

Mayor's Report

**Regionalism: No Scorecards Required
One Year Later**

By Mayor Sam Teresi

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The reconstruction and opening of two bridges in Jamestown's Industrial Corridor and the development of two new parking garages in Downtown Jamestown are the most recent examples of mutually beneficial, collaborative efforts involving our County and City Governments.

In the case of the two bridges, the County took the lead, and with a key assist from the City's Board of Public Utilities and the Jamestown Urban Renewal Agency (JURA), county workers were able to complete these key projects ahead of schedule and \$300,000 under budget.

While the City, through JURA, took the lead on the Downtown parking initiative, arrangements for the all important tax-exempt financing for the project were efficiently made by the County's Industrial Development Agency (IDA).

These two endeavors have effectively built upon a three-decade-long evolution in the way that public services are now delivered at the local level.

Through the bi-partisan work of hundreds of people, numerous essential services, all with regional implications (which had previously been the exclusive domain of the City of Jamestown) are now being provided either directly by County Government, or are being shared through contractual arrangements.

Included are the following:

CITY SERVICES CONSOLIDATED WITH THE COUNTY

1. Department of Social Services

2. Department of Health
3. Municipal Landfill
4. Municipal Airport
5. Industrial Development Agency (IDA)/Economic Development
6. Public Transportation
7. Emergency Dispatching (E-911) and related records management services
8. Tax Foreclosure/Sale of Foreclosed Properties/Enhanced Tax Certificate Investment Revenues
9. Ownership and Maintenance of all City Bridges
10. Elimination of the Municipal Chargeback method of financing Community College operations

CITY/COUNTY COLLABORATIONS

1. Installation of utilities and other infrastructure by the City at the County's Joseph Mason Industrial Park
2. Shared reconstruction and maintenance of County highways and bridges within the City
3. Expansion of the public safety mutual aid system
4. Provision of office space in City Hall for the County Mental Health Department
5. Treatment of solid waste overflow from the County's South-Center Sewer District at the City's Wastewater Plant
6. Treatment of leachate from the County Landfill at the City's Wastewater Plant
7. Construction of a pipeline by the City to transport landfill leachate directly into the City's wastewater treatment system, saving the county transportation and liability costs
8. Currently examining the purchase of the methane gas by product from the County Landfill to be used in the City's electric generating process
9. Billing, collection and processing of County property taxes by the City

10. Application and administration activities for the Greater Jamestown Empire Zone
11. Regionalized sponsorship of Jamestown Community College

CITY SERVICES SHARED WITH MUNICIPAL NEIGHBORS

1. City Electric (Ellicott, Celoron, Falconer)
2. City Water (Ellicott, Busti, North Harmony, Falconer, Celoron, Lakewood, North Harmony)
3. City Wastewater Treatment (Ellicott, Busti, Falconer)
4. Public Safety services with Ellicott and Lakewood/Busti
5. Assessment operations with the Towns of Busti, Kiantone, Harmony and Chautauqua, North Harmony and Ellery

Clearly, as outlined above, the structure of the City of Jamestown's government is vastly different today than it was thirty or even five years ago, and I have absolutely no doubt that it will continue to evolve and be different five years from now and beyond. And, the above list speaks only to efforts directly involving the city and does not include numerous other examples involving school districts, towns and villages from throughout Chautauqua County.

Although it is sometimes human nature to sell ourselves short and fail to appreciate the magnitude of ones own progress, the significance of the strides made over the past 30 years has not been lost on observers from the outside. In many respects, Jamestown and Chautauqua County have become a model for those now trying to enter the regional governance process for the first time.

We should recognize and applaud those that have worked so hard, past and present, to deliver sound, efficient and effective government services on a regional basis. In each instance, the process has been extremely difficult, slow moving, filled with thousands of unavoidable details and quite often, controversial and thankless.

Those that have led this change, however, have always placed the more valuable and difficult public good ahead of the easier political or even personal gain. They have proceeded ahead with the realization that inter-municipal cooperation and regionalism should not entail "keeping a scorecard".

In truly effective partnerships, questions and statements about who gave or gained the most are simply not raised, because they are typically not useful and quite often, are counterproductive to future initiatives.

Those responsible for driving our significant strides toward regionalism understood that the benefits for the participating governments are nearly always **mutual** and that the real winners are the residents, businesses and taxpayers that receive better service, quite often, at a more reasonable cost.

And for all of this, those that have sacrificed time and occasionally careers and friendships to push for regional approaches to regional issues, deserve our utmost respect and appreciation.

While great strides have and continue to be made, the pursuit of regional governance is far from over. In fact, there are numerous other opportunities currently being discussed, researched and pursued by folks in both the public and private sectors. They, like those that preceded them, deserve our input, support and patience as they go through the time consuming, detailed and difficult process of pursuing the regional or countywide delivery of public safety, public works, libraries, parks, public education and numerous other services.