



# **Lehigh County Annual Report for Citizens 2016**

Citizens of Lehigh County:

It is my pleasure as **your** County Executive to provide you with the County's second "Annual Report for Citizens". My goal is not to bury you in financial details but to provide you with a better understanding of what **your** County does and a brief overview of finances. The county's detailed budget—over 800 pages—is always available online but is better suited for auditors than the average citizen.

Working for you for over 11 years now--first as Director of Administration and now as County Executive--it has become obvious that what County government does is a mystery to most citizens. The fact is that the majority of **your** County's tax dollars are directed to areas I've labeled as "Law & Order", covering functions that are there for your protection but relatively invisible until you need them. Two great examples are the 911 center, which addressed over 300,000 emergency calls in 2016, and the Regional Crime Center, which helps law enforcement throughout the County identify and capture criminals.

Another critical function of **your** County is to return as much funding as possible from Harrisburg and Washington to provide the services required by our citizens, particularly those with needs such as the mentally disabled, senior citizens and at-risk children. Those funding streams represented well over half of our total budget in 2016, while County real estate taxes accounted for 27%.

Unfortunately, the game plan both Harrisburg and Washington have resorted to more recently is to pull back on funding directed to counties and municipalities while the needs for services continue to grow. Those legislators feel good about their tax efforts while ignoring the actual net impact on the citizens.

Fiscally, **your** County is sound, as confirmed by enhanced ratings from both Moody's and S&P over the past several years, and **your** County's infrastructure is sound and more modern than is the case in other counties across the state. Importantly, **your** County's tax rates remain low because we have worked hard to reduce the amount of "government" and focus on the most important issues. As a result, the average taxpayer's County tax bill for 2016 was \$668.

Overall, Lehigh County—*your county*—is enjoying good times. Companies see it as *the* place to be. Unemployment is down, real estate prices are rising and construction has picked up in all sectors. Tax incentives for developers tend to inspire animated debates but the palpable change in Center City Allentown and the bustling Hamilton Crossings shopping center, both adding hundreds of jobs, speak to what can be done when government participates in economic development.

Growth is necessary, but I've learned that we all want where we live to be as it was when we first arrived and that's why there is broad concern about distribution centers consuming farmland, not to mention the truck traffic they bring. I'm delighted that we were able to commit \$2 million per year for the next three years to re-energize our farmland preservation program, which is already one of the most successful in Pennsylvania with over 22,000 acres preserved. Partnering with municipalities on preservation is a significant recent enhancement of our program.

But, *your* Lehigh County also has issues. We are in the midst of a drug epidemic, too many of our children are not getting the education they need to realize their potential, a growing number of citizens are living near or below the poverty level and the number of citizens over age 75 and in need of support is growing dramatically. These issues all put added pressure on County government—greater in the long term if left unaddressed now. I know “entitlements” is a term often used for these areas but I've learned that “investment” may be the more accurate term. *Your* County government is committed to “investing” in these issues and to fighting for the support needed from others to succeed.

