

Councilman-At-Large Hockenberry, Councilmembers Siegel, Oney, Mazzara, Fuller, Dennison, O'Connell, Rhoades, and Vicchiariello, respective department heads, guests and residents of the City of Port Jervis:

Good evening and 'Welcome' to my third State of The City address. I appreciate the trust you have put in me as your mayor. We live in such divided times that trust in an elected official is very precious. It is something I strive to earn from you every day and do not take for granted. If there is something you have on your mind, something we can approve upon, something we can accomplish, please let us know. We are a small city with limited resources, but every day the men and women of the city government do the best they can to help you, our residents.

2026 will be a year of major growth for our city. In spring we will finally begin one of our major Downtown Revitalization Initiative projects; the Jersey Avenue Streetscape project. Bidding has recently concluded for engineering firms and tonight the council will approve the engineering firm recommended. Shortly thereafter, the design phase will begin, which we expect to take two to three months. We fully expect the demolition of the sidewalks to begin in spring/early summer. This work will be provided in-kind and in-house by our Department of

Public Works. If this project stays on time and on course, it will mean completion late 2026.

This year will also bring into the city an additional 422 acres of property from the Town of Deerpark. This will be in addition to the 565 acres of Boehlmer Park property the city closed on last year. These lands will be added to the city's watershed, which will be expanded to over 2,700 acres. The 422 acres being closed on will be added to the already existing 50-mile Watershed Trail system. In addition to protecting our watershed, these lands will remain as open space and be available for the public to utilize forever.

2025 saw a total of (8) eight grand openings: Dog Pound sports training facility, PJ Food Mart, Hometown Healthcare, Wake Cup, SA Baxter, Bijou Charm Bar, This Chapter bookstore, and Ironhead Records. These businesses are all open and operating today! 2026 already has a grand opening scheduled with Demarino's cannabis dispensary.

The Department of Public Works, under the direction of Director Steve Duryea and Assistant Director Wayne Addy, had a busy 2025. To go "along" with their "normal" day to day operations consisting of garbage and recycling pickup, snow and leaf removal, fleet maintenance, and general upkeep of the city, 2025 saw a very aggressive city street paving schedule which included 18 city streets (most

ever). 2025 also saw the completion of the West End Bathhouse rehabilitation. This project, which was funded through a CREST grant was completed entirely in-house and represents a significant upgrade to a heavily used seasonal facility.

Orange Square Park or Veterans Park, which over the course of two years, has also seen major upgrades. This project has only final painting of the pavilion before formal closeout. A project that showed a tremendous amount of pride is our new splash pad located at Church St Park. This project was funded entirely through Senator Skoufis' office and was also completed entirely in-house except for the concrete coloring. We have no doubt that our community's children will benefit from this project for many years to come. What's to come in 2026 for our DPW? In spring/early summer the city will see the beginning of one of our awarded DRI projects; the Jersey Ave Streetscape project. An engineer has been selected and hired to begin designing this transformative project over the winter months. When the weather breaks for spring, our laborers will begin the demolition phase of this project entirely on Jersey Avenue. Weather and funding permitted, the project will include new sidewalks, street lighting, trees, streetscape amenities and full roadway restoration. We anticipate this project to conclude before winter 2026.

Now that the City has finally closed on the \$20 million dollar loan and officially have the funding and engineering in place, we will see the start of the long-awaited sewer realignment project in spring/early summer. A full construction timeline will

be presented soon. In collaboration with the mayors office, DPW Director Duryea and our city engineers, MHE, the city was granted formal approval to increase our permitted discharge to 2.4 million gallons of water per day. This new city request for permitting process has been two years in the making and the Delaware River Basin Commission finally granted our request for additional water in fall of 2025. I want to thank everyone involved. The water filtration plant rehabilitation project is slated to begin in fall of 2026. This \$3.5 million dollar project scheduled to continue for the next two years will position the city to meet future demands and creates opportunities for major economic development for years to come.

Chief William Worden, Lts. John Fitzpatrick, Chris Sargente and William VanInwegen continue to lead our professional police department. In 2025, the City of Port Jervis Police continued to make significant progress in public safety, community engagement, and professional excellence. The city experienced sustained reductions in both violent and property crime, reinforcing Port Jervis as a safe and resilient community. According to the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Part 1 offenses reached their lowest level since 1980 marking a 17.86% decrease from 2024 and an extraordinary 72.6% reduction since the city's peak crime year in 1996. A landmark achievement in 2025 was the State Accreditation awarded on September 10th in Albany. This distinction place our Port Jervis Police Department among

fewer than 35% of agencies statewide that meet this program rigorous standards. Accreditation standards require compliance with 112 standards across administration, training, and operations. This accomplishment demonstrates the department's professionalism, accountability, and commitment to modern police practices. Some of the programs being implemented by our police department in 2026 include: Social work pilot program-Civilian Service coordinator which will be funded by a \$75,000 grant program to be able to assist and support individuals in crisis and connect community members with essential services, deployment of a Police Drone Unit, enhanced recruitment and strategic staffing initiatives, implementation of the NICHE County Wide records management system.

The Port Jervis Recreation Department led by John Faggione celebrated 30 years of the Youth/Community Center in June 2025. Our Youth Center served close to 6,000 students in 2025. The recreation department oversaw the newly renovated bathhouse at West End beach as well as the newly constructed Splash Pad at Church St Park which officially opened in July. In 2026, we will move ahead with plans to renovate the basketball and tennis courts at Church St Park as well as refinish the hardwood floors at the Youth Center. While the City was in the running with the newly created NYBRICKS program and ultimately unsuccessful, we will

again submit plans for funding a new recreation, senior, community center for our city. It continues to be a priority of my administration to construct a state-of-the-art community center for our residents. 2026 will see 4-5 recreation department sponsored community trips, as well as in conjunction with the Outdoor Club of PJ a reimagined Stone Challenge Adventure Series Race in the watershed property. In 2024, an opportunity was presented to the city by the OC Runners club. After many months of meetings and logistics, we proudly announced, “The Big Orange” 10-mile race. This race was a reimagined take and extension of the famous, “Orange Classic” race. In October of 2025, the race kicked off in our city limits and was an instant success. We look forward to hosting and watching this grow in 2026.

