

Steuben County Newsletter

January/February 2018



FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK....

As we ring in 2018, Steuben County is continuing many important initiatives. Most notably, we are still in need of help in spreading the word for our broadband survey. This is a critical tool that will provide us with accurate data regarding broadband coverage. The maps utilized by the state and federal government in determining unserved and underserved areas are very inaccurate, and as such, we as a region are limited in leveraging grant funds to make broadband accessible to all. If your municipality or organization would like to help spread the word, please contact Mitch Alger at (607) 664-2245 and he will get you fliers, surveys, and other pertinent items.

In addition, through our Ad Hoc Committee on Real Property Shared Services, we've heard of impending retirements of many assessors in the coming years. During 2018, the county will be evaluating how we may be able to partner in filling this gap and creating efficiencies. If your municipality has any thoughts or suggestions on this topic, please contact Jack Wheeler at (607) 664-2245.

Thank you for your help, and Happy New Year!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph Hauryski".

Joseph Hauryski
Chairman
Steuben County Legislature

Broadband Survey - Help Still Needed!

Steuben County's broadband survey will remain active until April 16, 2018. We are requesting the support of our municipal partners in getting residents to fill out the survey.

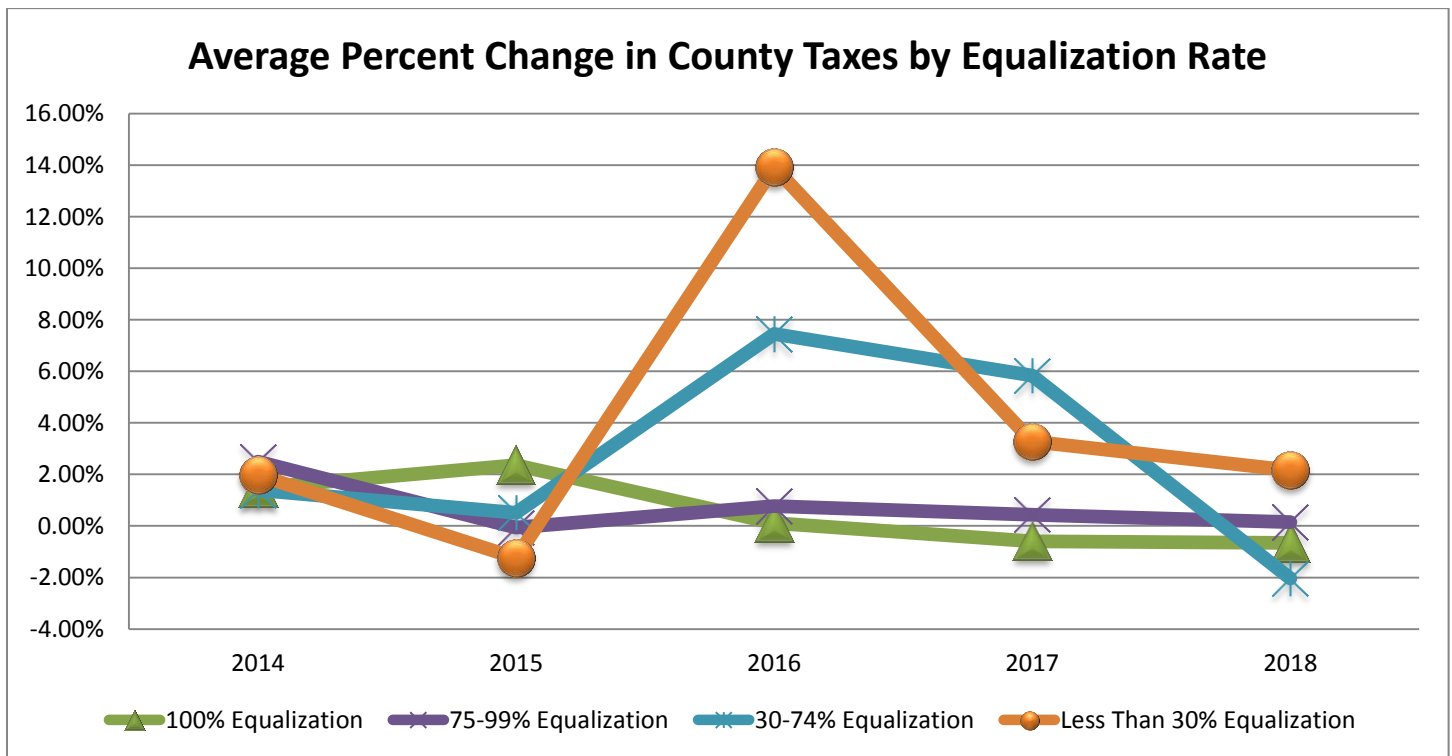
It is our hope that the results of this survey will help expand broadband coverage to residents who currently don't have coverage, improve coverage for those with poor service, and increase the number of service-provider options available.