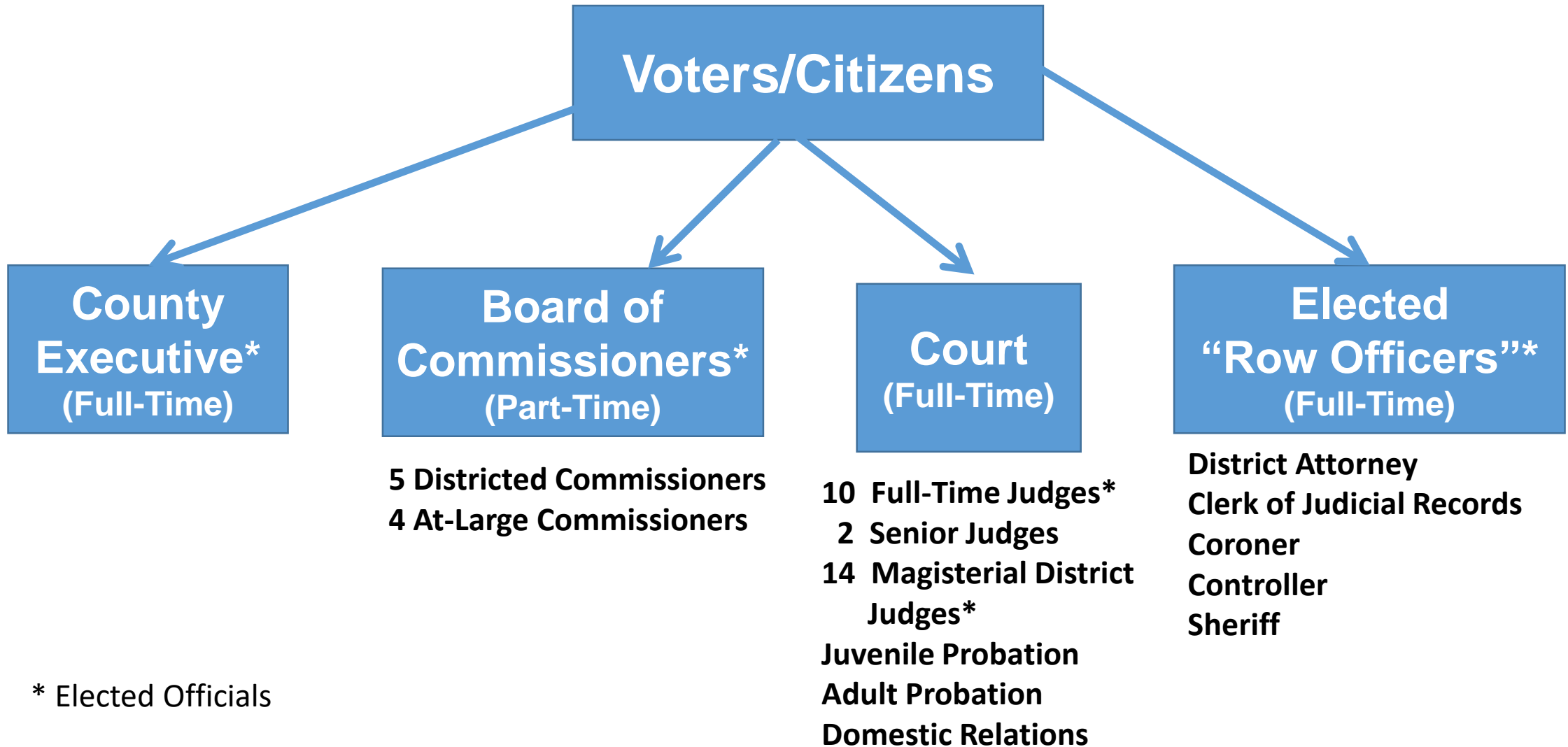
I hope you have a very good 2017 and I thank you for the trust you have put in me.

Tom Muller  
*Your* Lehigh County Executive



**Lehigh County Government**

(Home Rule Charter Since 1978)



## 2016 Financial Highlights

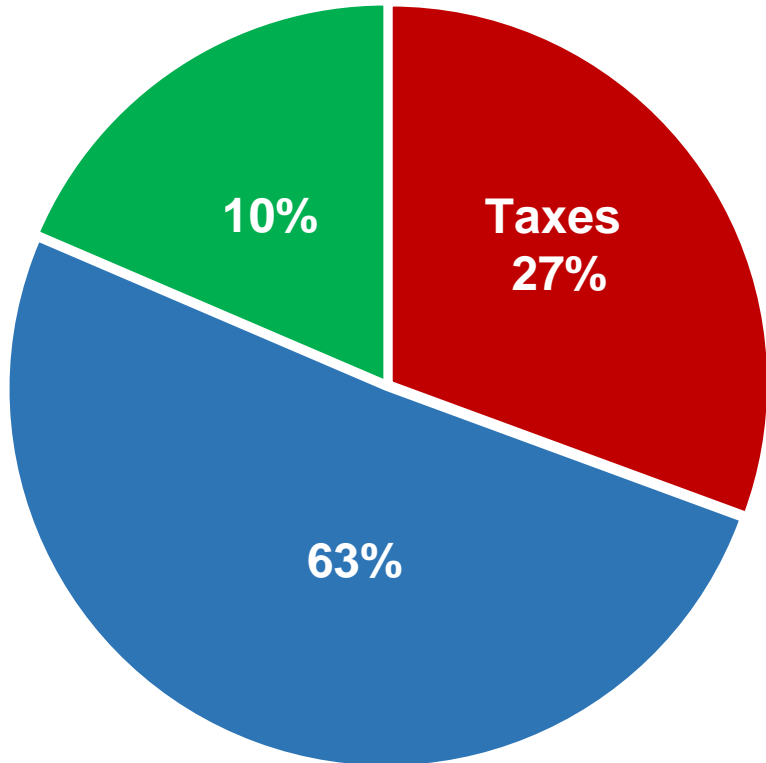
➤ Revenue exceeded budget by 0.1% and expenses were 4.2% under budget

