

# Community Update

A Bi-weekly News Report on the City of Olean  
From the Desk of Mayor Linda Witte



## **City employees boost Olean Food Pantry**

*City of Olean workers donated a large box of nonperishable food items to the Souper Bowl of Caring Feb. 3. A \$100 check was also contributed. Shown from left: Common Council Clerk Kelly Sweet, Olean High School Senior Maria Skrobacz (Olean Souper Bowl Drive Coordinator), City Auditor Fred Saradin, Mayor Linda Witte, Senior Clerk Glenda Jester. Citywide, donors gave three tons of food and more than \$1,000. The Class of 2015 will take over coordination of the drive, led by Mrs. Rakus.*

## **Announcements:**

Mayor Witte welcomes Christian Dougherty to the Olean Youth Bureau Advisory Board as a student member representing Archbishop Walsh.

Check out the new photo murals in Applebee's Restaurant on West State Street. Many of the photos were snapped by Mayor Witte and also can be seen on her "Mayor's Community" web page on the city's website, [www.cityofolean.org](http://www.cityofolean.org).

Streets crews managed to get started catching up on some warmer-weather projects, including sweeping, removing Christmas decorations, etc. Then there was snow, but work will continue as weather permits.

OATS bus rides are free February 29! For information on schedules, call VMC Group (for Olean/Salamanca routes) at 373-2223, or First Transit (for Olean/Portville routes) at 968-0834.

## **2012-2013 budget handed to Council**

Mayor Linda Witte's proposed 2012-2013 budget includes the following numbers:

- \$16,514,523 - general fund revenues
- \$15,285,899 - general fund expenditures
- \$3,364,916 - water fund (rate of \$58.08)
- \$3,402,878 - sewer fund (rate of \$55.73)

The plan was presented to the aldermen (Finance Committee) February 7. If it is sent up to the full Council and is approved without change by April 15, taxpayers can expect to pay roughly the same amount of taxes to support this budget as during the 2011-2012 year.

Mayor Witte called it a fiscally responsible budget and advised aldermen against lowering the tax rate, something that was done in the past that preceded a deficit.

The projected tax rate is \$14.64 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, just a penny more than last year. Property taxes will generate a tax levy of \$7,188,937, about 2.8 percent more than 2011-2012.

Assessed property values are on the rise, with fewer exempt properties. The value of all taxable property in Olean is \$491,210,698, \$13.5 million more than the 2011-12 assessment.

## **Olean to be recognized in Albany at Tree City USA Ceremony March 29**

Olean is being recognized as a Tree City U.S.A. Community for 2011 as one of 110 communities, utilities and campuses from around the state. In addition to the award training will be offered to our representatives and lunch will be served by the NYS Urban and Community Forestry Council and the Tree Line U.S.A. utility sponsors. Congratulations Olean!!!!

## *5-Year Capital Plan handed to Council's Strategic Planning Committee*



*Ann McLaughlin(l), Alderman from Ward 2 and Chairman of the Strategic Planning Committee, and Public Works Director Tom Windus presented the 5 Year Capital Plan to the Committee on Feb. 7.*

During the Olean Common Council's Strategic Planning Committee's meeting on Tuesday, February 7, Chairman Ann McLaughlin (Ward 2) and Public Works Director Tom Windus presented recommendations for a proposed 5-Year Capital Improvement Program.

The proposal helps the city manage and plan for costs of maintenance and construction of government facilities and assets. Buildings, property, vehicles, equipment, infrastructure and human resources, valued at more than \$10,000, are included in a schedule of improvements and upgrades.

Chairman McLaughlin and Mr. Windus said that having a Capital Improvement Program will demonstrate sound fiscal management to the national bond rating agencies and to potential bond buyers.

The Strategic Planning Committee makes recommendations to the Council to adopt the updated plan and a budget each year by Dec. 15. The Committee members will recommend to the Council to authorize work after studying the issues. Funding will be placed in reserve and capital accounts or bonds will be sold to raise money to pay for the projects.

