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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | FEBRUARY 2, 2017

Mayor Madden Delivers 2017 State of the City Address

TROY, NY – Detailing the importance of fiscal accountability, neighborhood revitalization and civic engagement, **Mayor Patrick Madden** reaffirmed his optimistic outlook for the future of the Collar City during his second State of the City Address delivered at Troy City Hall on Thursday night.

Reflecting on the Troy's shared accomplishments, Mayor Madden outlined the challenges ahead while celebrating the achievements of 2016, including the bipartisan efforts which helped stabilize the city's finances, the continued investment and redevelopment efforts underway across the community, and presented new initiatives and proposals he believes will strengthen neighborhoods, encourage economic development and support the continued rebirth and reinvention of Troy as a 21st century city.

Full text of the 2017 State of the City Address as prepared for delivery:

Council President Mantello, members of the Troy City Council, and our distinguished county, state and congressional representatives: thank you for joining us this evening.

I would like to thank you all for your service. Public service is not an easy or comfortable undertaking. But in a functioning democracy it is a necessary undertaking. An effective democracy requires that we all show up – that we all participate. These individuals, however, have taken the extra step. They made the sacrifice to serve. They put in long hours, neglected their family and friends, wrestle with difficult decisions, and can never make more than about 50 percent of the people happy at any given time. I offer my gratitude to each and every one of you.

Finally, I'd like to thank each of you in attendance. Thank you for showing up; for investing your time in the city. Many of you have attended meetings with me over the past year, whether it be neighborhood meetings, church meetings, house meetings or my budget workshops. You have invested your time. You have been thoughtful and engaged, you have prodded and challenged my thinking, you have done exactly what you should be doing – participating in governance. I hope you will all continue doing that in the years to come. You are making a difference.

Each year, the Mayor stands before the city to celebrate our community's successes and discuss the year ahead. When we began this journey together a year ago the difficulties facing our city were daunting. We knew that confronting these tasks would not be easy.

During last year's address I spent a good deal of time speaking, in general terms, about the fiscal challenges we were facing. I predicted that we would have difficult decisions to make between taxes and services. And I promised that I would approach that in an open and honest fashion and that I would provide opportunities for your input. We came into office with a budget that was structurally unbalanced, years of withering criticism by the NYS Comptroller regarding our budgeting practices and a fair degree of uncertainty as to where the City's finances actually stood. All of this was further complicated a few months later by the sudden and unexpected death of Joe Mazzariello. Joe had served as the City's Comptroller for 40 years

and was the repository of an enormous institutional memory. Needless to say a good bit of my first year was spent on the City's finances.

Though we are not nearly done with this work I am heartened by the progress made.

- The 2017 budget was a budget based on facts, not gimmicks, not hopes or wishes. It is the first structurally balanced budget that does not rely on one-shots or fund balance appropriations in a decade.*
- We addressed all of the previous shortcomings noted by the Office of the State Comptroller. In addition, 29 capital accounts, some dating back more than 10 years, were fully reconciled and audited. We now have confidence in our numbers and know exactly where the City stands financially.*
- We have provided quarterly financial reports with analysis not just to the Council but to the public by way of postings on our website. We also hosted public meetings to discuss the first and second quarter results.*
- We hosted three finance workshops in September the purpose of which was to educate the public as to our City's finances and the unique challenges we were facing.*
- I attended seven neighborhood meetings, 2 church meetings and 2 house meetings for the sole purpose of sharing information on our finances and the 2017 budget.*

My administration is committed to fact based budgeting devoid of the political calculations that led us to where we are today. We are also committed to sharing that information and being challenged on the numbers we put forth. We will continue and expand on that effort in 2017. It is your money and you ought to know how it is spent.

To say last year's budget process was challenging would be an understatement of enormous proportions. And it is probably fair to state that no one was overjoyed with the outcome. That was not unexpected. We had to make up for years of politically expedient decisions that understated expenses, overstated revenues and relied on our fund balance to cover over the deficits. We had to right the ship and it was urgent that it be done immediately. The final product – a bipartisan effort – included both a significant tax increase and substantial spending cuts. As I said, it was no one's first choice, but it was necessary to stabilize our finances. It was the result of many compromises that were difficult for each of us to make. I would like to extend my thanks to those who rolled up their sleeves and made this happen. We were elected to do the right thing for the City, even when it is difficult. And you all showed great courage in doing that. Thank you.

Despite the fiscal challenges with which we wrestle the optimism about Troy continues to grow. We continue to witness private investment throughout the City.