|                     | Budget        | Actual        | Difference    |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| County Tax Revenue* | \$105,977,324 | \$106,082,551 | +\$105,227    |
| County Tax Spending | \$109,510,139 | \$104,907,180 | (\$4,602,959) |
| Deficit/Surplus     | (\$3,532,815) | +\$1,175,371  | \$4,708,186   |

\*Includes delinquent tax revenue from prior years

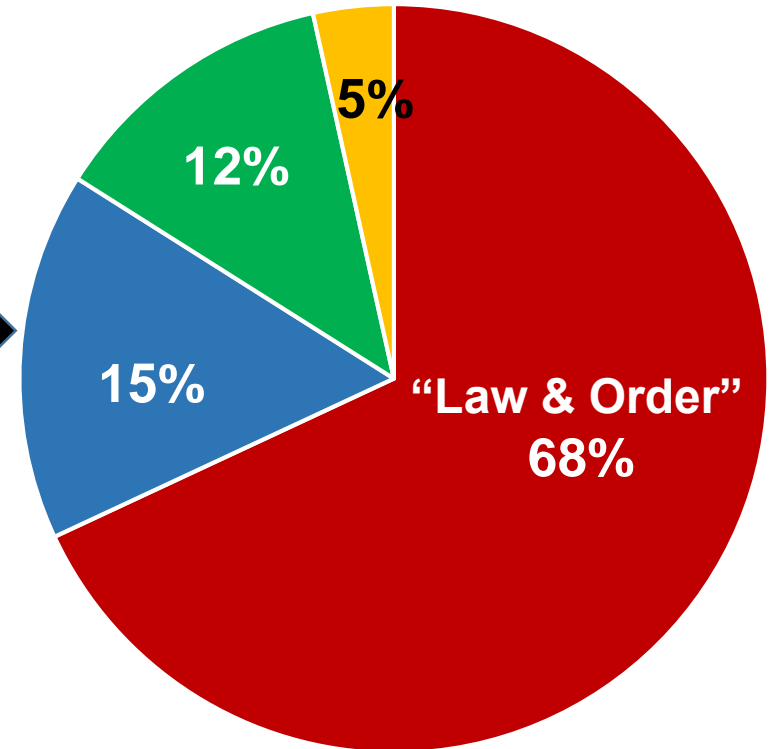
# Your County Tax Dollars

## 2016 County Revenues



- County Real Estate Taxes
- Grants & Reimbursements
- All Other

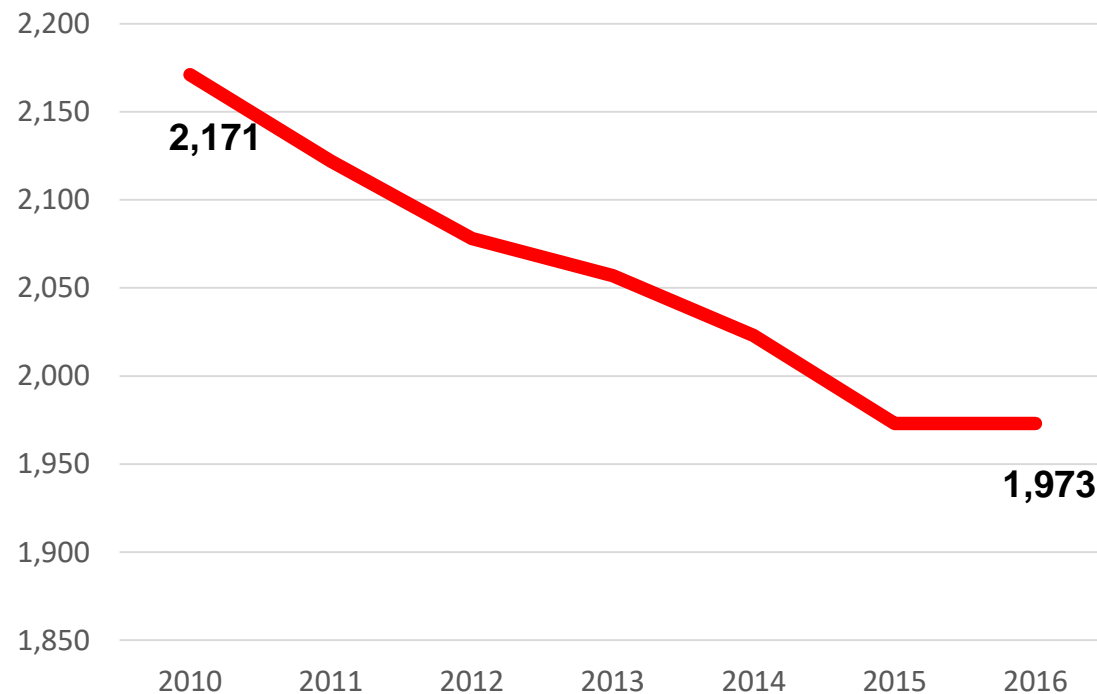
## 2016 County Tax Dollar Spending



- "Law & Order"
- Debt Service
- Retiree Costs
- Other

## County Personnel Count

In 2016, the County personnel count remained flat—the first year without a decrease since 2009. With a focus on public safety, the critical “Law & Order” areas now represent just over 40% of the County’s workforce.



Note: The personnel count was 2,200 in 1990 and 2006

| “Law & Order”          | 2006       | 2016       |
|------------------------|------------|------------|
| Courts                 | 305        | 296        |
| Corrections            | 317*       | 280        |
| Sheriff                | 49         | 66         |
| Coroner                | 11         | 17         |
| Public Defender        | 24         | 25         |
| District Attorney      | 52         | 61         |
| Central Booking        | 0          | 9          |
| Regional Crime Center  | 0          | 4          |
| Digital Forensics Lab  | 0          | 2          |
| 911/Emergency Services | 36         | 39         |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>794</b> | <b>799</b> |

\*Includes 49 at the Juvenile Detention Center, which is now mothballed.

## **The Cost of “Law & Order”**

- Includes Court, Corrections, District Attorney, Sheriff, Public Defender, Coroner, 911 Center and Emergency Management.
- The County receives very limited reimbursement for “Law & Order” functions—less than 5¢ of every dollar spent. In 2016, the total cost was \$82.9 million; 80.5% (\$66.7 million) was funded from County tax dollars and 13.1% was recovered through costs and fines.

