



STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS 2021

Delivered by
Mayor Patrick Madden
Thursday, February 4th, 2021

Hello, and thank you for tuning in to this special virtual presentation of the 2021 State of the City Address. A year ago, I stood before you to deliver the 2020 State of the City Address. I spoke of the achievements of the prior four years: balanced budgets, investments in our infrastructure and our neighborhoods, and the continued revitalization of the waterfront. And I spoke with great optimism about the future of our City and the specific and ambitious plans for 2020.

At the time no one could have predicted what lay around the corner. Within weeks of last year's address we were confronted with a global pandemic that threw our lives into unprecedented upheaval. Our schools and businesses closed...at first for two weeks and then two more, until the weeks turned into months.

Our businesses struggled to stay viable. Our students struggled with the new concept of remote learning. Local families struggled with the loss of jobs and income to cover the essentials of food and housing. We all struggled with how to keep ourselves safe from a microscopic enemy whose most predictable characteristic was its unpredictability.

On the municipal level we grappled with providing our full array of City services while doing our best to protect the health of our workforce and their families. Just as many of our residents and businesses did, the City suffered considerable loss of revenue while we were called on to spend more in response to the pandemic. While we were not always able to meet the standards we set for ourselves, the City continued to function and services continued unabated. This was only possible because time and time again, our employees rose to the challenge.

They staggered shifts, many adapting to working at home. They covered for each other, worked extra hours, and modified holiday and vacation plans. They balanced their work responsibilities and their home-schooling responsibilities. And they took seriously the steps necessary to mitigate the spread of the virus. From the earliest days of the pandemic our employees worked hand in hand with the administration to ensure the continued delivery of essential services to our residents.

On behalf of all of the residents of the City I'd like to thank them for being so accommodating in the face of this unprecedented year of challenges.

Throughout the year we also witnessed acts that demonstrated our residents' sense of community; that they really did feel as though we were all in this together. In the early days, neighbors, residents and families helped sew masks when none were to be had commercially. Throughout this pandemic, people came forward to help distribute food to those in need. Our rich network of non-profits launched new programs to feed and clothe those in need and to provide safe and structured outlets for our youth. Local businesses and restaurants donated food and supplies to organizations that could in turn share with those in need. In a time of national divisiveness, Troy again proved its passion for community.

Vaccination efforts continue to ramp up, but make no mistake: this virus remains a serious threat to the health and financial well-being of our community. With variations and mutations of the virus appearing on a near weekly basis we could be in for several very difficult months. How difficult they will be depends on each and every one of us.

We are smarter about this virus than we were last March. We know the importance of wearing masks. We know the importance of social distancing and avoiding crowds. We know the importance of washing our hands. Measured against the loss of more lives and economic impact on our small businesses these practices are only a minor inconvenience. I urge you all to continue strong adherence to those measures science tells us will mitigate the spread of this virus. And when it becomes available to you I would also strongly encourage you to take the vaccine. Do it for your family, do it for your neighbors, and do it for our community.

Financial Oversight

As the pandemic bore down on us it quickly became apparent that it would have a financial impact on the City, though throughout most of the year it would remain impossible to quantify. We experienced sizeable reductions in State Aid and departmental revenue such as building permit fees as construction slowed and parking fees which we waived to assist those working from home. We also anticipated the loss of sales tax revenue as the economy slowed.

Several steps were taken to counter this loss of income. These things that we would ordinarily avoid became necessary under the extreme circumstances. We appropriated funds from the surplus we had accumulated over the prior years. We bonded capital projects that we had planned to pay for out of the general fund. These measures were only possible because of the steps we had taken over the preceding four years to strengthen our financial position.

We also curtailed spending as much as possible enacting a hiring freeze except for the most essential positions and deferring expenditures until our finances recovered.

There is no question that the steps we had taken in our first four years got us through 2020. Without our fund balance, without the ability to go to the financial markets on favorable terms we would have been looking at significant reductions in staffing and services last year.