As 2025 ended the city said thank you to Fire Chief Keith Brown. Keith, we thank you for your years as assistant chief and four years as fire chief. The City of Port Jervis welcomed new Fire Chief Anthony Fuller as well as new assistant Chris Southard. The Port Jervis Fire Department under the supervision of these men as well as assistant chief Jeff Lewis commands a department that responded to a total of 484 calls for service in 2025. The department assisted 12 different municipalities over three states for a total of 109 calls. 2025 proved to be a successful year for department grant submissions. The Fire Department was finally able after 7 years to secure the FEMA AFG Grant for a total of \$530,000. The funding was written

for 55 new SCBA's to replace the department's current equipment which is coming to the end of its life expectancy. Additionally, the department received state funding targeting recruitment and retention in the amount of \$25,000. This funding will go towards the department's firefighter health and wellness program. 2026 will have the fire department planning upgrades to its training facility as well as planning for a new fire apparatus which will be 80% funded through Congressman Pat Ryans office.

Our City Clerk's office, led by Clerk Treasurer Stacey Hosking and Deputy Clerk Treasurer Bobbi Jo Muller have the unappreciated job of collecting taxes, water/sewer bills, fines, fees and documenting vital records. Under Clerk Treasurer Hosking direction, the office continues to seek ways to save money, upgrade and update services to assist the public and make everyone's lives easier. Under Stacey and Bobbi Jo's direction, we continue to see a net positive cash flow and a more organized approach to spending our city finances. In 2025, the city finances have been invested in the NYCLASS program. The rewards of this investment program has already paid off for the city, returning around \$100,000 annually. Investments like the NYCLASS program show are finances are sound and we are able to stay under the NYS Tax Cap.

The Building Department, led by Building Inspector Dave Rivera and Assistant Building Inspector Laurie Powrie, work towards helping prospective home and business owners by providing safe and reliable information to help assist and educate them towards achieving their goals. 2025 saw a total of 259 building permits issued. The department also saw a total of 10 demolition permits issued, 6 pool permits and 20 sign permits. 199 certificates of compliance/occupancy were also issued in 2025. 2026 is poised to be a very busy year for our building department who remain a vital component in our quest for economic development.

The Bureau of Fire Prevention led by Fire Inspector Craig Becker has been working diligently to keep our existing commercial properties safe by means of a thorough fire safety inspection program. In 2025, we increased carbon monoxide detection, and reduced fire protection deficiencies in commercial properties. The Fire Inspector has been working closely with the Fire Department to ensure safety and efficiency in the event of an emergency. We have been working with the building department on new projects to increase safety and continuity. The Fire Inspector believes this approach makes Port Jervis reputable to contractors and developers who are seeking to build and renovate.

In March of 2025, we wished our Assessor and long-time city employee Teresa Spradling a happy and healthy retirement. The city didn't have to look far to

find her rightful replacement. Teresa's clerk, Heather Marino would assume the role of city assessor. I am very happy to report that the transition has been seamless. The Assessor's managed to deliver a fair and equitable assessment role through a transition in staffing. Reflecting their continued commitment to accuracy and uniformity. In addition, the office reached a settlement in the centiori case with Orange and Rockland Utilities which, although not ideal, was reasonable under the circumstances. During the past year, the Assessors' office processed approximately 300 property sales, with the median sale prices increasing by nearly 8% in the residential sector and 17.6% in the commercial sector. This reflects continued market activity within Port Jervis.

The Community Development Agency, which is contracted by the City and led by CDA Director Valerie Maginsky, works tirelessly seeking and writing grants for the city. Ms Maginsky also works closely with potential developers, investors and small business owners, helping to find low interest loans and grants to kick start or continue projects within our city limits. The CDA was instrumental in assisting the city re-secure the \$825,000 through Congressman Pat Ryan's office for a new fire apparatus as well as securing \$530,000 through FEMA for much needed SCBA replacement for the fire department. While we did not receive a successful award for the NYBRICKS program, we did learn it was not because of our submission. Our submission did receive a high mark. Unfortunately, the state

ran out of money for the program. As recently mentioned, we will resubmit a new application in 2026. Some of the major city projects the CDA is actively involved in include New York State Homes and Community Renewal Resilient Investments through support and capital (RISC)-study for improvements to the dam at reservoir 1 spillway. Improvements of some \$3.25 Million to the City's water filtration plant upgrades. FEMA Assistance to Firefighters grant of \$533,000 for the purchase of SCBAs which have been delivered and are in service. \$825,000 through Congressman Pat Ryans office towards a new fire apparatus. NYS Department of Homeland Security recruitment and retention award of \$25,000 for our fire department. Phase 1 of project to plan a pedestrian railroad walkway at Fowler and 4th street is in its initial stages.

While the word transformative gets over used in government and I am always cautious to use that word. We will see major yet positive changes in our city in 2026. As you can see and hear in this address, your council and respective city departments are working together and hard for you, the residents. The city continues to be on the right path or trajectory. We have faced challenges, we have made progress, we are moving forward. The work continues, but so does our commitment to one another and to this city. I am proud of where we are and confident of where we are going.