

Good morning/afternoon/evening

- Welcome to the City of Watervliet – State of City for 2020
- Acknowledgements (dignitaries in attendance)

I am continually humbled by your support and would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who supported my previous campaigns for council and now for mayor and equally important thank you for your support for Councilwoman Diamond and Councilman Torncello as we begin collectively to work to move this City forward in the years to come.

Tonight, I am honored to be before you to present my first State of the City Address. A State of the City address is typically an opportunity to celebrate our successes and provide a look towards the future. My goal is to let you know the TRUE status of City. I have shown that honesty is and always will be my policy for governing this City. I have never sugar coated the City of Watervliet financial position and I never will. Our City's future depends on us working hard and coming together to build a stronger community.

As I stated at my Swearing in Ceremony, “the hard work is just beginning” and this still holds true in these past 30 + days since we took office. It is already evident in the work that we have put in.

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When I was elected three years ago as Councilman, Watervliet's finances were the worst in the city's history. Watervliet earned a spot on the Comptroller's list of the most distressed cities because hard decisions were not made, hard questions were not asked and follow up left unchecked.

With the current staff and the Councils help we will work diligently to remove the City from this list and continue governing making the hard decisions to move this City forward. I was just informed that although the numbers are not yet exact we are looking at closing out 2019 with a healthier reserve. I commend the efforts of all the department heads and the administration for holding the line and only spending what we absolutely needed.

Our City has a historical fabric of being a working-class community with Deep Pride and an un-wavering sense of Community. We all like to think and reminisce about what Watervliet was like when we were kids and what a great place to grow up. Such a place can still exist, but we must acknowledge that we cannot accomplish this by going backward but we must move forward. That is a necessity for this city to thrive and survive.

But I promise you this, we will work to bring this City back, back in a new way, a stronger way. The Council and I are prepared to work towards this mission.

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We want Watervliet to be a destination, a destination where people choose to live and raise their children and development dollars will be invested to help strengthen our local economy. This can only happen with a competent City Council and a sound financial plan.

This revitalization process will look to restructuring current policies. In order for the city to look quaint, charming, clean and attractive, it must have nuisance and abatement laws that each homeowner must follow to keep our neighborhoods in order. I am telling you tonight there will be no double standard when it comes to these laws. City buildings and property going forward will be held to the same standards as city residents' homes. Change only comes from the TOP DOWN and now that the City is doing its part maintaining its property, we would like the residents to do the same.

By strengthening the appearance of our City, we will be able attract interest from both the business community and residential homeownership.

We've already started on our end, sprucing up City Hall where our residents can feel proud to visit their place of government. City Hall needs a new roof and windows, which will need to happen sooner than later. We now are operating in a proactive manner, rather than reactive mode, when it comes to city buildings, property and equipment. No more waiting till it becomes an emergency and unfortunately some of these items are now at the doorstep. There will be a Facilities Committee in place to monitor these efforts and report to the Council on a regular basis.

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Operationally, we are in the process of moving some of the city departments to the first floor of city hall, so residents have easier access. We're also attempting to upgrade our computer system so everything is compatible. We have installed a preventive maintenance program within the DPW to keep our equipment in working order. We're also in the process of creating a work order program for the DPW to keep track of all incoming calls from residents, and keep track of jobs from start to finish. The City, library and seniors have come together to split the cost of new furniture in the lobby of the Leo O'Brien building. What was an empty lobby now has a welcoming atmosphere for our seniors and library patrons. We are partners with those these agencies and not adversaries. They serve our residents and we're here to support them.

I mentioned our facilities - the DOME which is a great recreational facility for city residents, is underutilized and hasn't been maintained for years.

We will be upgrading this facility, mostly minor and cosmetic enhancements, but we will turn that facility into something that our recreational leagues and city residents may be proud to use. We recently met with our many different city youth sport groups to bolster better communications and establish better coordination with these groups.

I know there are several requests to heat the building in the winter, but we have to keep in mind, when first built, the facility was a skating rink. Today

there is no heating system in the building to either upgrade or fix. It would be cost prohibitive to heat that facility in the winter.

