

## STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

JANUARY 2, 2018

WILLIAM J. AIELLO, MAYOR

It is my pleasure to welcome The Reverend Kim Rossi, Judge Daniel Palumbo, my wife Patty, my family and friends, Boy Scout Troop # 617, members of the media, members of the Common Council, our Department Heads and City Employees. Most of all, welcome to you in the audience here in the Council Chambers and those of you who are watching at home.

We also have a few honored guests here tonight: Earl McElfresh former Alderman for Ward 1 and former Cattaraugus County Legislator. And former Police Chief Terry Schnell.

Over the past four years it has been my pleasure to work with—and once again this year—I stress *with*—the Common Council. I have been blessed to have individuals, who as Alderman, are here to do what is best not only for their constituents, but also for the City of Olean. I look forward to working with them in 2018 as we continue the revitalization of our beautiful community.

This year, 2018 marks the 214<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Olean's founding in 1804 by Major Adam Hoops. A Revolutionary War Veteran, Hoop's realized this land that bordered the Allegheny River had great possibilities and over the course of our City's long history, Olean's leaders have tapped into this potential. With the help of our businesses and medical community, our educational facilities, our elected officials at the city, our county legislature, our state representatives, Governor Andrew Cuomo, Senator Cathy Young and Assemblyman Joe Giglio, our federal representatives Congressman Tom Reed, Senator Chuck Schumer and Senator Kristin Gillibrand and our residents, this tradition will continue through the City's 214<sup>th</sup> year.

Olean has been lucky to receive a number of grants and initiatives over the years that have allowed us to shake things up a bit--to reconfigure and renew our main street. Grants also helped us finance a major upgrade to our recreation center and Bradner Stadium. Grants have helped families live in their own homes. Grants have permitted an interest free loan on the Waste Water Treatment Plant's renovation. And, it is a grant that is funding a study on how best to use the river that brought Major Hoops to Olean.

The grants that the City has received have given Olean a new lease on life—but our residents working with the municipal staff are what make Olean a great place to live.

Every year in June, members of the City's Police and Fire Departments join the Boy Scouts and other members of our community in a tradition that started in 1995. Through their joint efforts, a portion of Franchot Park is transformed into a vibrant and fragrant garden.

Across town, in the offices of Greater Olean Area Chamber of Commerce, Meme Yanetsko meets with the City's Fire Chief, the City Electrician, the Police Chief and other members of the community to begin planning Santa Claus Lane and the parade.

Over on Wayne Street the Federal Credit Union gives up a portion of their parking lot to allow Olean's Professional Firefighters to sell hot dogs as they raise money for the Fourth of July Fireworks Display.

By that time in June the Olean Oiler's have played their first game and the Olean Park's department is busy readying Bradner Stadium for its next game—perhaps a SouthernTier Diesel game is up next or maybe another baseball game.

In June, the Youth and Recreation program at St. John's winds down and the staff gears-up for the summer program—a program that has seen, during the past four years, participation by well over 400 children—per year, who take part in the numerous events and activities that are planned daily. Local businesses underwrite some of the costs of this amazing summer program.

The Water Department has already flushed the City's 410 hydrants, a process that they do twice a year—spring and fall—to keep the water flowing during a fire emergency.

The plows are off the City's trucks by June and the Streets Division is busy filling pot holes. Over the winter they have kept Olean's 70 miles of streets free from snow as the Park's department worked to keep the City owned sidewalks clear.

In June, air traffic at the Olean Airport remains stable and the hangars are leased to capacity, but the Airport is gearing-up for summer activities such as drag racing, the Southern Tier Aero Radio Racing Fun Fly, commonly known as STARR, and the annual fly-in breakfast.

And by June, the entertainment has been booked for 10 weeks of Thursday night concerts at the Gazebo in Lincoln Park. The Gazebo was funded many years ago by the Rotary Club, who most recently funded the silent policeman on the corner of Lincoln Park--reminiscent of the direction marker that stood in the intersection of State and Union long before my time.

As June moved into July last year it was noted by many that the new gardens planted during the North Union Street project were not very attractive. I am very pleased that a number of residents--with green thumbs--were willing to form a committee and work with the City to make the gardens more eye-catching and at the same time continue their function as rain gardens.

It was the committee's suggestion to add planters to the State and Union and the Mall roundabouts in September and add some seasonal flowers to the street. In addition, a total of 2,500 spring bulbs were planted and a vibrant mix of red, yellow, blue and white will greet residents when the snow melts and the trees start to bud.

The committee plans to continue planting bulbs each year until the entire length of the street is filled with color in the spring. They will spend the winter months putting a plan in action that will maximize the beauty of the corridor and allow the rain gardens to continue their eco-functionality.

In addition, over the next year the committee hopes to add Laurens Street to its list of responsibilities--combining the ambiance of the Oak Hill Historic District to the North Union Street Gardens. At the end of Laurens Street, the Oak Hill Park entrance has been given a second life thanks to the generosity and commitment of Erick and Marianne Laine. The upgraded and restored Park entrance is a beautiful gift to our community, and when completed will beckon both residents and tourists to one of Olean's beautiful and historic parks.