The Strategic Planning Committee's process will be ongoing, evolving during several meetings each year that will be recorded and open to the public. Taking part and providing input to the Committee will be the Mayor, the full Council, Department

Heads, the City Attorney and the public.

The multi-million dollar East State Street reconstruction project, to get under way in the spring and partially funded by a grant from New York State, is one example of a long-deferred project that is addressed in the plan.

Mr. Windus said the three-lane design is a new approach: less pavement for fewer operations and maintenance costs, increased sidewalk width to promote pedestrian and bike use, and improved signage.

Pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and traffic calming there and in a downtown improvement project can help encourage growth at a realistic pace.

*(See photos of preliminary designs on P. 3)*

Mrs. McLaughlin said planning in today's world requires a new way of thinking to rebuild infrastructure that is suffering from deferring maintenance as society grows.

"Tax revenue doesn't match the liability" of having public facilities, said Ms. McLaughlin, who told the Aldermen that the country has seen 60 years of unproductive growth with little attention to infrastructure. Public infrastructure now requires a higher rate of return.

Ms. McLaughlin called for a transformation in thinking about capital improvements in "high-amenity" areas to attract new private-sector development. "Low amenity" projects also deserve attention because they serve a public need. Also, she said, the current trend is to help 50 local businesses each create one new job instead of the unlikelihood of attracting a new business employing 50 people.

She and Mr. Windus outlined a list of important projects that should be addressed: replacement and downsizing of the city's 225 street lights; malfunctioning sewer digesters dating back to 1937-1939 that are shifting and in need of replacement; nonfunctional air-conditioning ducts serving the police station.

General Fund vehicle replacement for 2011-2012 totals \$1.5 million and \$3.5 million in 2012-2013. The Capital Plan includes a 2011-2012 airport project totaling \$970,000 that cost the city only \$120,000.

The other members of the Strategic Planning

*Continued .....*

*See Capital Plan, p. 3*

### **Capital Improvements.... (Cont'd from p.2)**

Mr. Windus presented the Aldermen with large aerial photos of the East State Street project area that are graphically illustrated to show lane reconfigurations, bike lanes and other design elements.



### **Capital Plan.... (Cont'd from p. 2)**

Committee are: Vice-Chairman Nate Smith (Ward 6), Matt Keller (Ward 4), Tina Kamery (Ward 3), and Jim Brady (Ward 1).

For more information about the Capital Plan contact Chairman McLaughlin or one of the Committee members.

### **Comptroller's team begins budget review**

A two-person team from the NYS Comptroller's Office met with Mayor Witte, City Auditor Fred Saradin and Alderman Jim Finch (Ward 5) on the morning of February 13. These auditors received a copy of the proposed spending plan and will spend the next couple of weeks going over it in the Municipal Building.

Mayor Witte said the two will review the Comptroller's past recommendations and check them against the 2011-2012 budget and the new proposal.

The process has been in place since 2006 when the New York State Legislature authorized deficit spending for the cash-strapped city.

The Aldermen must receive and review the recommendations prior to voting on the plan.

### **How can the city help?**

*By Mayor Linda Witte*

As your Mayor I continue to have an Open Door Policy. You can contact my office at 376-5615 with questions and complaints. 2012 City Directories will be published and available by February 6. These list the phone numbers of the Department Heads and Alderman. Phone numbers and other information is also available on the city's website, [www.cityofolean.org](http://www.cityofolean.org). We want your suggestions! Employee salary information is available on the website [www.SeeThroughNY.net](http://www.SeeThroughNY.net) Aldermen can be contacted at these numbers:

Jim Brady, Council President, Ward 1: 372-3692  
Ann McLaughlin, Ward 2: 560-8407 (c)  
Christina Kamery, Ward 3: 307-7457  
Matt Keller, Ward 4: 585-378-0557  
Jim Finch, Ward 5: 373-0163  
Nate Smith, Ward 6: 307-8199  
Tom Morgan, Ward 7: 373-4860

To leave a message for an aldermen call 376-5635. Email addresses: first initial of the first name, the full last name, and [cityofolean.org](http://cityofolean.org): For example: [lwitte@cityofolean.org](mailto:lwitte@cityofolean.org)