CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS COUNCIL MEETING

January 5, 2021

Held at

MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM

PRESENT:

Meg Kelly, Mayor
Lisa Shields, Deputy Mayor
Michele Madigan, Commissioner
John P. Franck, Commissioner
Anthony Scirocco, Commissioner
Robin Dalton, Commissioner
Matthew Veitch, Supervisor
Tara Gaston, Supervisor
Aaron Dyer, Assistant Fire Chief
MAYOR KELLY: Welcome to Tuesday, January 5th city council meeting. I could just make one announcement before we start. Could I have everybody muted except for council? So with -- if you're not on the council or the supervisors please turn off your video, which I think everybody is off. So I need Mr. Millis (ph.) to mute, please. Thank you.

Mr. Millis, can you hear me?

DEPUTY MAYOR SHIELDS: I think he is muted.

MAYOR KELLY: Okay. It's not showing as muted to me.

DEPUTY MAYOR SHIELDS: Okay.

MAYOR KELLY: Okay.

DEPUTY MAYOR SHIELDS: It's not showing that he's on, either.

MAYOR KELLY: Okay. So let's get going.

We have no public hearings this evening, so let's get started with roll call, please.

SECRETARY TO City Council:

Commissioner Franck?
COMMISSIONER FRANCK: Present.

SECRETARY TO City Council:

Commissioner Madigan?

COMMISSIONER MADIGAN: Present.

SECRETARY TO City Council:

Commissioner Scirocco?

COMMISSIONER SCIROCCO: Here.

SECRETARY TO City Council:

Commissioner Dalton?

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Present.

SECRETARY TO City Council: Mayor Kelly?

MAYOR KELLY: Here.

SECRETARY TO City Council:

Supervisor Veitch?

SUPERVISOR VEITCH: Here.

SECRETARY TO City Council: And Supervisor Gaston?

SUPERVISOR GASTON: Here.

MAYOR KELLY: Please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

IN UNISON: I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with
liberty and justice for all.

MAYOR KELLY: Thank you. Next on the agenda is our public comment period. We will keep the comments up to two minutes each. There will be a bell to signify your time. Public comment period will continue up to fifteen minutes. We will be respectful to speakers while addressing the council as a whole. Please do not interrupt the person speaking or engage with members of the public. As a reminder, public comment is not a dialogue. It's a discussion with council members. However, at the end of the public comment period, the council may respond to any comment. Anyone who wishes to address the council on any issue will now do so by raising your hand in Zoom.

So we have a couple people on here. I'm going to ask if Mr. Millis, Anna Plant (ph.), want to speak.

DEPUTY MAYOR SHIELDS: It doesn't look like it or Louise Kerr (ph.) also is on. But it doesn't -- no one is raising
their hand, so I would say that there's
nobody for public comment. There is one
person coming in, Mayor.

MAYOR KELLY: All right.

DEPUTY MAYOR SHIELDS: Steve Gordon
(ph.) just walked in but, again --(audio
interference).

MAYOR KELLY: Okay. So is there
anybody in the -- on the Zoom call that
wants to public comment? Please speak
up.

Okay. So I don't see anybody
speaking up or raising their hand, so I'm
going to close the public comment period.
We have no executive sessions this
evening, so we'll move right on to the
consent agenda.

I move that the city council approve
the consent agenda as included with this
agenda. This is a motion. Is there a
second?

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Second.

MAYOR KELLY: Any discussion?

All those in favor say aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.
MAYOR KELLY: All those opposed say no.

The matter passes.

On to the Mayor’s Department. My first item is an announcement. The 2021 Community Development Block Grant sub-grantee application period opens 1/15/21. The Community Development Department will be opening up the sub-grantee application period for the Community Development Block Grant 2021 program year starting January 15. Application guidance and forms and the program year schedule will be made available on the city website very soon.

My next item is discussion and vote, approval to hire a senior planner in the Planning Department.

As the council is aware, the administrator of Planning and Economic Development has retired. My recommendation is for the Deputy Mayor to fulfill the department head’s duties for now and to hire a senior planner for the essential planner’s duties, which include
managing the Design Review Commission.

This retirement is an opportunity to take a fresh look at our staffing plan and adjust the organizational structure where necessary.

Hiring a senior planner at a lower salary is fiscally responsible now, especially with the budget constraints while we evaluate the department needs.