Our preference is for residents to take the short, online version of the survey as it includes a speed test, so residents can log the actual speeds they're experiencing at home. For those without adequate service at home, a paper-copy of the survey is also available. The online version as well as printable, hard copies of the survey can be accessed at www.steubency.org/broadband. You can help by posting the flyer in your offices, making paper copies available, announcing the survey at your Board meetings, talking to residents about the survey, letting people know they run a speed test for their address, and collecting completed paper surveys at your offices and mailing/delivering them to:

County Manager's Office, ATTN: Mitch Alger
3 E. Pulteney Sq.
Bath, NY 14810
(607) 664-2245

Equalization Data

The County Manager's office has put together an analysis of changes in county property tax share according to the equalization rate of towns. The graph below displays the annual percent change in county property tax share by the following categories – towns with 100% equalization rate; towns with an equalization rate between 75-99%; towns with an equalization rate between 30-74%; and towns with an equalization rate less than 30%. The data clearly shows that the lower the equalization rate, the more drastic the swing in county property tax share year-to-year. In addition, on average for those with equalization rates less than 30%, the percent change in county tax share is much higher than towns with equalization rates near 100%. For reference, the towns with equalizations rates below 30% are Jasper, Lindley, Thurston, and Tuscarora.



Planning Department - Agricultural District Enrollment

The Steuben County Planning Department encourages farmers to enroll their land in an Agricultural District by February 15, 2018.

Agricultural property owner may request inclusion of viable agricultural land not already included in a certified NYS Agricultural District. The property owner must demonstrate that the agricultural land is viable or actively farmed. The property owner must also supply the owner name and tax map number of the property. Only whole parcels are eligible for inclusion. Owner name, tax map number, and agricultural status of the property may be emailed to planning@co.steuben.ny.us or, alternatively, this form may be submitted:

https://www.steubencony.org/Files/Documents/planning/ag_district_303b_addition_request_form.pdf

Requests will be reviewed by the Farmland Protection Board, after which time, the Farmland Protection Board will request Public Hearing and approval by the Steuben County Legislature. Once approved by the County Legislature, the proposal is forwarded to New York State Agriculture and Markets for certification.

The purpose of agricultural districting is to encourage the continued use of farmland for agricultural production. Detailed information about Agricultural Districts may be found here: https://www.agriculture.ny.gov/ap/agservices/Agricultural_Districts_FAQ.pdf.

If you have any questions about enrolling in an agricultural district contact the Steuben County Planning Department, 3 East Pulteney Square Bath, NY 14810, (607) 664-2268, or email planning@co.steuben.ny.us.

Sheriff's Office

On December 7th, the Steuben County Sheriff's Office partnered with the Village of Bath Police Department, NYS Police and NYS ENCON Police to conduct "shop with a cop" and met with over a dozen youth who were in a protective setting due to domestic violence. All youth participating were taken to K-Mart in Bath and shopped with their assigned officer, deputy, or trooper and picked out gifts for their families and themselves. They then all returned to the Steuben County Public Safety Building and wrapped the presents with their assigned police 'elf' and enjoyed a great lunch provided by Arbor Development prior to returning to their temporary home. All gifts were paid for by donations from the various unions and persons involved, including "no shave December" at the Sheriff's Office. On a side note, "no-shave November" at the Sheriff's Office raised almost \$3,000 for cancer research.

