



News from the Office of **ADAM J. BELLO** **MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

For Immediate Release
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Monroe County Executive Adam Bello Unveils Proposed 2021 Monroe County Budget

Reduces the tax rate by \$0.26, the largest decrease in almost 20 years

Limits spending growth to .38%, well below rate of inflation

*Invests in programs and services to help Monroe County respond and recover from the
COVID-19 pandemic*

ROCHESTER, NY – Monroe County Executive Adam Bello today unveiled the proposed 2021 Monroe County budget, the first County spending plan prepared by the Bello administration. Developed in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainty that surrounds it, the 2021 proposal maintains the County’s commitment to the public health and wellbeing of Monroe County.

“Our community is still feeling the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in many different ways. The proposed 2021 County budget will serve as our blueprint as we continue to respond and recover as a community. Not only are we cutting the tax rate for residents and keeping spending flat, we’re doing it while keeping our public health at the forefront, and investing in programs and services needed by our residents at this critical time,” said County Executive Bello.

Committing to Fiscal Responsibility

Overall, the 2021 proposed budget calls for \$1.237 billion in spending, an increase of just \$4.7 million or 0.38% over the adopted 2020 budget, well below the rate of inflation. Additionally, the proposed budget reduces the tax rate by \$0.26 to \$8.53 per \$1,000 assessed value, which is the largest decrease in the County tax rate in almost 20 years. The budget complies with both the New York State property tax cap and the Monroe County Taxpayer Protection Act.

Continuing to Address the Impacts of COVID-19

The COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on Monroe County throughout much of 2020. The proposed budget will serve as a blueprint as we continue to respond and recover to the pandemic. With continued economic uncertainty and state aid reductions looming, the 2021 proposed spending plan appropriates \$11.6M of previously assigned fund balance within its General Fund to partially offset the loss of sales tax revenue and the 20% withholding of state aid.



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COVID-19 has forced people into isolation in ways like never before, worsening the already troublesome opioid epidemic that has plagued our community for several years. The proposed 2021 County budget makes a significant investment in our efforts to combat the opioid crisis and expand addiction services throughout Monroe County. In addition to the recently hired Addiction Services Director, Monroe County's first ever addiction services team - the Improving Addiction and Coordination Team (IMPACT) – is fully funded in this year's proposed spending plan. The eight-member IMPACT team will operate out of the Monroe County Department of Public Health, and will coordinate services and care for this multi-faceted program.

Like many other communities, the COVID-19 pandemic has also caused record high unemployment throughout Monroe County. To improve job readiness and job linkage, the 2021 proposed County budget merges the County divisions of Economic Development and Workforce Development so they can work as one to make connections between employers and employees. It also retools and strengthens the County's workforce development training program with MCC under the rebranded MPower program. MPower aims at bringing workers displaced by the economic downturn into sustainable, rewarding career paths in essential industries.

Responding to the Monroe County Transition Report

Many of the priorities in this year's spending plan were outlined in the Monroe County Transition Report. Released on February 11, 2020, the Transition Report was the first community-stakeholder driven effort for County government in over 30 years. It represents the input of over 130 committee members who helped to identify critical issues for my administration to confront and features 235 recommended strategies to address those issues.

One of the top recommendations of the Transition Report, and priority of the Bello administration, has been improving diversity, equity and inclusion in County government so it is reflective of the community it serves. The proposed budget fully funds the newly created Department of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, which will be led by a Chief Diversity Officer. This department will assist all other County departments and offices with recruitment and retention of employees from historically underrepresented communities. It will also work to improve our MWBE selection procedures, and investigate internal complaints of discrimination, harassment, hostile work environment, and unequal treatment.

The 2021 County budget proposal also aims to ensure our children and families have the resources they need to succeed in our community. It expands the Early Intervention services program staff to provide more support for children with special needs, improves transportation services for pre-school special education students and fully funds all child protective service staff positions.



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Putting an end to Budgetary Gimmicks

The proposed 2021 County budget changes several budgetary tactics used by previous administrations. No longer included is the “Snow Tax,” a below-the-line fee that removed the cost for snow and ice removal on county roads from the general levy. Instead, it has been returned to the tax levy where it belongs. This change eliminates \$5 million in extra charges and will reduce the overall “County Services to Localities” charge by an average of 12 percent on the 2021 tax bill.

Additionally, County Executive Bello has committed to phasing out the sale of delinquent tax liens, which were once used to bolster revenue during difficult budget years. This tactic worsened problems with crumbling, vacant “zombie” homes in communities and neighborhoods throughout Monroe County, and stymied homeowners struggling to pay their bills to catch up and stay in their homes. The sale of delinquent tax liens is on track to be completely eliminated by 2022.

“I’m incredibly proud of the work my administration has done in the face of uncertainty. The 2021 proposed Monroe County budget not only embraces fiscal discipline, it also puts the needs and priorities of our community at the forefront,” concluded Bello.

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