



Board of County Commissioners

County of Hunterdon
71 Main Street, Building #1
PO Box 2900
Flemington, NJ 08822-2900

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: March 30, 2022

Contact: John E. Lanza, Director

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**Lanza On The State of the County:
Hunterdon County A Proven Desirable Place
To Live and Work**

**Independently Verified
As The Safest, Healthiest, Best County**

There is independent verification that Hunterdon County is the safest, healthiest, and best place to live and work, County Commissioner Board Director John E. Lanza told the Hunterdon Chamber of Commerce's Employer Legislative Committee, in a state of the county address, at the group's annual Breakfast meeting on March 30th.

During the event at the Chamber's Unity Bank Center for Business & Entrepreneurship, which was conducted both in-person and via zoom, Lanza told the group, "Our county is an extremely desirable place in which to reside, raise a family, grow a business, and work, and the economic outlook continues to grow."

Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce President, Chris Phelan commented, "We thank Commissioner Director John Lanza and the Board for their support of the Business Community. In addition, we thank NJBIA, New Jersey Business & Industry Association for their partnership with the Employer Legislative Committee and being a collaborative voice with the Chamber on numerous issues in Trenton that impact the Business Community."

Director Lanza during his remarks pointed to positive rankings of the County by several outside studies over the past few years.

Lanza noted, "The international nonprofit 'Save the Children Fund' has recognized Hunterdon County as the safest County in America to raise children and the US News and World Report's annual healthiest communities ranking has listed the County as one of the healthiest counties in the nation.



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Additionally, the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute study that determined Hunterdon to be the healthiest county in New Jersey and a report by 24/7 Wall Street, a financial news company, listed Hunterdon County as one of the twenty best places to live in the entire country, based on the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index.

This isn't us saying it folks, it is coming from independent outside groups using real data."

Lanza stated, "Those following the real estate market know that people want to move here. Home and property values have been skyrocketing. The County has enjoyed a nearly 5.5% increase in property valuation over the past year.

And, while we would never suggest that the actions of county government alone are the reason for this recognition and growth, our Board's conservative fiscal philosophy over the years should definitely be considered a contributing factor.

The County Board has frozen the tax rate for three straight years, and I have strongly encouraged the Board's Budget Committee to continue the tax rate freeze again this year. The County has no debt and the last debt service payment was made in 2014."

Lanza said, "There are a host of reasons for these fiscal achievements, including strong financial controls, applying cost benefit analysis to all spending decisions, and working diligently to find budget savings without sacrificing effectiveness of county programs."

The Board Director noted the example of the jail consolidation decision jointly made by the Board and County Sheriff Fred Brown in 2016.

"That decision, criticized by some at the time, has resulted in a total savings of \$1.6 million in operating costs since inception. Additionally, the county has avoided at least \$5 million in capital costs that would have been needed to bring the county facility into compliance with regulations," he told the assemblage.

Lanza also said the Board's economic development strategy has paid dividends and "is now making tourism a key aspect of building economic growth."

Lanza stated, "To emphasize the significance and importance of tourism to our county's economic growth, and to encourage the development of a fully comprehensive tourism effort, earlier this year the Board elevated the Economic Development office to the Department level. Renaming the unit, the Department of Economic Development and Tourism."



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Lanza also acknowledged, “The outstanding performance of the County Department of Health in meeting the incredible demands of the pandemic.

Health Department Director Karen DeMarco has consistently made herself available to advise the chamber and the county’s business community about the evolving and often confusing health protocols throughout the pandemic and has proven to be a valuable resource for the community.”

Lanza credited the County government's success to the “dedicated, honest and committed work of the County’s Constitutional Officers; Sheriff Brown, County Clerk Mary Melfi, Surrogate Susan Hoffman, and Prosecutor Renee Robeson, and that of my Board colleagues; Deputy Director Zach Rich, and three former Board Directors, Commissioners Matt Holt, Sue Soloway and Shaun Van Doren.

All of whom work together as an exceptional team in the best interests of the people and taxpayers, ensuring that Hunterdon County remains the safest, healthiest, and best place to live, not only in New Jersey, but in the America.”