Funds to cover this position are readily available in our 2021 approved budget. The senior planner is an established title in the CSEA contract. The Civil Service Commission met on 12/29/20 and approved the second planner -- senior planner position. A budget transfer of 61,912, grade 14, step 1, will be submitted for the next council meeting.

So I move that the city council approve the hiring of the senior planner in the Planning Department. This is a motion. Is there a second?

COMMISSIONER FRANCK: Second.

MAYOR KELLY: Any discussion?
COMMISSIONER MADIGAN: So I'm going to vote no tonight on this position. Because on my agenda, there is an update about city finances. It'll be a sobering update for the beginning of the fiscal year 2021. And at this time, I think we need to enforce our hiring freeze, and especially a hiring freeze for those positions in which employees have just retired. The best way to save money is to delay replacing retired employees. And I appreciate that it will save some money since the entire salary has been budgeted for this position. And it was significant because it was a significant senior level position that we had retiring. But if these type of positions, I'm hoping people will retire and we can go a long while until we have a better idea of what the future will hold for us before we move forward and replace them. I do appreciate that the Planning Department is quite busy, I guess. I
don't know, really, much about how busy
they are with COVID still being with us.
I did look through some old agendas.
There's definitely some activity in DRC.
But primarily, DRC seems to be our least
busy of the three planning units. So
it's not personal but I -- I'm very
cconcerned about city finances right now.
Thanks.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Can I ask what
the approximate differential was between
what the one was prior to this (audio
interference).

MAYOR KELLY: I believe it was
around 150.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: So it's a
fairly significant (audio
interference) --

MAYOR KELLY: Yes.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: -- but wasn't.

MAYOR KELLY: Yes.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Okay.

COMMISSIONER SCIROCCO:
Unfortunately, she -- you might be right,
but progress, as far as the DRC and the
planning board and all that stuff, it
doesn't -- it just doesn't stop in the
city. And my understanding is the
workload is there. It's not like it's
not there. Obviously, the planner has
retired and somebody has to take over
that part of it. It just makes -- it
makes sense to put another senior planner
in there at roughly, probably less than
what the -- what the total salary would
be. And then as far as -- done the road,
then we could just evaluate the position
down the road. But I think it makes a
lot of sense then. And it's financially,
and both financially and
administratively, it makes sense.
So again, I'm going to support it
under those conditions.

MAYOR KELLY: Any other comments?
Okay, all those in favor say aye.
IN UNISON: Aye.

MAYOR KELLY: Those opposed say no.
COMMISSIONER MADIGAN: No.

MAYOR KELLY: Any abstentions?
The matter passes.
My third item is discussion and vote, Saratoga Springs Recreation Department Part-Time/Seasonal Personnel Referee Proposal.

Any part-time/seasonal hourly employee will be paid the approved 2021 starting hourly rate effective 1/30/21. Please note, if any employee current or returning rates exceeds the proposed rate, the employee will be frozen at the issued rate received within the last twenty-four months.

I move that the city council approve the Saratoga Springs Recreation Department Part-Time/Seasonal Personnel Referee Proposal as included -- or it wasn't included with the agenda. I sent it to the council just before the meeting. This is a motion. Is there a second?

COMMISSIONER FRANCK: Second.

MAYOR KELLY: Any discussion?

All those in favor say aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.

MAYOR KELLY: Any opposed say no.
The matter passes.

And I'll turn it over. That concludes my agenda. I will turn it over to Commissioner Franck from Accounts.

COMMISSIONER FRANCK: Thank you, Mayor. We just have one item this evening. It's an announcement that the state has passed legislation to address senior and disabled homeowner exemptions.

The New York State Legislature held a special session and Governor Cuomo signed into law the COVID-19 Emergency Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention Act. This legislation includes a provision that covers senior citizens and persons with disability exemption for the 2021 assessment roll.

The legislation, one, requires local governments to carry over senior citizen homeowner exemption and disabled homeowner exemptions from 2020 assessment roll to the 2021 assessment roll at the same levels; two, it requires local governments to provide renewal applications via electronic or postal
mail for individuals who may be eligible
for a larger exemption in 2021; three, it
allows local governments to specify
procedures where the local assessor may
require renewal applications from
residence who they no longer believe
qualify for the exemption. And it also
bars any requirement that a recipient be
required to appear in person to file a
renewal if one is required.

So I had Tony Popolizio briefly go
over that with you yesterday. As we talk
to more local governments, we'll probably
address this at the next meeting also.

Thank you, Mayor. That concludes my
agenda.