With the election behind us and a new Senate and White House administration in place, I am hopeful that another relief bill will include assistance to localities such as Troy. To that end I am in constant communication with our federal representatives in DC to advocate on behalf of our community.

In developing our 2021 budget we took full account of the lingering financial impacts due to the pandemic and worked to address anticipated revenue shortfalls without laying it on the back of the taxpayers. The result was our fifth balanced budget. Having passed with bi-partisan support the 2021 budget continues our discipline of crafting budgets that do not rely on one-shots for recurring expenditures and which are based not on hopes and wishes but on verifiable facts and reasonable trend projections. Though thin, the 2021 budget is realistic, achievable and remained under the tax cap.

The 2021 budget also continues our focus on important investments in neighborhoods improving the quality of life for Collar City residents while preserving essential services & staffing levels.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Council for their partnership and cooperation in approving this year's spending plan.

Despite the challenges the pandemic laid on us this past year we were able to advance several important initiatives and projects in 2020 and lay the groundwork for several more in 2021.

Infrastructure

As promised at this time last year, construction commenced in 2020 on the long awaited South Troy Industrial Roadway. Decades in the planning, this roadway is intended to remove heavy truck traffic from the South Troy Neighborhood while opening up long fallow lands along the river for redevelopment. The first phase of the road, from Main to Monroe Streets has been completed. Preparations for phase II are now underway to extend the road to Adams Street and reconnect with River Street south of downtown.

With the completion of Phase I, work is underway to establish an official truck route in the neighborhood to direct trucks off of the residential streets.

I would like to recognize and thank the Federal Highway Administration for funding this project, New York State Department of Transportation and Capital District Transportation Committee for allocating the funds for construction, and Commissioner of Planning Steve Strichman and City Engineer Aaron Vera and their staff for their work on this project. Finally, I'd like to especially acknowledge the residents of South Troy for their advocacy and support throughout this long process. Hang in there South Troy....we're getting this done.

Last summer, we celebrated the completion of the Troy Seawall Stabilization project, a multi-year, \$25.6M effort to restore the City's downtown seawall that was damaged by Hurricane Irene. With assistance from Senator Schumer roughly 50% of the cost of this project was covered by FEMA.

The project repaired approximately 3,500 linear feet of seawall from the north end of the Hedley Building south to the Monument Square site. These repairs stabilized our seawall, helping to protect vital infrastructure and build a foundation for further revitalization of our waterfront, including the new marina, expansion of Riverfront Park North, and the new riverfront trail.

Today, I am excited to announce that FEMA has recently authorized an additional \$11.4M in mitigation funds to further support the cost of this project. This means the project is now 90% covered by grants, greatly reducing the burden on our taxpayers. We are extremely appreciative of this assistance from FEMA and for their support throughout the project. I also want to recognize Deputy Mayor Monica Kurzejeski and Project Manager Todd Dickinson for their efforts in overseeing the project to successful completion.

With the seawall project complete, we moved forward with the construction of the Riverfront Park North extension which adds a Riverwalk north to the Marriott Hotel. This included a trail behind Dinosaur BBQ, restoring a public vista that Troy lost in the 1980's.

Simultaneously, we completed the construction of our new marina & docks. The Marina will be fully operational for the 2021 boating season, and we look forward to welcoming back boaters from across the Capital Region to Troy later this year.

Less visible, but certainly no less important: last April, the Department of Public Utilities completed the final section of sewer line upgrades beneath Campbell Avenue. In total, approximately 2,600 linear feet of sewer line was replaced or relined on Campbell Avenue between Thomas Street and the Campbell Avenue Bridge. This multi-year effort ensures the long-term reliability of our sewer infrastructure network.

Later this year, just up the road, we will be commencing reconstruction of the Campbell Avenue bridge over the Wynantskill creek. This project, 90% funded by the BRIDGE NY Program, will replace an aging structure ensuring a safe route between Troy's eastside and south side as well as destinations in Albany. We'll take this opportunity to replace aging water and sewer infrastructure traversing the creek at that location as well.

