



Board of Chosen Freeholders

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MEDIA RELEASE

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State of the County: Hunterdon's Future Is Bright, But Economy Must Be Re-opened Now, Freeholder Director Says

Hunterdon County government's financial base is strong, enabling the county to freeze the property tax rate for a second year in a row, but the local economy is in jeopardy if the Governor does not quickly allow county businesses to fully open, Hunterdon County Freeholder Board Director Shaun C. Van Doren told participants in the County's Employer Legislative Breakfast, during his 'State of the County' report, held via Zoom and teleconference, on June 5th.

"The county government has zero debt, a significant surplus designed to protect taxpayers against just the kind of crisis we are facing, and a budget that is still \$10 million lower than the budget that was in place in 2006.

Freezing the county tax rate for the second consecutive year is a key part of the county's economic recovery strategy," Van Doren reported during the Zoom conference co-hosted by the Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce and New Jersey Business and Industry Association (NJBIA).

"The greatest threat to our county is the reluctance of the Governor to allow a full re-opening of businesses in our Hunterdon, Warren, and Sussex County region, where COVID-19 cases have dwindled to a few. The Governor's one size fits all plan doesn't work. The Hunterdon Freeholders have called on the Governor to allow a re-opening before it is too late for our economy," Van Doren stated.

Van Doren said, "The county's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is a tribute to the County Health Department and Office of Emergency Management's training and preparedness. The exceptional response has occurred not by chance, but by design, to quote County Chief of Staff George Wagner.

Despite County buildings being closed to the public, and gubernatorial orders to stay at home and not to gather, county government services have continued to operate and serve the public."

The Freeholder Board Director noted, "Hunterdon County is a unique and special place – look no further than the just released report from the international non-profit organization Save The Children that ranked Hunterdon County as the #1 safest county in America to raise a child."

"And despite the pandemic and the challenges we face, our future is bright – we have the ability to face these challenges head on by working together through partnership, collaboration, ingenuity, and perseverance. These are the hallmarks of Hunterdon County's resiliency," Van Doren concluded.