| <b>County Tax Dollar Spending (\$000)</b> | <b>2012</b>       | <b>2013</b>       | <b>2014</b>       | <b>2015</b>       | <b>2016</b>       |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Courts                                    | \$27,257.1        | \$26,667.4        | \$25,791.6        | \$25,847.9        | \$24,263.5        |
| Corrections                               | 26,552.8          | 27,667.7          | 25,059.8          | 26,156.4          | 26,234.7          |
| District Attorney                         | 4,827.4           | 5,359.8           | 5,437.9           | 5,713.3           | 6,062.5           |
| Sheriff                                   | 4,255.6           | 4,350.0           | 4,523.3           | 4,523.2           | 4,731.4           |
| Public Defender                           | 2,142.6           | 2,217.9           | 2,262.2           | 2,334.1           | 2,436.1           |
| Coroner                                   | 1,657.8           | 1,718.6           | 1,708.4           | 2,056.3           | 2,162.3           |
| 911/EMS                                   | 221.7             | 173.0             | 1,429.5           | 1,125.6           | 806.9             |
| <b>Total Tax Dollars</b>                  | <b>\$66,915.0</b> | <b>\$68,154.5</b> | <b>\$66,212.7</b> | <b>\$67,756.7</b> | <b>\$66,697.4</b> |



## **2016 Criminal Justice Stats**

- A total of 4,738 new cases were filed, up 1.3%% from 2015, and 836 cases were reopened.
- A total of 5,526 cases were disposed, with 60.6% in guilty pleas and 35.4% receiving Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition—a program primarily for first-time offenders of lesser crimes to avoid punishment and eventually get their record expunged.
- 19.9% of incoming prisoners required psychiatric evaluation and an average of 31.1% of the jail population was prescribed psychotropic medication
- The County's Pre-Trial Services unit arranged for the release of 1,674 individuals without pre-trial supervision, thus providing significant cost savings relief versus incarceration. Of those 1,674, 421 were diverted to mental health treatment.
- 85% of new commitments to the Corrections system were male and 15% female.
- 66.6% of prisoners had been sentenced, reflecting the concerted efforts to reduce pre-trial detention time.