In 2020, installation of 1,400 linear feet of 30-inch storm water line beneath the northernmost section of the Uncle Sam Bike Trail in the Lansingburgh neighborhood was also completed. This project is critical to our ongoing efforts to reduce and eventually eliminate the periodic sewer overflows and improve the health of the Hudson River as part of the Albany CSO Pool Communities' Long-Term Control Plan. It will also alleviate seasonal flooding in the adjoining neighborhood. As part of the project, over a half-mile of the bike trail between Northern Drive and Cemetery Road was repaved to improve biking and walking on the historic rail trail.

Later this year, we will break ground on the first phase of a major water line replacement project between the Tomhannock Reservoir and the City's Water Treatment Plant. During phase 1 of the project, two 36-inch diameter pipes totaling 43,000 linear feet will be installed (that's over 8 miles). Phase 1 construction is scheduled to take between 18 - 24 months to complete.

This will be one of the most consequential and important infrastructure projects the City has undertaken since the water treatment plant was built over half a century ago. These lines provide over 21 million gallons of water daily to over 135,000 customers in Troy and eight other communities in Albany, Rensselaer, and

Saratoga counties. It is an ambitious but crucial project that will preserve the reliability of the City's water infrastructure network for another 200 years.

The city has been awarded a \$10M grant from NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation, with additional funding approved by the City Council. I want to thank our partners on the City Council for their support, NYS EFC for their assistance in securing the necessary grant funding, and the Department of Public Utilities for their work to make this project a reality.

Bids have been received, and construction should commence this spring.

Economic Development

Investments in infrastructure are always expensive and many times unseen. But they form the basis, figuratively and literally, upon which a City is built. Our commitment to responsibly maintain our infrastructure gives confidence to those seeking to invest private dollars in our community. Whether it be a homeowner, a small business owner or a large commercial developer, investors are drawn to reliability.

Despite construction shut downs in late spring, this past year saw the completion of several large renovation and new construction projects including:

- 444 River Lofts on River Street(74 units),
- Incite Apartments on King Street (52 units),
- Vicina Modern Urban Flats on the corner of 4th and Congress Streets (80 units plus commercial),
- 257 River Street (16 Units), and
- Old Brick Warehouse on River Street (80 units)

Together these projects consist of 302 apartments and represent over \$60M of investment.

It is worthy of note that this investment is happening across the City, including 701 River Lofts in North Central, the conversion of the former St. Augustine School in Lansingburgh, and demolition and redevelopment of the Taylor Apartments in downtown Troy.

The Taylor Apartments redevelopment project is a partnership with Troy Housing Authority and Pennrose to redevelop the vacant Taylor Apartment towers. This multi-phase, multi-year project includes not just the demolition of Taylor 1 & 2, but also the total redevelopment of all former and existing Troy Housing Authority facilities along the waterfront.

The project will accommodate all existing Taylor Apartment residents and will also provide new modern workforce housing for Troy families. Demolition of Towers 1 and 2 is anticipated to begin later this year. Included in this vision for a new waterfront south of downtown is the reorientation of the River and Ferry Streets intersection. Construction of the Congress Street Bridge severed the previous traffic route between downtown and the City's southern neighborhoods. It also drove a highway through the heart of a public housing community. It was a bad design and our intention is to mitigate some of its most undesirable impacts.

Restoration of River Street will support further expansion of downtown south, increase connectivity between our neighborhoods and the waterfront, and link up with the new South Troy Industrial Road.

Preliminary designs which are much more compatible with our streetscape have been completed and an application for funding was just recently submitted to NYS.

Steady progress continues on the redevelopment of the One Monument Square site. This past August, the City was awarded a \$1M Economic & Infrastructure Development grant from the Northern Border Regional Commission to assist with relocating water lines, and the installation of storm water separation and sewer infrastructure on the site. This essential work will prepare the site for development by our project partner Hoboken Brownstone. Thank you to the NBRC, New York State Department of State, Congressman Tonko, and our state & federal partners for their continued support of the Monument Square project.