MAYOR KELLY: Thank you,
Commissioner. On to Commissioner Madigan
of Finance, please.

COMMISSIONER MADIGAN: Thank you,
Mayor.

So my first item is an update on
city finances. This will be a recurring
topic at most 2021 council meetings.

Yesterday, I distributed an updated
cash flow worksheet to the council. In the future, I'll try to have those uploaded, but we didn't have it quite completed by the time I wanted to get the agenda out but I knew I wanted to give an update.

The cash flow is the money that we have in the bank. And mostly what we have in the bank right now is what we just recently borrowed from Adirondack Trust. You will see a lot more money coming into the bank as we get into February with our first quarter property taxes.

So that's money that we expect to be -- money in our bank account, money that we expect to be coming into the bank and money going out of our bank account. Budgets what we plan to do with the money. In years past, prior to COVID-19, the budget has been a bit less than the money that we've had in the bank, which is good. We can outlay cash to cover grants and other things, and we can wait for that reimbursement.
Right now, our cash flow is not
great and we keep running into this
problem. We ran into it last June and
last December, and we're going to run
into it again this June.

In 2020, we planned on spending a
certain amount. However, money coming in
was much lower than expected, and we used
that money as you know, we've been
through 2020.

So I want to make sure that the
council and the public hears this
message. 2021 is looking very similar.
And unless there are significant revenue
breakthroughs, our financial situation
will be similar to 2020.

As of June 2021, we will require
approximately seven million dollars. We
will be seven million dollars in the red.
We will have less than what we planned
for. We will have additional cash flow
coming in throughout the year. But in
June, we have large disbursements. And
that's what that cash flow shows you.
And we will not have the cash to cover
those disbursements that will come in.

So making the council aware of amounts of actual cash on hand at all times is key and is outlined in the charter that I am supposed to be doing this. I -- we have borrowed already 11.3 million dollars. We have sufficiently burdened future administrations and generations with pandemic-related financial choices, and we are going to require some discipline now to enter into 2022 and beyond.

So again, in June, the city will experience a substantial dip in cash flow, a 7.3 million-dollar cash deficit. This is up for change all the time. If we can get some federal fiscal aid in, the cash flow will change.

I am going to be looking at sales tax for January, February, March, and April. I think those numbers are a bit low. But I don't know yet. I don't know what the impact of COVID and the variant strain is going to be on our city revenues in the first quarter of the
year.

So while we can hope for increased revenue, pursue federal and/or state bailout aid, and any other resources that have not been included here, we must plan for those figures that we have before us in black and white and in the red, which is the 7,306,349 dollars.

I also requested in the email questions and comments to be emailed to me so that I can prepare and be responsive to the council and the public. I'm also looking for your suggestions as to how we might meet the challenge of the projected cash flow projections through June 2021, in which, again, we will be negative 7,306,349 dollars. That's it.

Item number 2 is a discussion and vote, refunding for the bond resolution.

The Finance Department has --

COMMISSIONER DALTON:

(Indiscernible)

COMMISSIONER MADIGAN: Yes?

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Sorry. Can I ask you a quick question on your first
item?

COMMISSIONER MADIGAN: Yes.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Do we have any -- does the real property sale and stuff you're looking into and the (audio interference)?

COMMISSIONER MADIGAN: I don't have an update on that. But that's another thing that could bring revenue in and will change our projections. So I appreciate you bringing that up because I meant to mention that. Some of the things that are on the horizon where, potentially, we budgeted for five million dollars in fiscal aid which we don't have yet. That will be helpful.

Selling property will be helpful and bring in new revenue. We also have about 1.6 million dollars still outstanding in grant reimbursement for the Geyser Road Trail with DOT. So that will change cash flow projections. But I want to make sure that you had an update as to where we are right now with cash flow.

So as those reimbursements or funds
come in, I will make the council aware.
And as sales tax projections perhaps
change, I will make you aware.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Thank you.
COMMISSIONER MADIGAN: Any other
questions?

All right. So my item number 2 is
discussion and vote, refunding bond
resolution.

The Finance Department has initiated
a bond refunding, a refinancing in the
amount of three million dollars for bonds
dated June 15, 2013, due to mature on
June 15, 2033. The action will result in
present value savings and debt service as
required by local finance law. Exact
amounts to be announced after the public
sale. I think this is my fourth bond
refinancing, which is saving us fairly
significantly on debt service and our
ability to issue further debt.

So I move that the city council
approve the refunding bond resolution as
included with the agenda. The matter
requires a four-fifths vote, and I ask
for a roll call vote as well, please.