And speaking of the gardens and our parks there are a number of groups and volunteers, who, year after year, keep the streets and parks in Olean free of litter--organized groups such as the Zonta Club and groups of concerned citizens such as Lila Ervay's Litter Control Program, Revitalizing Olean, the State and Union Group and other volunteers who not only pick up litter, but tend to the gardens at the Bartlett House and the other City owned facilities. Their hard work and dedication to our community does not go unnoticed and is greatly appreciated.

The City comes alive in the summer, but Olean is a four season community. Our habits and way of life are defined by each season. And your City doesn't stop working --no matter how cold, how wet, how windy or how hot it gets.

As we hunker down in this winter weather—the weather that Western New York is famous for, we can be comfortable and confident knowing that the men and women who perform our city services – the street crews, the operators at the water plant and wastewater treatment plant, the police and firemen--the people who keep our city operating, moving, and safe will be on the job, every day and every night--keeping our streets and roads safe, our homes secure and neighborhoods patrolled.

When I stood over a water main break on December 23<sup>rd</sup> a couple of years back, I learned first-hand that the weather challenges Olean faces can look overwhelming but with a professional staff working together to solve a problem—Olean is second to none.

I heard something at a breakfast lecture a few weeks ago at JCC that caught my attention. Dr. Gerald Puccio, the Chairman of the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State College said that the combination of strong teamwork and the creative problem solving can help turn challenges into opportunity. As he was speaking, I immediately thought of that water main break—an excellent example that Olean's limited resources encourage imaginative and creative approaches to the inevitable challenges that we face as a small city in Western New York

I have decided that turning challenges into opportunities will be our motto during the budget season and throughout the year. Because the cold hard facts of municipal finances hit us in January as we start the budget process and it can get very stormy in February and March as we hash out the details. But by April, as the trees on Mount Herman start to bud, the Council will pass a budget that will keep Olean on track for a bright and sunny future.

We continually face obstacles when building our budget. But we continually surmount them--as the City has done for 214 years. And, just as the staff in the City's departments use their knowledge, their skills and their creativity to manage the hurdles, the department heads and I will do the same as we work on this year's budget.

I am very pleased to report that during my four years as mayor we have been able to live within the tax cap set by the state. In fact our City taxes have only been raised 37 cents per \$1,000 during my tenure, and water rates have only been raised 9 percent in that same period. However we have increased sewer rates 15 percent over the four years. The higher rate is indicative of the debt we will be paying for the waste water treatment plant upgrades.

Even with our challenges, Olean continues to look to the future—to provide a quality of life to make Olean a great place for the next generation to live and raise a family. And the City has been very fortunate to receive plenty of help from a number of partners as we make our way further into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

In April 2017, after the Home Show; Kinley Corporation as the general contractor, started dismantling the William O. Smith Recreation Center. They were on a very strict time line. The Rec. Center's Ice is a hot commodity in Olean and it had to be ready in September for recreational skaters as well as the many hockey teams that rely on the rink throughout the winter. The \$3.2 million project was aided by grants secured by Senator Cathy Young in the amount of \$200,000, from a grant from New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation in the amount of \$500,000 and a grant from Empire State Development in the amount of \$420,000.

The City's investment in this project guarantees that the next generation of Olean residents can enjoy the benefits of the pool in the summer and the ice rink in the winter.

During the Rec. Center renovation we did lose a full summer of swimming at the War Vets Park pool, but down river a bit, the wading pool at Francot was open and allowed residents relief from the heat.

With the help of Cattaraugus County, three baseball fields, owned by the city are in the process of being renovated. The project started in the fall and one other field at the complex, owned by Olean Little League, will also be refurbished. This guarantees a baseball park for the next generation of Olean residents, and also entices travel baseball leagues to our community for tournaments.

Early autumn brought some excitement to Olean. The community was thrilled that Olean was selected to receive 10 million dollars of funding for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, a program introduced by Governor Cuomo to improve the vitality of urban centers across New York State. Urban Strategies, a consultant team, is working with the Local Planning Committee—a group of residents from our community. Together they will assess the opportunities and the potential projects that could occur in our downtown. The Local Planning Committee will select the projects that continue our downtown revitalization and eligible projects will be approved for funding by the Governor's Office.

Amazingly, it gets even better---in December the City of Olean was awarded a number of grants through the Regional Economic Development Council Consolidated Funding Application. The Manny Hanny Stabilization Project was awarded \$500,000, a \$200,000 microenterprise grant was awarded to the City and \$59,000 was awarded to the Bradner Stadium Forness Park Trail.

Our generation has been charged to make Olean an inviting place---a place where people want to reside and raise a family. The City has a number of dynamic industries, a thriving regional hospital, a nationally recognized university, and a community college located in the heart of our business district---these institutions are recruiting constantly and now, more than ever before, it is important that Olean remains an appealing destination. In addition to good quality housing and entertainment venues, the area has to have outdoor recreation possibilities.