In October, demolition of the former Leonard Hospital in Lansingburgh was completed. This 140,000 sq. ft. vacant and abandoned former medical facility is located on New Turnpike Road. For over two decades, this property has negatively impacted quality of life and property values in the Lansingburgh neighborhood. The safe and responsible removal of this building is a victory for nearby homes, families, and businesses, and an important step that will help create new opportunities for investment, growth and vitality to Lansingburgh. The hospital's time capsule was also recovered from the site during the demolition, and has been donated to the Hart Cluett Museum. Materials found in the capsule will be processed and catalogued for display later this year.

Parks, Recreation & Amenities

While sound investment in infrastructure gives investors and homebuyers the confidence to invest in a community it is the amenities and quality of life characteristics that give them the will to invest. Parks, green spaces, cultural amenities all make important contributions to the quality of life in Troy.

Public swimming returned to Troy last summer with the reopening of the South Troy Pool after a multi-year renovation effort. After significant structural and mechanical issues caused the pool's closure in 2017, we secured the necessary funds to renovate the entire site to improve safety, increase accessibility, and add decades of life to the facility. Assemblymember John McDonald was instrumental in securing state funds to help complete the necessary budget.

Renovations included a new roof and skylights, electrical upgrades, plumbing, and changing rooms in the facilities building, replacement of the pool's pump and filtration system, repairs to the concrete pool walls and installation of a liner and gutter system, new concrete decking, exterior fencing, and installation of a pool lift to provide access for individuals with disabilities. The splash pad facility was also restored. We look forward to welcoming back swimmers and families for many summers to come.

I want to thank Deputy Mayor Kurzejeski, Project Manager Todd Dickinson, and Parks & Recreation staff involved with reopening this facility. I also want to acknowledge the partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Capital Area for their assistance and contributions to prepare the staff and site for the 2020 swimming season.

In July, we celebrated the opening of our first-ever disc golf course in historic Prospect Park. Developed in partnership with the City Planning Department and local disc golf players & volunteers, the course is an exciting addition to our community. This is the first public disc golf course in Rensselaer County, and one that will draw thousands of players and visitors to our community this spring & summer. Importantly, it's an outdoor activity that can be done in a socially-distant manner. Plans are now underway for creation of an additional 9 holes that will be accessible from Downtown Troy. The course is free to use, but you will need to bring your own disc.

Construction is substantially complete on the 7th Avenue Park renovation project. Located at the intersection of 7th and Ingalls Avenues, this beloved neighborhood park was long-overdue for an upgrade. The redesigned park features two new basketball courts, a spray pad, new bathroom facilities, new playground equipment, pavilion, new fencing, and lights. We had hoped to have this park open in time for last summer but the pandemic related shutdown closed factories that were producing needed components. It will be ready for this summer season and it will have been worth the wait.

One-third of the total project cost will be covered by City funds, with the balance raised from private foundations including the Troy Redevelopment Foundation as well as state grants sponsored by Senator Neil Breslin and Assemblyman John McDonald. Additional funding from the One Troy anti-poverty initiative will be used toward surveillance cameras and lighting near the park. Thank you to all our partners and supporters who helped make this project a reality.

Working with the City Council we have set aside \$2 million in 2021 to make upgrades and improvements to several of the City's smaller neighborhood parks. Located across the City these smaller parks are easily accessible and provide recreational opportunities for our younger children. Upgrades are expected to include updated playground equipment, fencing and lighting.

Troy's seven miles of Hudson River waterfront remains one of our most valuable natural assets. During the last five years, we have worked to redevelop underutilized land along the river creating recreational amenities like parks, trails, and waterfront access areas to better connect families and neighborhoods to the river.

Building on last year's progress to expand pedestrian and bike trails throughout the city, planning is underway to extend the Riverwalk behind the Marriott Courtyard from Riverfront Park North along the river's edge up to the Hoosick Street Bridge. From there it is our plan to extend it further north to the Ingalls Ave Boat Launch.