- In 2016 we issued building permits for \$98,000,000 worth of construction, an increase of 44% over last year*
- We attended 23 ribbon cuttings in 2016. These are all small businesses which have proven to be the nation's strongest employment engine. These interactions led to the region's very first Small Business Summit organized by our Economic Development team, hosted by the Tech Valley Center of Gravity, with a second annual program planned for later this year.*
- We recently celebrated the ribbon cutting on the conversion of the old School One into apartments,*
- The conversion of the old Troy Record Newspaper building on Broadway is underway,*
- Two separate hotel projects are currently in planning phases,*
- St. Peter's Health Partners is investing \$99M in the expansion and reconfiguration of Samaritan and St. Mary's Hospitals,*
- The Tapestry on the Hudson, the conversion of the long vacant warehouse at 599 River Street is nearing completion,*
- Two proposals were made to us for the reuse of the 1 Monument Square site both of which would contribute to the growing vibrancy of our downtown,*

- *Franklin Inn and Suites is nearing the completion of an expansion of their hotel facility to accommodate a growing demand,*
- *The old Haskell School, long a blight in Lansingburgh is now under new ownership with plans to convert it into housing,*
- *A total of 93 buildings on our vacant building registry in 2016 were repaired and reoccupied.*
- *These and a number of other projects getting underway are indicative of an optimism about Troy's future backed up by significant financial resources. And importantly, the bulk of this investment is not in the downtown. It is occurring across our city. We are witnessing the spread of enthusiasm about Troy from our downtown to our neighborhoods.*

Across the board our staff has stepped up to the challenge of a new administration and new priorities. I've already spoken of the great work of our Finance Department.

We've also been busy with enforcements.

- *In 2016 we issued 6,400 code violations, an increase of 23% over 2015,*
- *Trash citations in 2016 increased 164% over 2015,*
- *Traffic citations in 2016 increased 17% over 2015, with a resulting decrease in traffic accidents of 9%.*

In 2017 we expect to be deploying handheld technology to assist our Code Enforcement Officers. That, coupled with the addition of a 3rd sitting City Court Judge should bolster our ability to undertake even faster enforcement.

In 2017 we are also looking to revive a civil enforcement program that was operated to great effect in prior administrations. This initiative blends the Police Department, Codes and Department of Public Works to target pockets of blight in our neighborhoods.

In 2016 in partnership with the Land Bank we were able to demolish 12 vacant and terribly blighted buildings. In total 35 vacant and deteriorated buildings were removed from our neighborhoods in 2016.

Staff worked with the Council, most notably Councilman McGrath, to amend the process by which we sell property we acquire through foreclosure. The changes ensure a more open and transparent process, a better financial return to the City and created a better enforcement system to ensure that the property is used as was proposed by the purchaser.

One of the most important responsibilities of government is ensuring the safety of our residents. In 2016 our streets were safer. Violent crime was down 14% over 2015 while property crimes were down 16%. These reductions far surpass those of other Capital Region cities and are a testament to the skills and determination of our police force. Looking forward to 2017, our grant writer will be working closely with the Department to secure funding for School Resource Officers and Community Policing Initiatives. Preventing crime is always preferable to solving crime and the SRO's and Community Police by virtue of their close connection to community members add considerably to our ability to head off crime before it occurs. Let's make the reduction we saw in 2016 the beginning of a trend.

In 2016 the Fire Department successfully secured a number of grants to fill out its ranks and ensure that all of our firefighters are certified paramedics. When that is achieved later this year the residents of Troy can take great comfort in the knowledge that there are certified paramedics within a couple minutes of their home 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

I ask you now to join me in thanking the men and women of the Troy Police and Fire Departments for making our City safer.

The proposed closing of our pools sparked a very constructive dialogue in the community regarding youth programming and services. This led to the exploration of a Youth Service Commission to coordinate and promote existing opportunities while leveraging additional resources. A preliminary meeting was held just two days ago under the leadership of Deputy Mayor, Monica Kurzejeski. We recognize the dearth of opportunity for many of the youth in our City and are committed to working in concert with our community partners to explore opportunities for positive growth experiences for our young people.