## **District Attorney**

In addition to effectively and fairly prosecuting adults and juveniles convicted of crimes, the office of District Attorney, **Jim Martin**, has created task forces for specialized investigations for areas such as Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, Auto Theft, Insurance Fraud and Drug Offenses.

The office also includes the following units which are not generally found in counties across the State:

### **Central Booking**

Located in the County Jail facility, this unit enables police officers to drop off individuals they arrest for booking, drug testing and arraignment via video with Magisterial District Judges. The unit helps get officers back to their posts quickly, which is particularly critical for our smaller municipalities. The unit operates profitably due to charges authorized by the Court and there is no chargeback to municipalities.

### **Regional Crime Center**

Known more formally as the Regional Information & Investigation Center (RIIC), this unit is the only one of its kind at the county level in the State and its staff has access to extensive data bases not accessible to local law enforcement officials to provide assistance and guidance in criminal investigations. Its value is particularly high in dealing with investigations crossing municipal or even county borders. Northampton County is now participating in the center.

### **Officer David M. Petzold Digital Forensic Lab**

Named after a fallen Upper Saucon Township police officer, this unit on the DeSales University campus is staffed by officers from municipalities who are trained to examine any electronic equipment, including phones, involved in a criminal investigation. The unit is funded by the David M. Petzold Foundation and the District Attorney's forfeiture funds and the space is donated by DeSales University. Recently the unit played a key role in the identification and arrest of a suspect in a murder via mobile text records.

## **Sheriff's Department**

- Under Sheriff **Joe Hanna**, the department provides security for County buildings and all court rooms, transports adults and juveniles who are under custody, serves/processes warrants, issues gun permits and processes real estate sales as directed by the Court.
- In 2016, the department served processes for 11,215 civil cases, 2,061 family court and “Protection from Abuse” actions and served 1,933 criminal warrants and 913 domestic relations warrants.
- The department also issued 6,440 gun permits and processed 584 real estate sales.
- In 2016, transport activity included 10,854 adults transported to court and 1,879 inmates transported to Federal or State prisons or jails in other counties.
- Transports also included 35,893 miles to transport 516 juveniles to and from detention centers in Berks and Lancaster counties due to the mothballing of our juvenile detention center, which is providing the taxpayers with a net savings of over \$750,000 annually.

## **Department of Corrections**

- “Corrections” includes the Lehigh County Jail in Allentown, the Community Corrections Center (aka “Work Release”) in Salisbury Township and the outsourced incarceration of juveniles.
- The average daily jail census in 2016 (1,113, including 189 in the Community Corrections Center) is the lowest it’s been since 1998 and included an average of 449 probation or parole violators. The average length of stay was 70.1 days.
- Approximately 22% of all commitments required medically supervised detoxification.
- Corrections also held 68 individuals for other jurisdictions at a profitable rate, which helps offset overall Corrections costs.
- The average daily number of youths being held was 7.12—less than half of what it was five years ago and all at out-of-county centers—further validating the 2014 decision to mothball our own juvenile detention center, which once held over 30 youths.

## **Juvenile Probation**

- Department staffing includes 49 full-time employees including 11 Supervisors managers, 26 Probation Officers, 7 Probation Aides and a support staff of 5.
- The department utilizes sophisticated and proven evaluation tools to determine the best-suited probation supervision and direction for each juvenile. The goal is to prevent any additional offenses and set that individual on a course toward productive adulthood.
- In 2016, the department had 967 referrals, a decrease of 24% from 2015, and 82.6% of youths completed supervision without re-offending.
- A total of 149 youths were detained in 2016—a reduction of 12% from 2015--and 106 were placed out of their homes.
- Juveniles under the supervision of the department completed 12,508 hours of community service and the department collected \$74,856 in restitution for crime victims.