In 2021, partnering with the Troy IDA and the Lansingburgh Neighbors, we will start the design of the Lansingburgh portion of the Riverfront Trail, first identified in the Lansingburgh Village Plan. This latest expansion to Troy's bike and pedestrian trail network along 1st Avenue in north Troy will run between 111th and 123rd Streets, creating a direct link between historic Powers Park and eventually to the Waterford Bridge and the Empire State Trail. This project will create a safe corridor for recreation, with scenic river overlooks at roughly one-block intervals, on City owned land.

Construction of the Lots of Hope park, a new ADA accessible neighborhood pocket park at 2nd & Jackson Streets was completed last year. Formerly a litter strewn vacant lot the neighbors rallied to turn this eyesore into a neighborhood amenity. The City invested CDBG funds into a design of the neighbors' making. The park features benches, accessible tables, trees, a basketball court, bike rack, and space for a small stage.

This was a great collaborative effort between the City and the Osgood/South Troy Neighborhood Association. In November, we celebrated the completion of the Franklin Alley Revitalization Project. This was a major revitalization effort in the heart of our historic downtown to create outdoor dining options and support opportunities for programming. A long neglected alleyway was transformed into a unique and intimate public space, featuring new lighting, sidewalks, and public art inspired by Troy's history and people.

Sustainability

Despite the challenges posed by COVID, our efforts to improve our management of solid waste continued in earnest.

We deployed new litter patrol officers to address illegal dumping and hold irresponsible property owners accountable.

Our textile recycling program, first launched as a pilot project in 2018, will be expanded in 2021. Students from Troy Prep and New Visions are working with the City to develop creative online-based learning opportunities and promotional materials to help promote the availability of this service and the types of materials that can be recycled. Students will also help develop plans for additional textile bin locations across the community.

We're in the final steps of the process to reopen the Alamo facility to the public this year. A variety of services will be available onsite, including disposal of leaf bags, stump and branch drop-off, mulch pick-up, pallet pickup and other opportunities during specific days each month.

This past holiday season, the City partnered with BSA Troop 2526 to collect broken or non-working holiday lights as part of a citywide recycling program. The project was a huge success, with an astonishing 1,249 pounds of lights collected. I want to acknowledge Tyler Michaels, the scout responsible for organizing the program, his fellow troop members and adult leaders who spearheaded this effort. Their hard work helped divert these broken holiday lights from local landfills and a donation of \$312 to Toys for Tots collected from the recycling proceeds.

In 2020, we saw a modest but consistent increase in our community recycling rate. In order to encourage further recycling, we are offering larger containers, including a 16-gallon and 22-gallon bin with new weatherproof graphic stickers detailing what can be placed in the bin. Increased recycling helps lower tipping fees, reducing overall costs to city taxpayers.

We recently signed a contract with ReCollect, a mobile and desktop app designed to inform residents and businesses about various aspects of our solid waste program. This platform will allow for effective outreach

and education and also act as a clearinghouse for diversion, disposal, reduction, re-use and recycling strategies. The construction of that platform is underway.

Finally, we're continuing to pursue implementation of a Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) program for solid waste collection for 2022. Throwing away less and recycling more each week will help reduce costs for the City and thus our taxpayers. Public outreach efforts to educate the community on the benefits of waste reduction programs like PAYT are planned in the coming months. This is an essential and timely step to address shrinking landfill space.

Many of these efforts are outlined in the City's recently approved Comprehensive Recycling Analysis which identified opportunities to increase recycling opportunities in Troy. I want to acknowledge the work of Tom Abbott, his City Sanitation team as well as City Recycling Coordinator Renee Panetta who is leading our community's efforts to create a cleaner, greener Troy.

Last year I spoke of the start of construction on an array of solar panels located at the former Troy dump. That work has now been completed and will imminently begin producing power. This array consisting of 8,000 solar panels will produce 2.6 megawatts of power. When combined with the 2.1 megawatt array completed in 2018 over 40% of the City's electric needs will be sourced from renewable solar energy. I also spoke of the acquisition and conversion of over 4,000 street lights to LEDs last year. Unfortunately due to COVID related delays that did not occur. This important process remains underway, and we expect to complete the purchase this year.