On December 10th, Santa Claus came to the Sheriff's Office and provided lunch and presents to over 40 families. A great time was had by all who attended and Santa stated that coming to the Public Safety Building is "the highlight of the season" for him. It is also the only time he gets to ride in a police car with lights and sirens going!

It has been a busy and productive year at the Sheriff's Office, filled with change, reorganization and a renewed sense of purpose. It has been our honor to serve the citizens of Steuben County this year, and in 2018 we look forward to continuing to meeting the needs of our county with Professionalism, Integrity, Leadership, and Service.

Youth Bureau

Like most counties across New York, Steuben continues to strategize to fight "brain drain", a term describing the flight of young professionals out of the region. At the same time, many municipalities and organizations across the county struggle to find leaders willing to "step up" when vacancies arise on leadership boards and other community initiatives. One solution to both issues may be to prepare youth to be ready to fill in when those vacancies arise.

Throughout 2017, the Youth Bureau continued three initiatives designed to develop leadership skills in participating youth:

- The Youth in Government Intern Program (YIG) provided over 30 students with an in-depth look at how the County Legislature operates, as well as many county departments.
- The Steuben Youth Leadership Summit provided 23 students with an opportunity to meet with county and state elected officials, including NYS Senator O'Mara, Assemblyman Palmesano, County Chairman Joseph Hauryski, and County Manager Jack Wheeler.
- The Steuben County Youth Board has appointed four students to serve alongside county officials and community volunteers to advise the Youth Bureau on the needs of county youth, and how to best to address these needs.

The next step for the Youth Bureau is to increase the opportunities for youth to practice their leadership skills. "We encourage communities and organizations to actively involve youth," said Coordinator Bill Caudill. "Our dream is to have youth engaged in town planning and other municipal

boards and more serving on organizational boards. The more they see that they can make an impact here, the more likely they will want to stay and live – and lead - in Steuben County.”

Public Health

Steuben County Public Health continues to offer free radon test kits for residents in Steuben, Schuyler, and Yates Counties. Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that can cause lung cancer. Radon gas is released from soil and can enter homes or buildings. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends the radon level found in buildings be below 4 picocuries per liter of air (pCi/L). Steuben County, along with all of the Southern Tier region and beyond, falls in a high-radon zone where measurements of radon are regularly above the recommended 4 pCi/L level.

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. today according to the Surgeon General, so regular exposure to high levels of radon is worrisome. Radon kits are available to test for the radon level in your house. For accurate results, radon testing must be performed during the time of year when your house windows and doors remain closed, so conditions can be maintained. Fall and winter are perfect testing times.

Radon kits can be obtained at the Steuben County Public Health office free of charge for all Steuben County residents. Stop by to pick up your kit today. More information on radon can also be found by visiting www.epa.gov/radon.

Office for the Aging

Tai Chi for Arthritis is an evidence-based program, clinically proven to help older adults improve balance, flexibility and posture. By incorporating powerful Qigong breathing exercises with gentle Tai Chi movements, it has shown it can reduce the risk of falling by 70%.

Steuben County RSVP has recruited and trained volunteers as certified Tai Chi for Arthritis instructors, who have offered more than 20 workshops throughout the county over the past 18 months, including Bath, Hornell, Corning, Wayland and Howard. These workshops are free of charge for all participants. Older adults who have attended the workshops have reported outstanding results, including an 83.7% reduction in the fear of falling, a 93.6% self-reported increase in strength flexibility and balance, and say they feel less lonely, greater ties to their community and generally happier as a result of taking the classes.

Currently, new classes for 2018 are scheduled to begin in Bath in January and Hornell in February. As the popularity of the workshops continues, new instructors are being recruited and will be trained in April. For more information on how you can incorporate Tai Chi into your new year's resolutions, call the Steuben County Office for the Aging at 607-664-2298.