## **Adult Probation**

- The Adult Probation Department consists of 9 Supervisors, including the Chief and Deputy Chief, 34 Probation Officers, 6 Probation Officer Aides, 5 part-time Probation Officers and a support staff of 5.
- In 2016 the department supervised 5,867 individuals; DUI, property and drug offenses accounted for 70% of the cases.
- 253 offenders received a sentence of house arrest/electronic monitoring, thereby avoiding incarceration and saving the taxpayers money.
- At Christmas, the staff donates presents to families who otherwise wouldn't be able to celebrate the holidays.
- For over 25 years, the department has run a golf tournament with all proceeds going to families with children battling serious medical conditions.

## **Public Defender**

- The Public Defender is recommended by the County Executive and appointed by the Board of Commissioners. **Kim Makoul** became the first full-time Public Defender in County history with her appointment in 2014.
- The staff includes 19 attorneys, 2 investigators and 4 administrative assistants, supplemented by contracted professionals as needed for cases.
- The Public Defender's office provides free representation to individuals who can't afford a private attorney. That representation continues throughout the entire judicial process, including appeals.
- The office also represents juveniles in delinquency matters and individuals in involuntary mental health commitment proceedings where representation is constitutionally required.
- In 2016, the office opened 5,342 adult cases, 586 juvenile cases and 549 mental health commitment cases and filed 36 appeals.
- The office handles 80-85% of all adult criminal cases and approximately 95% of all juvenile cases.

## **Domestic Relations**

The County is reimbursed for two-thirds of all expenses for this critical function, which covers the broad range of family issues and can often be both volatile and critically sensitive. In 2016.....

- There were 11,172 active support cases.
- This unit was responsible for support collections of over \$47 million.
- There were 4,411 support conferences and 5,169 contempt conferences conducted.

## **Judicial Records**

- Functioning within the Court system, the Clerk of Judicial Records, **Andrea Naugle**, and her staff oversee a wide range of civil and criminal court filings, record all deeds, open administration of estates, probate wills and process passport requests.
- The department is the result of the consolidation of three departments in 2008 which reduced staffing from 68 to 46 employees (almost one-third) and helped offset a significant decrease in fees during the recession.
- In 2016, passport activity increased by 500 to 4,000; the County earned \$25 per passport for total 2016 revenue of \$100,000.
- 2016 activity in both Deeds and Wills increased versus 2015; the department turned over \$28 million in inheritance taxes to the Commonwealth and earned \$158,000 in commissions (up from \$145,000 in 2015).
- Also in 2016, the department's newly-opened Civil Division E-Filing jumped to almost 20% of all filings.
- The Criminal Division, in conjunction with the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, has instituted a scanning project this year which will allow individuals to view criminal files on the statewide computer program.

## **Controller's Office**

- The Controller's office, under Controller **Glenn Eckhart**, is responsible for protecting the taxpayers' money by performing independent, internal audits of County operations, particularly the processing of funds.
- In 2016 the department provided oversight for over 40,000 vendor payments totaling over \$181 million and 19,000 pension payments totaling almost \$30 million.
- In addition to auditing internal operations, including the 14 Magisterial District Judge offices, the department conducts audits of hotel taxes and maintains the County's ethics hotline for anonymous concerns regarding any County operation or employee.

## Coroner's Office

Operating from the County's Medicolegal Center built in partnership with Cetronia Ambulance Corp and under the direction of Coroner **Scott Grim**, the Coroner's Office once again dealt with a record number of investigations. For the second consecutive year, drug-related deaths increased by over 30%. Of those deaths, 92% of the victims were between 20 and 59 years old, 62% were male and 78% were white. Unfortunately, the 2017 pace is running ahead of 2016 at this time. The good news for 2016 was a significant drop in motor vehicle deaths.

|                         | 2014  | 2015  | Change | 2016  | Change  |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|---------|
| Natural Deaths*         | 2,592 | 2,804 | +8.2%  | 3,911 | +39.5%  |
| Field Investigations    | 869   | 907   | +4.4%  | 907   | NC      |
| Cremation Reviews       | 2,288 | 2,456 | +7.3%  | 2,538 | +3.3%   |
| Autopsies               | 244   | 260   | +6.6%  | 298   | +14.6%  |
| Suicide Deaths          | 73    | 77    | +5.5%  | 87    | +11.5%  |
| Homicide Deaths         | 12    | 15    | +25.0% | 15    | NC      |
| Drug-Related Deaths     | 88    | 117   | +33.0% | 157   | +34.2%  |
| Motor Vehicle Deaths    | 71    | 81    | +14.1% | 64    | (21.0%) |
| Other Accidental Deaths | 242   | 288   | +19.0% | 298   | +3.5%   |

