



News from Livingston County

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Livingston County Website Ranks #1 for Transparency

Sunday, March 12th kicked off Sunshine Week, the annual campaign in March to highlight open records laws and public access to government information. The effort was started by newspapers 12 years ago to promote transparency in government. As part of this year's Sunshine Week, reporters in the USA Today Network graded New York county websites (excluding the New York City boroughs) for transparency.

According to the USA Today audit, websites were given scores out of 14. They received two points for showing budgets, public meetings, information about officials, and public records. They received one point for information about audits, lobbying, taxes and contracts.

Only seven counties had complete or partial information in all nine of the categories that the USA TODAY audit examined: Cortland, Erie, Genesee, Livingston, Madison, Nassau and Westchester. Livingston and Nassau were the only sites to obtain a perfect score of 14!

The *Democrat & Chronicle* reported that the categories USA TODAY Network reporters and editors used to assess the available information on the 57 county websites outside New York City included the availability of:

1. Budget documents, preferably several years' worth to enable comparisons.
2. Meeting information including agendas and minutes.
3. Contact details for elected officials.
4. Contact details for administrative officials.
5. Access to public records (including how to file Freedom of Information requests and access to building and zoning permits).
6. Access to financial audits.
7. Contract information, including bids and contracts for purchases from vendors.
8. Information about lobbying associations the county is connected with or lobbyists the county has retained to advance its interests.
9. Comprehensive tax information, including historical property tax data and school tax rates.

Reporters found Livingston County's website to contain easily accessible information related to all of the above categories.

PRESS RELEASE – Livingston County, (March 14, 2017)

"Livingston County Government is continuously striving to maintain open and transparent government systems. Keeping information flowing and easy for the public to access is a priority", stated County Administrator Ian M. Coyle.

The County has also been working on growing its social media presence. Along with the website, the public may access information via Facebook and Twitter to find updated and relevant information regarding their local government. Activity and followers are up over 50% versus early 2016. Future plans for further development of open government in Livingston County include the use of video and live streaming for County meetings and a formal website refresh in summer 2017, creating an even more accessible interface for the public.

"This report verifies to the public the commitment this Board has made to making public information accessible on the web. Whether we are talking about viewing audits, collective bargaining agreements or minutes of meetings, the overarching theme in Livingston County is transparency and we say 'let the sunshine in' to our County residents" commented Chairman Eric Gott.

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