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Public Comment

Sullivan County Legislature – Full Board

July 20, 2023, at 11:00 a.m.

Good morning.

I am Martha Scoppa from Liberty.

I am also a member of the Senior Legislative Action Committee.

I remain disappointed that the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding allocated to Sullivan County during COVID was used for paving County roads and upgrading the heating and cooling system at our community college. This legislature had the opportunity to use ARPA funds to compensate front line workers but chose not to do so. Instead, County money was used to distribute \$500 checks that, after taxes, were a piddling thank you to the workers who put their health and lives on the line. The ARPA funding was used for “fiscal responsibility” when it could have been used to aid County residents in need of mental health assistance, housing assistance, and necessities like food and transportation. Residents were in great need at that time because of the COVID shutdown, but ARPA money was not spent on the people. It was spent to fortify the bottom line.

Although fiscal responsibility is important, it is also important to take care of the people of Sullivan County by providing programs that meet human needs and improve the human condition here. Our health ranking is abysmal and could have used some of the available 14 million in ARPA dollars. Instead, we trudge along with bare minimum staffing at Community Services and Public Health Services, and we have an opioid crisis.

I believe that we must help our fellow man. Although it is wonderful to acknowledge the great work of the County Treasurer’s Office, the balance annual budget prepared by the County Manager and the Fiscal Staff, and the work of this legislature, I believe that residents of Sullivan County are being short-changed.

This is most apparent at the Adult Care Center at Sunset Lake which is currently managed by Infinite Care. This legislature had heard repeated Public Comment about the low staffing there and the inadequate care, but nothing is done. Did you know that there is no Activity program? Did you know that one of the dining rooms has been converted into a physical therapy area? Have you seen the recent Medicare.gov ranking of one star and red icon warning of abuse at the facility? This legislature is long overdue for a diligent review of the conditions there. The residents had better care when the Adult Care Center was run by the County.

Please take a hard look at the Sunset Lake LDC (Local Development Corporation). Please take a hard look at the Certificate of Need application by Infinite Care to the NYS Department of

Health. Please take a hard look at the nursing home itself. Go there and see for yourself how it has changed.

Remember that the creation of the Sunset Lake LDC was to protect taxpayer dollars, yet hundreds of thousands of dollars are now paid in taxes annually. In the past, with a deed held by the County, the facility was tax-exempt.

I am not advocating a Pollyanna budget, but I do hope you will consider people, your constituents, when you vote to spend money.

Thank you.