A number of energy related upgrades to City buildings were completed in 2020 including LED lighting, new roofing, insulation, windows and HVAC replacements in, fire stations, the police station & City Court house complex, parking garages, and various public works facilities.

These investments in renewables and energy efficiency improvements advances two important goals of this administration: saving the taxpayer money and acting responsibly to the generations that will follow us.

Public Safety

The issue of public safety and crime was a significant challenge for our community in 2020. Reversing a years-long trend, 2020 saw an alarming increase in the number of shootings and homicides. Not unique to Troy, communities across the nation are reeling from increasing gun violence this past year and searching for answers that might lead to effective strategies to deter and/or combat increasing gun violence. Every shooting incident was tragic but what was truly unbearable were the young lives impacted on both sides of those guns. This is not acceptable, and we cannot allow it to become the accepted norm in our community. Reversing this trend is not solely a policing issue. We also need the community's help in addressing crime and violence in our City. Stemming this behavior must come from a community response including parents, schools, peer groups, youth support agencies, and other service organizations. Just such a group was formed this summer in response to violence in one of our neighborhoods. Organized and led by residents, the City administration Police and Fire Departments are active participants in these dialogues working to create a safer community.

While the solutions go well beyond law enforcement, our police department, notably the Detectives Bureau, has spared no effort in bringing those responsible to justice. Often working in collaboration with the New York State Police, FBI and other law enforcement agencies, their painstaking work has resulted in arrests in 9 of the 14 criminal stabbings and shootings that occurred in the City last year. The open cases are still under active investigation. In addition, the Department has removed 41% more illegal firearms from the streets in 2020 over 2019.

Beyond day to day policing, the Chief and his leadership team have been engaged in a series of changes in the Department since they assumed their roles. Much work was done this summer to advance those changes:

- We have re-worked our use of force policies making them consistent with the "8 Can't Wait" principles
- The Department's Discipline Policies have been reworked so they link more seamlessly with the newly reconstituted Police Objective Review Board,

- The department achieved re-accreditation in 2020 through the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services. This is an accomplishment only about a third of police departments in NYS have achieved. We have been accredited for 20 years and we completed the re-accreditation process this past summer.
- We reinstated the Emotionally Distressed Persons Response Training (EDPRT), a comprehensive 40 hour training that teaches officers to effectively deal with someone in emotional or mental distress. The news has recounted a number of tragic incidents around the country this year between police officers and individuals in emotional or mental distress. We want to make sure our officers have the right tools for these situations. Our last class was held in December with two more sessions planned for this year. To date about 50% of the Troy Police Department has completed this training.
- We have rewritten policies and procedures for the PORB to ensure that it will be a citizen led initiative and we have recruited new members for the Board.
- We are on the cusp of deploying body worn cameras. The cameras have been acquired and are being configured by the vendor.

Each of these items and accomplishments are necessary and important steps in our work to advance trust and transparency in the community.

Last week, we began our first round of public meetings with the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative (PRRC). The objective of this Collaborative is to develop community consensus on policing strategies and practices to promote public safety, improve community engagement and foster trust for all members of the Troy community.

The Collaborative is comprised of members of the community, including service organizations, clergy, police leadership, and government officials. While this effort will provide a report and work plan for a state mandated deadline of April 1st, it is our intention to make the Collaborative an ongoing workgroup that will continue to look for new, innovative and collaborative strategies to make Troy a more welcoming, inclusive and safe community for all.

I am grateful for the embrace of this important work by the community, the Police Department, and our partners in County Government.

The pandemic created great challenges for both our Police and Fire Departments in 2020. The nature of their work requires regular and close contact with each other and with members of the community. Great effort was made by both departments to ensure continuity of services while keeping their members safe. We are relieved that our community's first responders were early in the line for vaccinations.

The urgent work of meeting the changing needs in the community for emergency services trumped two of the important initiatives I had spoken of in last year's address relative to the Fire Department.

The first is replacement of House 1 in Lansingburgh. Long past its useful life we had hoped to make progress in 2020 on both the design and location of a new house that not only meets the demands of the services we offer in that neighborhood today but also for generations to come. That work stalled as the pandemic consumed our attention and financial resources. In the fall we issued an RFP for design services at the existing location and another location. It is our intention to move this important effort forward in 2021.