Last year at this time much was said about infrastructure on the heels of the water main break in Troy's Lansingburgh neighborhood. Shortly after, a sewer line on Campbell Avenue collapsed revealing a serious problem with that line. Those failures should serve as stark reminders to all of the precarious nature of our infrastructure. Like many other upstate cities across New York, century old pipes spread like spider webs under our streets. In most cases there is no warning before a failure. It just appears. While we have taken steps to address those incidents we need to be focused on a proactive program that heads off future catastrophic failures. Our water plant and distribution system are a gift left us by preceding generations. We have a moral obligation to maintain that system to ensure its viability to succeeding generations. We will advocate aggressively for State funding for that purpose. Regardless of that outcome this is a matter that will deserve our attention in years ahead.

Through the support of Senators Schumer, Gillibrand, and Congressman Paul Tonko, the City of Troy was able to secure \$13M in federal funding through Federal Emergency Management Agency. This critically important funding will enable our city to strengthen and improve nearly 7,750 linear feet of seawall along our city's western border. Construction will start this year and is anticipated to be completed in 2018.

A 21st century city requires an embrace of new technologies which benefit not only our environment, but our wallet as well. In January, the city's long-planned solar energy project began installation of a 2.1 megawatt solar array on several city facilities. We expect this to be up and running within a few short months generating recurring savings on our energy bills.

Another long planned project, the South Troy Industrial Roadway is now moving ahead. Having secured the additional necessary funding earlier this year surveying for the road bed has begun to be followed shortly thereafter by property acquisition.

As I stand here this evening and speak about our accomplishments and our goals I need to be clear that none of this gets done but for the dedication and effort of our workforce. In the face of long expired contracts, a shrinking workforce and aging equipment and infrastructure they are fully committed to serving the public. They are a constant source of ideas on how to cut costs and improve service delivery. They step up in a big way in times of crisis. They work daily to produce the accomplishments that I get to talk about.

At the risk of leaving out some who also deserve recognition I would like to single out for special attention the contributions of my first Corporation Counsel, Kevin Glasheen. In all my years I have never known anyone to work as many hours and as diligently as Kevin. Constantly under tremendous pressure Kevin remained the consummate professional and gentleman. Although Kevin retired Tuesday he continues to come in to ensure that his successor gets up to speed quickly.

It is without exaggeration that I tell you that this City owes Kevin a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid. On behalf of all of the residents of Troy I ask you to join me in thanking Kevin for his tremendous contributions to the City.

The first 100 years of Troy's history was one of wealth and prosperity. We were at epicenter of much of this country's early growth, driven by manufacturing and our location at the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk rivers. We built great buildings and institutions. We invented, and manufactured, things. The second hundred years brought a reversal of fortune as the jobs left

and the highways to the suburbs were built. Like so many northeastern industrial cities, Troy couldn't find its place in the economy of the 1900's.

Now, after nearly a century of decline and disinvestment, we have entered a period of rebirth and reinvention. Like a sleeping giant, long-dormant factories have sprung to life, transformed into centers of commerce and housing. Revitalization efforts across our downtown have strengthened the attraction of urban living, electrifying our downtown as a great place to do business in the Capital Region. This renaissance has long-held the promise of spreading the energy and excitement throughout our neighborhoods. And as I have noted that is starting to happen now. That energy is here, and that day is now. There is a strong sense of optimism about Troy.

Today I stand before you not only confident in Troy's future and our collective accomplishments of the last year but also in defiance of the cynical outlook which has harmed our city in the past.

The progress we have made in Troy is thrilling. Even more exciting is the knowledge that working together, we are going to do so much more. And when I say working 'together', I mean precisely that. The ability of city government to achieve our goals arises from the interest and involvement of the citizens of Troy. Without that we risk chasing the wrong dreams and falling into the mediocrity that sometimes afflicts government.

I have heard it said that "democracy is not measured by its leader doing extraordinary things, but by its citizens doing ordinary things extremely well". I believe that. And by extension I do believe that the resurgence we are experiencing in Troy is the not product of our elected officials.

Rather, the credit belongs to all of you.

It belongs to those who participate in our many neighborhood organizations and civic groups.

It belongs to the investors and small business owners who have invested their dollars and their sweat here in Troy.

It belongs to the rich fabric of non-profits that serve our spiritual, intellectual and physical needs.

It belongs to the homeowners who show pride in their homes.

In short it belongs to all of those who recognize that problems present opportunities and who take it upon themselves to create solutions instead of waiting for someone else to do it.

I want our citizens to be as excited about the possibilities for our city as I am. I want them to feel the ownership. Our shared ownership of the future. I am more determined than ever to make this City a model of success of which the people of Troy can be proud. It is my goal to convert your noblest aspirations into practical realities. I invite you all to join us in making Troy better than it ever was.

We are Troy NY and we are in this together.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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