And with that in mind, the City is working with its partners---who include the city of Salamanca, the towns of Olean, Allegany and Portville and the villages of Allegany and Portville--to establish a multi-use recreational trail system along the Allegheny River. The City is also finalizing plans to install boat and kayak launches on the River. The recreational benefits and opportunities along the banks of the River have been overlooked for generations. The River winds its way through the middle of our community and we will soon be able to take advantage of this natural asset which links us with our neighboring communities and our neighboring states.

And speaking of the River, the City is pleased to announce that the project at the Wastewater Treatment Plant is almost done. If you recall, the City was under a Consent Order by the State DEC. The state of the art upgrades to the plant will guarantee that sewage will not flow into the river under any circumstances. We plan to cut the ribbon on Olean's vital contribution to our region's environmental health in the near future,

As for personnel, the City has had some major changes over the year.

Long term Youth and Recreation Director John Anastasia retired in August. As the City's Mayor, I looked at other options to administer the recreation program. The program has a profound effect on the quality of life for our residents. It was decided that the City would continue to oversee the Rec program and Kris Shewairy was recently appointed to the position of director.

Mary George who served as Community Development Director for many years, retired in September. Keri Kerper was appointed Director of this very busy office. I thank both Mary and Keri for their dedication to the City. Their time and effort led to the \$10 million dollar Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant that the City received and they cross-trained throughout the years to make the transition seem effortless.

Alex Utecht retired last week. He was City Clerk for the past 11 1/2 years and did an excellent job. I am very pleased that he has agreed to come in over the next few weeks to train the new City Clerk Lens Martial.

I would like to thank these three retirees for their dedication to Olean. All three of them worked tirelessly to make our community a great place to live and they will be missed.

Tom Windus, Olean's DPW Director resigned from his position during the year. As director he oversaw the East State Street project, the North Union Street Project, a number of projects at the airport, the upgrades to the Wastewater treatment plan and many other projects throughout the City. We were sorry to see him leave.

I was very pleased to announce Bob Ring as the new DPW Director. Having served in the City engineering department for a number of years, Bob is very familiar with our community. Bob has my utmost confidence and under his direction the 14 departments in Public Works will continue to run efficiently and professionally.

For generations the Olean Police and Fire Departments have worked hard to keep Olean residents safe. Over the past year the two departments were very busy and I would like to thank the personnel in both departments for their bravery and dedication to our community. They never know what to expect when they walk into work. They are faced with a different challenge everyday and many of their acts of bravery go unnoticed. However this fall, our community got to see them on the job, working together, to save both lives and property.

A fire that started in the early morning hours on Oak Street in late October could have led to a terrible tragedy. It was late at night, tenants were sleeping, there were children on the third floor and the house stood very close to the house next door.

I want to personally thank the police officers who first responded and helped the tenants to evacuate the house to safety. They were Captain Andrew Langdon, Patrolmen Matthew Schnell, Kyle Baldwin and William Beggs. And I want to personally thank Captain Theodore and Platoon A. They were the first on the scene from the Olean Fire Department. In addition Firefighter Nate Veno assisted Captain Langdon in rescuing a tenant in the front of the house.

The firefighters did an excellent job, fighting a ferocious fire and preventing it from spreading to the neighboring house. Their expertise is commendable.

But what makes Olean a great place to live is what happened after the fire. The patrolmen who helped the children to safety had lunch with them a few days later. And City Building employees, along with other agencies, businesses and individuals throughout the community joined together to help the residents who were displaced by the fire to get back on their feet and begin to rebuild their lives.

I would like to ask Captain Langdon, Patrolman Schnell, Patrolman Baldwin, Patrolman Beggs and Captain Theodore to come forward.

[Congratulate and hand our certificates.]

The Common Council recently amended the City's Code of Ordinances and added a new Property Maintenance and Residential Occupancy Code. This change to the Code will have a substantial impact the City's housing stock and our fight against blight. Blight is a cancer that is afflicting almost all of our neighborhoods in the City and I am pleased that we have a law in place that will help our Code Enforcement office stop the spread. I commend the Council and the City Attorney for the hard work they put into getting this legislation passed.

I have a good feeling about 2018 and the City of Olean.

I look around our City tonight and I see old businesses thriving and new businesses opening up—or under construction. I see new restaurants and bars, renovation and upgrades—a hum of activity that indicates a thriving downtown—a downtown that is busy night and day. I see a downtown that presents one of the most modern, interesting and innovative cityscapes in New York State—and probably far beyond...

A few Olean highlights: We have construction on the east end of town: a new Dollar General Store.

We have a major remodel on the west end of town: a new Marshall's is opening on the former K-Mart site.

To the north: the Brownfield construction at the intersection of Buffalo Street and Constitution Avenue will start this spring and will bring a hotel and retail stores to this long abandoned piece of prime real estate.

People are coming to Olean from far and near—check the license plates in the Beef and Barrel parking lot—they come here to frequent the wonderful restaurants, the shopping, the entertainment, the cafes, the coffee shops, to take advantage of the mall's stores or the specialty shops like the music and bike shops, the brokerage firms, the investment advisors, the banks, the law offices and other fine businesses that line our downtown and side streets. People are coming to Olean just to try out our new streets and the traffic circles. Olean is not just another city—Olean is not just a dot on the map—Olean is now a destination again.

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