Secondly, I had committed in 2020 to study with Chief McMahon the demands on the Department today compared to 20+ years ago when the current structure was established. Much has changed in terms of health care during that period and those changes have impacts on the demands of our department. It is time to consider whether our current structure meets the demands of today and the capacities of the taxpayer. This is important work and so often important work is set aside when urgent work takes precedence. The pandemic created great urgent matters in 2020 but I do look forward to picking up this important work with the Chief in 2021.

As we look ahead to the challenges and opportunities in 2021, I'd like to highlight two addition projects that failed to materialize in 2020.

Last year I spoke of reopening the American Theater in collaboration with Proctors in Schenectady. That has not moved forward. I do understand that there is probably no sector of the economy that was more devastated than those whose essence is to bring people together. Theaters, concert halls, banquet halls and the like are suffering terribly. There are many that will not survive.

As I say this I do not know what the future holds for Proctors but I would guess that their first focus post pandemic will be on restoring existing facilities and programs before branching out further. While I fervently hope this project will someday come to fruition, I cannot say if or when that might happen. It would be an amazing addition to our downtown and I'll continue to try to make that happen.

I also announced last year that we would be putting out an RFQ to prospective developers to assist us in finding a permanent City Hall. That too did not happen. The implications of the pandemic on our finances were not known and could not then have been known. In fact, there still remains great uncertainty. With those unknowns the possibility of actually moving forward became extremely remote. Under the circumstances it was not a prudent time to move the idea forward. A permanent home for City Hall remains an important goal and we will continue to explore opportunities within the prudent approach we are known for when it comes to the City's finances.

Concluding Message

In a number of respects 2020 was a year like no other. The COVID pandemic interrupted our lives in ways we could not have imaged 12 months ago. No one was spared but some suffered more than others. Some of you lost loved ones to the virus, some who were alone at the time of their passing. Others who lost loved ones but not to the virus were unable to gather with family and loved ones, an important tradition that helps us deal with loss.

Some of you lost jobs, some of you lost businesses, and our youth lost precious educational and social development. It will be some time before we fully understand the long term impact of these losses.

This pandemic calls us to action much as the Great Depression and World War II called earlier generations to action. They made painful sacrifices for the benefit of our nation. The sacrifices we are called on to make are not nearly as dramatic. They are mere inconveniences by comparison. But the stakes are just as high.

If we all appropriately wear masks, maintain social distancing, wash our hands, and take the vaccine we could significantly cut future deaths over the next 6 months and, more importantly we would reduce the likelihood of vaccine resistant mutations of the virus from evolving.

Please do your part.

I want to acknowledge and thank the heroic front line staff – the doctors, nurses, paramedics and hospital staff for their sacrifices over the past year.

There is another call to action that rings just as brightly. Precipitated by the senseless death of George Floyd, outrage erupted in communities across our Country this summer. For some the passion and anger came as a surprise. For others it was an “it’s about time” moment.

It should be clear that while this country speaks aspirationally about equality for all, and color blindness and equal opportunity we have fallen well short of those ideals in practice. Various legislative efforts have been made over the years; the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the US Constitution, the Civil Rights Act of 1994, with important but incomplete results. The final frontier in the fight for equality lies largely within the heart and head of each of us. While we are all products of our environment we are also uniquely endowed with the capacity to examine how we are shaped by our environment. We have the capacity to question our subconscious assumptions and our learned biases. The time urgently calls on us to do that. Don't let this opportunity pass us by.

I often conclude my public remarks with a reminder of our shared responsibility in building and maintaining a stronger community. Today that message is more important and relevant than ever. Our City, our State, our nation and our world are grappling with once in a century challenges that have put pressures on each and

every one of us. They will test our resolve, our commitment to values of fairness and unity. I encourage each of us to reflect on what we have achieved and how we can do even more by working together to build a brighter future for our City.

We are Troy, NY and we are in this together.