\* Deaths certified by physicians also get referred to the Coroner's office but require no field investigation

## **Department of Human Services**

<https://www.lehighcounty.org/Departments/Human-Services>

Human Services helps people navigate through crisis or chronic situations where external help and guidance are needed for them to move forward with their lives and rediscover their personal power and self sufficiency. Services are designed to assist people in a variety of difficult life situations

Aging & Adult

Mental Health

Drug and Alcohol

“HealthChoices”

Children and Youth

Intellectual Disabilities

Early Intervention

Integrated Services

| \$000             | 2011        | 2012        | 2013        | 2014        | 2015        | 2016        |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Budgeted Expense  | \$174,592.4 | \$169,293.5 | \$136,918.3 | \$133,787.6 | \$136,569.6 | \$147,488.5 |
| Local Tax Dollars | \$6,505.8   | \$5,855.8   | \$5,865.7   | \$5,857.4   | \$5,481.6   | \$5,488.7   |
| % of Local Match  | 3.7%        | 3.5%        | 4.3%        | 4.4%        | 4.0%        | 3.7%        |

***80% of all Human Services funds go directly to client services.***





## **Department of Human Services**

Demand increases annually; funding from the State doesn't.

- In 2016 there were **1,469** reports of suspected child abuse, with **124** substantiated. In 2015 the numbers were 1,297 and 105.
- There were **477** reports of elder abuse and **215** reports of adult abuse (ages 18-59). In 2015 the numbers were 338 and 121.
- There are **827** individuals with Intellectual Disability Waiver Services and over **330** receiving Family Support Services.
- The "HealthChoices" program pays nearly \$1.3 million in behavior health medical claims each week.
- There were 4,383 referrals to the Mental Health Crisis Intervention Unit. Over 70 police officers have received crisis intervention training.
- In just the past six months, more than 1,200 individuals have been authorized for Drug & Alcohol services and there have been 57 confirmed drug overdose deaths already in 2017, outpacing last year's record.
- Over 1,600 citizens have been trained in youth mental health first aid to learn warning signs and risk factors and provide immediate assistance in both crisis and non-emergency situations.

***Over 78,000 County citizens received some form of DHS funded service!***

## General Services

In addition to handling farmland preservation and partnering with the Conservation District, the Department of General Services is responsible for the maintenance of all County-owned buildings and land. That includes:

- 47 bridges—41 solely owned by the County, 3 jointly owned with Northampton County and 3 jointly owned with the City of Allentown. The County has been committed for years to address any bridge identified as needing work or replacement and has gotten strong support from PennDOT.
- 15 parks
- Over 4,200 acres of recreation space
- Over 40 miles of trails



Link for Parks & Recreation: <https://www.lehighcounty.org/Departments/Parks-And-Recreation>

Link for Lehigh County Sports Field Association\*: <http://lcsportsfields.org/>



\* Operates the County-owned sports fields on Broadway in South Whitehall Township

## **Cedarbrook Nursing Homes**

<http://cedarbrookseniorcare.com/>

- 670 licensed beds
  - > South Whitehall: 473 licensed beds
  - > Fountain Hill: 197 licensed beds
- Rated 5 stars by Medicare  
<https://www.medicare.gov/nursinghomecompare/profile.html#profTab=0&ID=395465&state=PA&lat=0&lng=0&name=CEDARBROOK%2520NURSING%2520HOMES&Distn=0.0>
- Cedarbrook is open to all Lehigh County seniors in need of long-term skilled nursing care and to parents of County residents needing skilled nursing care.
- Management is provided by **Good Shepherd**.
- The County Administration and Board of Commissioners are currently reviewing a number of options involving the renovation of the South Whitehall facility, a possible addition to that facility and even the possibility of constructing an entirely new home. A final decision, which will require significant bond financing, should be made this Summer.
- No additional skilled nursing beds have been licensed by the State in Lehigh County since the late 1990's so the responsibility for seniors in need will increasingly fall to the County as the population ages. Due to inadequate reimbursement from the State, the County experiences a net loss on each Medicaid resident. We continue to lobby the State to address this inequity.



