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## An Annual Report from John Wasik, Lake County Board Member (District 6)

Hello everyone. I hope this finds you well. Every year, I like to update you on major accomplishments and things I'm working on. If you have any questions, please email me at [jwasik@lakecountyil.gov](mailto:jwasik@lakecountyil.gov).

In general, much of the past year was occupied in getting people COVID-19 vaccines and getting back to business. Our county fairgrounds mass vaccination site alone administered 91,500 doses. While many of our most vulnerable residents are now vaccinated against COVID-19, we're still aiming to get 80% of our county population vaccinated to achieve herd immunity. This is still our top public health priority.

The County was provided more than \$120 million in federal CARES Act funds, much of which was distributed to our partner agencies and local governments. These funds were used to provide rental and utility assistance, small business grants, and food pantry support among other things. As the pandemic is still ongoing, a new sub-committee has been created to provide direction on use of new funds that the County has received under the American Rescue Plan Act. Lake County is committed in helping our communities and partners continue to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 public health emergency.

I am also pleased to say that Lake County now has a Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, which I authored and teamed up with Treasurer Holly Kim to publish. It's simple: You have a right to appeal your property tax assessment three ways and know where your tax dollars are spent. It's on the Lake County Treasurer's Office website at [lakecountyil.gov/propertytax](http://lakecountyil.gov/propertytax).

Lake County has developed a recommended Fiscal Year 2022 budget that reflects the recovery of revenues to pre-pandemic levels. We have been challenged through this pandemic to do more with less and have focused on operational efficiencies and reducing expenses. Managing taxpayer resources in a fiscally responsible approach, the County has maintained an AAA rating from Moody's and Standard and Poor's. We've kept spending flat and reduced the county tax rate slightly over the past two years.

Despite the continued challenges we face through the pandemic, the County Board is always looking to see where we can save money while delivering exceptional service. Specific highlights can be found on the next page.

## Environment

- The Lake County Board's most important advance in 2021 was passing a Climate Action Plan that will reduce carbon emissions to nearly zero by 2040. We're hiring a new sustainability staff lead to implement this plan, something I've been requesting for the past three years.
- To implement our Climate Plan, we're installing solar panels on our facilities, cutting fleet carbon emissions and reducing our waste stream.
- What's Next? The Lake County Energy and Environment Committee is continuing to work with the Solid Waste Agency of Lake County to reduce (Countryside) landfill volume and emissions.
- The Energy and Environment Committee also is working closely with staff to look at County net-zero buildings that will produce more energy than they consume.

## Transportation/Public Works

- Working with Illinois State Senator Melinda Bush, Springfield earmarked \$30 million for a grade crossing at the Canadian National Railway tracks on Rt. 120 and Rt. 83. More federal and state funding and approvals are needed, though, to improve traffic flow at this intersection. All told, I've worked to secure more than \$60 million in local road and stormwater project funding.
- I'm continuing talks with the Canadian National Railway to reduce freight train delays through Grayslake. We've made some progress.
- The Lake County Board approved a resolution to work with Pace Suburban Bus on a new borderless paratransit system called Ride Lake County that will help individuals age 60+ and those with disabilities get around Lake County.
- I'm continuing to advocate to the State for completion of the Rt. 83 modernization and widening of Rt. 120. The Atkinson Road extension to Rt. 83, which I supported, is funded and on track.
- As Chair of the Lake County Legislative Committee, we successfully advocated for sidewalk/trails along Hainesville Road; stormwater improvements near Grayslake Central High School and Haryan Farms; and a water system study for Highland Lakes.

## Forest Preserve

- We passed a \$63 million budget. Good news: It's balanced and we're saving \$10 million by refinancing bonds. Bad news: We're out of money for land purchases.
- I was thrilled to work with an anonymous donor to assist in securing a \$2 million donation to help fund our environmental education center, our first net-zero building. The grant is the second largest received by the Forest Preserve Foundation to date.
- I advocated for a small picnic area at the Washington Street entrance in Rollins Savanna and hosted a tour of the seed nursery there.
- Our golf course revenue rebounded strongly and we opened a beer garden at Independence Grove, which was successful.
- We also worked out an arrangement to lease our Brae Loch Golf Club clubhouse to the College of Lake County Hospitality and Culinary Management Program, where students will prepare food and train.
- What's Next? The District has been exploring voluntary carbon credit programs that could potentially generate revenue to fund additional tree planting and restoration. It's a big project that the District and I have been working on for years. I'm also working on establishing an internship program at Rollins Savanna for CLC and high school students.

Please let me know if I can help you with county services. If you have an immediate need, please call the 2-1-1 hotline. I am happy to speak at any community group. You can reach me at [jwasik@lakecountyil.gov](mailto:jwasik@lakecountyil.gov). I also send a bi-weekly emailed newsletter with the latest County updates. Sign up to receive the newsletter for free at [lakecountyil.gov/Wasik](http://lakecountyil.gov/Wasik). Be well, be safe & happy holidays!



John Wasik  
County Board Member (Dist. 6), Vice President, Lake County Forest Preserve District,  
Chairman, Lake County Board Legislative Committee