We will soon breaking ground this spring on the new bike path from the 4th St tunnel to Hudson Shores Park. This spring we intend to construct a dog park at Clinton Park thanks to the efforts of our park committee. Dates are now set for an electronic disposal day, bulk pick up, and working on another document shredding date. We are also looking to expand our wireless hot spots throughout the city.

Personally, I think this is an exciting time for the City of Watervliet. We have a new city council, as well as a new general manager, deputy general manager, Director of Finance and City Clerk. New blood means new ideas in how to improve this city.

The General Managers Office has been tasked with concentrating on the areas where Watervliet needs the most work and finding people with the skills and proven experience to move this city forward.

One of this administration's top priorities will be concentrating on planning, development, accountability and increased performance. Going forward, city jobs and contracts will be awarded based on who is best qualified to improve this city with the goal being that every tax dollar spent makes the city better.

There's no denying the business culture in this city needs to change. We may have to revamp the city charter to make it happen. We will work hard

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and do what is needed to attract new businesses to this City and keep the businesses that are located here.

This city needs to come up with its own business and development plan, much the way the cities of Cohoes and Troy rehabbed their downtown districts and Green Island is in the process of reinventing its shoreline along the Hudson River, to attract new residents and businesses.

This will come as the City begins to concentrate on updating its Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Revitalization Study. By using innovation and creativity we can seek to develop our business districts, our parks and continue to improve our infrastructure with help from grants and re-zoning as we want Watervliet to become a destination with a thriving business district, rather than a cut-thru for people drive through to get to Cohoes, Troy, Albany and Latham.

We will be looking to obtain the greatest potential of our waterfront at Hudson Shores Park and reevaluate our mixed use zoning code to improve our business districts both on 19th and 3rd Ave.

We will use the skills, talents and experience of our city councilmembers to help lead these efforts and they will be part of the process from day 1. Together as a team we will be able to accomplish more, with the likelihood of a higher rate of success.

But it cannot not happen with the work of only the Council. We are constantly looking for residents and business to get involved. Please don't

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wait to be asked, let us know your interest. We recently received 20 residents expressing interest in joining our boards, many I have never had the opportunity to meet but were comfortable enough to step up.

As I mentioned earlier, this entire report will not be all gloom-and-doom. There are plenty of positive projects happening in this City, which I am more than happy to share with city residents via social media and email. If you have not received my emails, please send me your email address and I will add you to the list to get up to date news, issues and programs in more detail.

Some of the positive items going on in the City right now are shared services with other local municipalities. Recently, Albany County lent us trucks and drivers to help plow the streets after a heavy snowstorm. We are working with the county to borrow their sewer cleaning machine and to join in the purchase of a water chestnut harvester to be used at the reservoir.

The City's sanitation department is working with Colonie to pick up trash in Maplewood where the City receives a fee for this service. Under this agreement the City also has the use of one of their trucks when needed and also use of the Colonie landfill for offsetting tipping fees. We will continue to look for alternate ways of sharing and offsetting costs for everyone involved.

While recently attending the State of the State address we had the opportunity to meet with the governor's policy makers and I petitioned the

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State to help us do more regarding the high increase in cost of recycling. An area that they agreed that needed to be further discussed.

We also plan on making the aerobic digester a project worth keeping by producing methane gas to heat the city garage or eliminating the project all together. We no longer carry projects that are not producing a positive outcome.

The City's new Chief of Police Anthony Geraci and Fire Chief Tom Garrett have many things on their plates but one of those that I have asked them to keep in the forefront of their duties is the opioid crisis and what we can do to help our residents deal with it. We are proud to report that the times we needed to only administer narcan is down 35%, a move in the right direction.

Another program, in coordination with our Code Enforcement, is the landlord notification. If we have an incident at a particular property, where the landlord doesn't live, we will call and notify the landlord regardless of the time of day or night and let them know.

Making them aware of an incident will improve communications, awareness and accountability of what is happening in their properties. Should we have excessive calls to the same location we will look to offset the fees for service and levy fines to the property. This will cut down on the drain of emergency services for the City and improve the quality of life for those that live in the neighborhood.

Overtime costs have been an issue for the city in recent years, and the new bail reform laws have caused a strain on our police department and finances, but we need to tighten our belt until this issue is addressed on the state level. Overtime is now being monitored on a weekly basis to ensure there is no waste of revenue or resources.