South Whitehall



Fountain Hill

## **Cedarbrook Nursing Home Financials**

➤ The State's reinstatement of the Intergovernmental Transfer program helped eliminate the need for an infusion of County tax dollars to support Cedarbrook in 2016.

| <b>\$000</b>            | <b>2012</b> | <b>2013</b> | <b>2014</b> | <b>2015</b> | <b>2016</b>        |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Gross Expenses          | \$59,648.2  | \$59,586.3  | \$57,853.7  | \$57,154.2  | \$57,522.8         |
| Retiree Costs           | 5,518.0     | 6,276.7     | 5,963.7     | 6,349.1     | 6,281.1            |
| Debt Service            | 1,178.2     | 813.5       | 839.1       | 779.2       | 327.9              |
| Operating Expenses      | \$52,952.0  | \$52,496.1  | \$51,050.8  | \$50,025.9  | \$50,913.8         |
| State IGT               | 0           | 0           | 0           | 0           | \$1,977,660        |
| County Tax Contribution | \$5,618.0   | \$4,994.5   | \$3,106.1   | \$1,597.8   | <b>(\$1,022.7)</b> |
| Daily Census            | 654         | 632         | 625         | 623         | 624                |
| % Medicaid              | 84.7        | 85.3        | 88.2        | 88.6        | 89.3               |

**Note:** State reimbursements for Medicaid residents do not fully cover costs, which is why many private nursing homes are reducing Medicaid beds despite an ever-increasing demand.

## **Support for Veterans**

- Under the District Attorney's office, the Veterans Mentor Program assigns volunteer mentors to work with veterans who have committed lesser offenses and would be best served through mentoring. To date the program has served 75 veterans through the invaluable efforts of 26 volunteer mentors.
- Created in March, 2015, the Lehigh Valley Homeless Veteran Task Force has permanently housed 59 veterans with another 15 previously homeless veterans in transitional housing.

In 2016, the County's Veterans Affairs department.....

- Filed 186 VA claims resulting in awards of just over \$2.6 million
- Assisted in securing the property tax exemption for 57 veterans who were 100% disabled
- Filed Temporary Assistance Grant requests to help pay bills such as rent, utilities and car repairs for 16 veterans experiencing a temporary loss of income
- Distributed over 31,000 American flags for placement on veterans' graves before Memorial Day
- Distributed \$71,400 in burial benefits to the families of 741 eligible veterans and spouses
- Participated in numerous veteran events to show support, provide information and generally reach out to Lehigh County veterans

## **Lehigh County Information Sources**

Lehigh County Website: [www.lehighcounty.org](http://www.lehighcounty.org) Phone: 610-782-3000

Address: 17 South 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Allentown, PA 18101

Borough/Township Information: <https://www.lehighcounty.org/Community/Boroughs-Townships>

County Executive, Tom Muller: [tommuller@lehighcounty.org](mailto:tommuller@lehighcounty.org)

Director of Human Services, Kay Achenbach: [kayachenbach@lehighcounty.org](mailto:kayachenbach@lehighcounty.org)

Director of General Services, Rick Molchany: [rickmolchany@lehighcounty.org](mailto:rickmolchany@lehighcounty.org)

Director of Community & Economic Development, Frank Kane: [frankkane@lehighcounty.org](mailto:frankkane@lehighcounty.org)

Board of Commissioners E-mail Address: [commissioners@lehighcounty.org](mailto:commissioners@lehighcounty.org)

Board of Commissioners Website: <https://www.lehighcounty.org/Departments/Commissioners>

Aerial Tour of Lehigh County: <http://media.lehighcounty.org/LehighCountyStateoftheCounty.wmv>

Video Tour of Lehigh County:

[http://www.elocallink.tv/m/v/player.php?pid=Q6xAzA14&fp=paleco\\_welrev3\\_iwd](http://www.elocallink.tv/m/v/player.php?pid=Q6xAzA14&fp=paleco_welrev3_iwd)



## **Other Websites of Possible Interest**

- Lehigh Valley Planning Commission: <http://www.lvpc.org/>
- Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation: <http://www.lehighvalley.org/>
- Discover Lehigh Valley (Tourism): <https://www.discoverlehighvalley.com/>
- LANTA: <http://www.lantabus.com/>
- Lehigh Northampton Airport Authority: <http://www.flylvia.com/public-info/board-governors/lnaa-meetings/>
- Lehigh County Authority (water & sewer): <https://lehighcountyauthority.org/>