

Councilman-At-Large Hockenberry, Councilmembers Siegel, Mann, Fuller, Dennison, O'Connell, Rhoades and Vicchiariello, Department Heads, guests and residents of the City of Port Jervis.

Tonight, I present to you my 1<sup>st</sup> State of the City Address. As your Mayor, I feel privileged to stand before you tonight. When I look around our City, I see a completely different town than the one I grew up in. Today, many store fronts and vacant buildings are owned and operating with many nearing completion and ready to welcome customers. Economic development and future development will be the focus of this administration. This will not only help with job growth but also ease the tax burden on our residents and businesses and further set our city up for the future. This spring, the Governor's office will begin to award the Downtown Revitalization Project. Both public and private projects submitted to the state were evaluated by our local planning committee. There are 13 projects totaling some \$12M which will be considered for \$9.3M available. The long sought at-grade crossing at Fowler & 4<sup>th</sup> St is

included in the proposed DRI project list. This project is critical to the development of our downtown and Riverside park. While no date has been set yet, we are looking forward to the DMV moving back into Port Jervis. Hopefully we will have more details on that soon.

February 14<sup>th</sup> at 11am in the City Council Chambers will be the hearing regarding the at grade crossing with NYS DOT, Metro North and City of Port Jervis. If the public is willing to speak, write a letter of support or is curious to see how the proceedings progress all are invited to attend.

The Department of Public Works under the direction of Director Steve Duryea and his assistant Wayne Addy continue to work towards saving tax payers hundreds of thousands of dollars by performing work in house for our city. This year will be no different. This year we will see the continuance of the sewer relining project throughout our city in the spring. Orange Square park will undergo much needed rehabilitation to the fountain, electrical upgrades and a newly erected bandstand. Now

that the NYS DEC has issued the city a permit to perform work, this spring the DPW will begin the process of Dam removal in Chris Marion Park. This is all in addition to an aggressive paving schedule that will begin in the fall. The talented men and women of the DEW will also continue their regular duties which include water filtration, catch basin maintenance and cleaning, garbage pickup, snow and leaf removal, as well as regular maintenance on the city wide fleet of vehicles.

Chief William Worden, Lts John Fitzpatrick, Chris Sargente, William VanInwegen continue to lead our highly trained and professional police department. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week these men and woman who are sworn to protect, proactively police our town to prevent crimes and rapidly solve complex investigations. UCR Part 1 crimes reported the 1990's historically represents the highest levels of crime reported in our city. Specifically, in 1996, the city recorded 505 Part 1 offenses. In comparison to today, the Part 1 crimes rate reported in 2023 represents a 60.9% decrease from offenses reported in 1996. From a historical

perspective, between 2018 to present, the city continues to experience its lowest historical crime rates range since 1980. The Port Jervis Police Department actively remains involved with our community performing Enhanced drug and violence prevention education, Foot and bicycle patrols, National night out, the harvest fest and new to 2024, a pilot project focused on a social work program. This program is a partnership between health and human services co-located within the police department operations to assist with improved responses to mental health and domestic violence. Chief Worden remains diligent in securing outside funding in the form of grants to ease the burden on our taxpayers as well. These efforts total an amount of almost \$300K(297,479). A major goal of the police department is to seek and obtain accreditation through the State of New York.

The Building Department lead by Building Inspector Rivera and his assistant Laurie Powrie continue to work towards helping prospective home and business owners by providing safe and reliable information to help assist and educate them in achieving their goals. They also strive towards working to decrease the number of vacant and abandoned structures within our city limits. The building department is in the center our future economic development, as they work hand in hand with helping move our city forward.

The Port Jervis Recreation Department lead by Director John Faggione had another busy year in 2023. The Youth Center saw an average of 25 kids a day attending both after school and in the summer. Last year saw the 1<sup>st</sup> annual food truck and fireworks festival in July with thousands from ours and neighboring communities in attendance. Some other highlights included the 75<sup>th</sup> annual October Halloween parade, the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Delaware River run which was held in May with close to 300 participants and more than 50 volunteers.

Moving forward in 2024, the Port Jervis recreation department will see the following improvements completed at our parks and playgrounds. West end beach bathrooms, Tennis and basketball court renovations at Church Street Park, possible Riverside park improvements included in the DRI. I do believe the time has come again to discuss the process of building a new recreation center. We have simply outgrown our current location and what that building was originally meant for. I truly believe our children and City deserves a modern recreation/community center.

Fire Chief Keith Brown along with assistants Anthony Fuller and Jeff Lewis continue to lead our 100% volunteer fire department along. 2023 saw the fire department respond to a total of 482 calls for the year. That number represents a 16% increase from the 2022-year end run number. Mutual aid responses to our neighboring departments totaled 101 of those calls for the year 2023. Of those 482 calls, 10 were for structure fire responses within the city limits. 2023 also saw engine 1 or 821 placed into service. This state-of-the-art pumper allowed the fire

department to consolidate two apparatus' into one which in return will result in long term cost savings for the city. For 2024, firefighter cancer reduction initiatives continue to be front and center. The department continues to improve programs and equipment to help reduce the exposure of carcinogens for our firefighters.

In our City Clerk's office, led by our City Clerk Treasurer Laura Quick, her Deputy Bobby-Jo Muller and staff traditionally have the unappreciated job of collecting taxes, water/sewer bills, fines and fees all while seeking ways to have the city operate efficiently. This department is constantly looking for ways to improve our city's cash flow and seeking ways for us to run the city more effectively. As our City continues to grow, the finances will see a net in positive results.

Our City Assessor, Teresa Spradling and her assistant Heather Marino continues to work closely with our building department in monitoring, inspecting and reviewing our city's housing and building inventory. In

this office, exemptions take up a great deal of their time as there are over 2,000 that need to be reviewed and processed each year. For the city to have our own Assessor's office is a great benefit to us and allows us to constantly provide a more personalized service to our taxpayers and residents.

The Community Development Agency, which is contracted by the city, works closely with business owners to attempt to find them low interest loans and grants when involved in a project or even to start up. CDA Director Valerie Maginsky balances the task of taking grant awards received from state and federal government and manage the process from beginning to end. Some of the grants her agency is working towards this year are The NYS DEC WQIP-Water Quality Improvement program for over \$1.8M, (RISC) Resilient Investments through Support and Capital which 3 were submitted for up to \$200K each, USDA Forest Service Urban and Community forestry which we were awarded up to \$1M, we expect to see this money in spring of 2024. The FEMA AFG



grant for the Fire Dept which we just voted on the NOFA letter this evening for over \$700K. Valerie's office is also heavily involved with the entire DRI process as well in addition to promoting our city through home, business and health initiative. The CDA also manages the Section 8 program.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone for their patience and understanding. While we are only 30 days into a new administration and city council; we have hit the ground running and we are only just getting started. There is a lot of work to handle over the next 2 years and I am confident that the city will see dynamic positive changes and growth within our city limits and city government.

Thank You. God Bless America and God Bless The City of Port Jervis.