The City applied for 15 grants totaling almost \$9.8 million for 2019. So far we have been approved for 12 grants that will award the city a little more than \$6 million for projects. I congratulate the efforts of the previous administrations team and now look forward to making them a reality.

The grants I am most excited about are the \$3 million for filter plant improvements to improve water quality; almost \$1.3 million for a clean water Combined Sewer Overflow Separation Grant. The City has paid tens of thousands of dollars as part of the Albany County Combined Sewer Overflow to help improve water quality in the Hudson River. Our goal is to someday separate from the group and handle the overflow on our own to save money and put that revenue back into the community; a \$540,000 grant for a lead lateral replacement program for our homeowners should be off and running in the next few months and we are in the process of relicensing our hydro-electric plant in Guilderland, we will soon be installing a new waterline replacement on 9th Avenue between 16th St and 19th St. which will take place this spring as well as the paving of roads which we identify as those in most need of immediate repair.

Both former Mayor Manning and I are on the same page as to the need to take care of our environment and I intend to carry on these and new efforts and again build and improve on them to do our part. We are currently looking to apply for a grant to install electric car charging stations, now becoming a new demand from drivers.

The City of Watervliet has successfully renewed its NYS Climate Smart Community designation; and we are now in the beginning stages of pursuing Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) by entering into an agreement with Municipal Electric and Gas Alliance (MEGA). This program would allow an electricity broker to negotiate better rates with competitive suppliers on behalf of the City's residents and small businesses.

We're also working with the state's Financial Restructuring Board, which reviewed Watervliet's structure and finances and looked for areas where we could save money. The FRB backed up their recommendations with incentives to help us out. City government would be remiss and not acting in good faith to its constituents if we did not look into these recommendations to find where we can streamline certain areas while creating additional revenue for other projects.

We are activity working on the purchase of our street lights. We have met with both National Grid and the NYS Power Authority and with the incentive from the restructuring board it looks like a great deal for the residents of Watervliet. The yearly savings being proposed makes this a no

brainer of a proposal. We hope to finalize this project within the next month.

Another project that has been talked about for years and is now under review, is the upgrading of our computer system. This is also part of the FRB's recommendations. This will give us up to date software and provide more efficient and cost cutting measures that are needed to help with our operations.

We also closed last year on making Watervliet self-insured for workers compensation. We have protected ourselves with other insurance and hired a risk control provider to help ensure our claims are kept as low as possible. Great for our residents and even better for our staff.

I would like to take this time to remind city residents of the importance of the 2020 Census. Please take the time to fill out the form and return it because it impacts city finances. Financial aid we receive from the government is based on population. A poor showing means a loss of funds for the city and affects our representation in federal, state and county elections. So again, please take the time to fill out the form and return it so Watervliet will receive the full amount of aid in which the city is entitled.

I saved the city's best asset for last – the city reservoir located in Guilderland. We are currently working on a watershed protection study for the reservoir. The city is in the process of upgrading the electric in Guilderland so we can run the hydro-electric plant at full power. We will

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also have a maintenance plan in place to help mitigate water chestnut issues as well as clean up around the reservoir to improve the quality of our drinking water. We will improve our filtration plant and improve the water quality in Guilderland – with the potential to sell water to other communities looking for a clean water supply. Guilderland, as many of you know, has recently re-assessed our reservoir, an increase of 850 percent. We are now in litigation with Guilderland concerning those fees that of course directly impact our water rates. I will give you all the information as it becomes available.

Having been a part of the past administration as a member of the council for 3 years, I know the hard work and dedication our staff has and we'll keep that movement going and support them. I'm very confident that with our new administration you will not be disappointed. Although, we won't be able to please everyone, but once communicated I hope you agree our reasons and our decisions are valid, justified and transparent.

Again, my door is always open to converse and engage with residents who have ideas how to improve this city. I again invite residents to get involved with our citizen action committees to help take ownership and improve the city we call home. As I have stated, we have plenty of work to do, but we're off to a good start. Government is about making it happen, its service and not making excuses.

Thank you for coming tonight.