

# Poughkeepsie Journal

## Myriad problems remain for county to fix

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First — last July, our county's Citizens Advisory Committee on Domestic Violence issued a report endorsing my proposal for expansion of our county's Domestic Abuse Response Team to cover more municipalities than just Poughkeepsie, Beacon, and Hyde Park, yet our county Legislature's leadership has repeatedly not even allowed our Democratic Caucus resolution for this to appear on an agenda for a committee meeting. Considering the massive \$57 million county fund balance just revealed, why not?

Second — the Poughkeepsie Journal reported recently that "the number of accidental drug overdose deaths in Dutchess County jumped 31 percent from 2014 to 2015. Last year, there were 59 accidental drug overdose deaths investigated by the county's medical examiner's office...."

GOP Broome County District Attorney Steve Cornwell, this February, announced that his office was launching a new Operation S.A.F.E (Save Addicts From Epidemic) program with Republican Broome County Sheriff David Harder to send drug addicts there to treatment to save lives and prevent crime with this statement: "Our goal is to save lives by getting those addicted to drugs into treatment, and in doing so, we will clean up our streets. If you're in treatment, you're not stealing from family, neighbors or businesses, or committing other crimes."

Jefferson County and Cooperstown here in New York, and more than 100 other municipalities across the U.S. have now joined Gloucester, Massachusetts Police Chief Leonard Campanello's Police Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative to sensibly ensure treatment instead of incarceration for drug addicts ([www.PAARI.org](http://www.PAARI.org)).

Dutchess needs PAARI, so back in February I submitted a resolution to our county Legislature's offices for this to happen, but it hasn't been allowed on to the agenda for a committee meeting.

Instead, Dutchess County District Attorney William Grady bizarrely spoke publicly at the podium during a March County Legislature meeting on his strong preference for his jail-first, treatment-later approach at our county jail for 29 inmates charged with nothing more than "criminal possession of a controlled substance" — not charged with dealing or any violent acts (why?).

Finally, the conservative Heritage Foundation's Romina Boccia was spot-on in her testimony before the U.S. Senate last June: "Corporate welfare or crony capitalism is a destructive force that undermines public trust in the institutions of the free market and in government itself" (from

"Corporate Welfare Wastes Taxpayer and Economic Resources". The libertarian Cato Institute also notes that taxpayers shell out \$100 billion a year for corporate welfare).

Here in Dutchess, taxpayers spend \$40 million annually in corporate welfare to subsidize poverty wages paid by large corporations locally. A May 2015 University of Connecticut/Jobs with Justice report from Dr. Diane Simmons found this to be true here, extrapolated, because of government benefits local taxpayers have to pay for when those companies' employees need them to supplement low wages.

It's a cruel joke that workers in New York City will be paid \$15 per hour in three years, and workers on Long Island and Westchester will be paid \$15 per hour in six years, while in Dutchess we have to wait five years for the minimum wage to increase to the full amount from the recent "deal" to only \$12.50 per hour, holding back economic revitalization (remember, 70 percent of our economy is driven by consumer demand).

Wake up, Dutchess — there's nothing but a lack of political will to end that \$40 million annually in corporate welfare paid by county taxpayers here, and get a living wage sooner rather than later for local workers on the same time schedule as workers in New York City. But it means holding the GOP accountable for cutting an atrocious "bargain" on this (It's time!).