certified in the plan are realized.
	.000034%
CERTIFICATION	
I hereby affirm under penalty of perjury that information provided is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. This is the finalized county-wide shared services property tax savings plan. The county-wide shared services property tax savings plan was approved on November 6, 2019, and it was	

disseminated to residents of the county in accordance with the County-wide Shared Services Property Tax Savings Law.

Joshua A. Potosek — County Manager

(Print Name)

(Signature) — 11/22/19 (Date)

Supporting Data:

Township	County	Town	Special Districts	Reassessments	Returned School Taxes	Solid Waste Fee	Total Raised
Bethel	5,647,950.31	4,453,483.53	1,360,931.67	89,564.14	2,133,810.32	366,386.00	**14,052,125.97**
Callicoon	2,599,429.96	2,043,425.51	668,426.18	7,995.72	377,787.86	157,108.00	**5,854,173.23**
Cochecton	1,539,036.44	1,042,507.49	236,236.72	-	240,319.95	88,306.00	**3,146,406.60**
Delaware	2,141,237.13	1,626,667.00	756,765.47	-	437,690.64	123,706.00	**5,086,066.24**
Fallsburg	7,407,321.15	8,777,312.88	4,320,068.80	838,747.54	3,420,225.48	710,364.00	**25,474,039.85**
Forestburgh	1,932,106.86	1,281,295.74	346,587.89	-	382,418.94	53,322.00	**3,995,731.43**
Fremont	1,986,765.52	883,476.88	192,073.40	3,425.70	507,141.66	95,506.00	**3,668,389.16**
Highland	2,737,351.60	1,740,236.65	224,200.00	-	511,913.45	142,178.00	**5,355,879.70**
Liberty	5,304,527.35	4,768,673.60	2,225,874.11	75,742.10	2,282,429.39	457,060.00	**15,114,306.55**
Lumberland	2,646,110.06	2,367,091.55	225,515.09	-	457,576.40	129,274.00	**5,825,567.10**
Mamakating	8,241,805.57	4,288,881.65	2,104,347.41	12,073.14	2,081,346.86	460,358.00	**17,188,812.63**
Neversink	6,545,486.38	4,005,852.89	714,523.41	-	243,272.17	149,730.00	**11,658,864.85**
Rockland	3,155,931.81	2,744,087.38	810,405.88	122,681.04	511,409.72	196,610.00	**7,541,125.83**
Thompson	11,025,155.68	4,878,348.96	7,925,991.92	247,860.06	2,584,706.12	792,836.00	**27,454,898.74**
Tusten	1,803,076.18	1,294,974.45	322,642.00	38,470.16	378,000.85	97,850.00	**3,935,013.64**
	64,713,292.00	**46,196,316.16**	**22,434,589.95**	**1,436,559.60**	**16,550,049.81**	**4,020,594.00**	
							155,351,401.52

Villages	2019 Levy
Bloomingburg	337,937.00
Jeffersonville	573,267.00
Liberty	7,334,996.00
Monticello	15,374,859.00
Woodridge	3,941,054.00
Wurtsburo	629,078.00
	28,191,191.00

Schools	2019-2020 Budget
BOCES	46,787,720.00
Eldred	17,196,500.00
Fallsburg	46,471,065.00
Liberty	48,393,178.00
Livingston Manor	16,479,972.00
Monticello	91,227,073.00
Roscoe	9,017,207.00
Sullivan West	38,398,347.00
Tri-Valley	33,314,562.00
	347,285,624.00

Total Town Levy	155,351,401.52
Total Village Levy	$ 28,191,191.00
Total School Levy	$ 347,285,624.00
Grand Total	530,828,216.52

Appendix B

CERTIFICATION OF PLAN AND PROPERTY TAX SAVINGS TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

By my signature below, I hereby certify that the County-Wide Shared Services Property Tax Savings Plan submitted herewith is final, that it was completed in accordance with the requirements of Article 12-I of the General Municipal Law, and that the savings identified and contained herein are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Joshua Potosek

County Chief Executive Officer (Print Name)

(Signature) _____ (Date) 11/22/15