SECRETARY TO City Council: We needed a second.

MAYOR KELLY: Oh, I'm sorry. Is there a second?

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Second.

MAYOR KELLY: Any discussion?

COMMISSIONER FRANCK: (Indiscernible)

SECRETARY TO City Council: Commissioner Franck?

COMMISSIONER FRANCK: Aye.

SECRETARY TO City Council: Commissioner Madigan?

COMMISSIONER MADIGAN: Aye.

SECRETARY TO City Council: Commissioner Scirocco?

COMMISSIONER SCIROCCO: Aye.

SECRETARY TO City Council: Commissioner Dalton?

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Aye.

SECRETARY TO City Council: Mayor Kelly?

MAYOR KELLY: Aye.

The matter passes.
COMMISSIONER MADIGAN: Item number 3 is a discussion and vote, Budget Transfers - Payroll.

These transfers are to make expected adjustments to the 2021 budget. This was discussed at the 11/30/20 city council meeting and at budget workshops prior. The budget was completed and passed swiftly. Review and adjustments will be required throughout the next couple of months.

Budget transfers neither increase or decrease the 2021 budget. They reallocate expenses from one appropriation to another.

Lines 1 through 2 move funds from amounts budgeted for the discount issued for 2021 annual tax payments completed by March 1 to the line for part-time senior clerk approved last year to assist the Finance Department during short staffing and increased tasks.

This is actually a position that fits in the Accounts Department. It's the records manager position.
Lines -- and they are also helping
the Building and Planning Department with
their records and documents that are
stored.

Lines 3 through 4 move funds from
the Fire Department battalion chief to
the assistant chief to accommodate a
reorganization decided after the 2020
budget was approved. This is a
reallocation of funds budgeted in the
2021 Fire Department budget for the
battalion chief.

After the budget vote, the Public
Safety Department decided its preference
was to have an assistant fire chief
instead of a battalion chief. This does
not change the plans included in the 2021
budget since the comprehensive budget
plan to reduce the number of Fire
Department chiefs from three to two.
Only the title is different.

I move that the city council approve
the Budget Transfers - Payroll as
included with the agenda. This is a
motion.
MAYOR KELLY: Is there a second?

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Second.

MAYOR KELLY: Any discussion?

All those in favor say aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.

MAYOR KELLY: Any opposed?

The matter passes.

COMMISSIONER MADIGAN: Thank you.

That completes my agenda.

MAYOR KELLY: Thank you, Commissioner. On to Public Works.

COMMISSIONER SCIROCCO: Thank you, Mayor. I don't have anything on the agenda right now, but I do -- I think I want to add one item. And it's to add to the decorative lights on Broadway. And it's just an announcement.

MAYOR KELLY: Okay. Okay. Is there a second?

COMMISSIONER FRANCK: Second.

MAYOR KELLY: Any discussion?

All those in favor say aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.

MAYOR KELLY: Any opposed?

The matter passes. Go ahead,
Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER SCIROCCO: Thank you.

This is just an announcement. This is in regards to the decorative lights that we put up every year on Broadway. I thought that it would be a good idea this year to leave them up a little bit longer. I know in the past we've taken them down. Like this week, we were ready to take them down.

I think it's -- it kind of keeps the Christmas spirit, the holiday spirit for residents and visitors that come into the city alike. It makes a lot of sense to do that right now, given the fact that COVID is kind of like on everybody's mind. I think we need something to kind of calm the waters a little bit. And people really appreciate the lights and they appreciate that part of it.

So I think what we're going to do is DPW will keep those, at least the wreaths and the lights that are strung across the side street, I think (indiscernible) Street. We're going to keep those --
keep those lights up, at least till the end of the year -- end of the month.

MAYOR KELLY: That's great, Commissioner. I think that's a great idea. I love that. So I think -- it just brings some kind of joy into the city. So I appreciate that.

COMMISSIONER SCIROCCO: You're welcome.

MAYOR KELLY: Anything else, sir?

COMMISSIONER SCIROCCO: That's it.

MAYOR KELLY: Okay. Thank you. On to Public Safety, Commissioner Dalton.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Thank you, Mayor. The first item on my agenda is a COVID-19 update, which is rather lengthy. So first, I wanted to go through some of the numbers and where we're at. I know we just get numbers thrown at us all the time when it comes to COVID-19, so I thought it would be helpful to compare where we were two weeks ago as to where we are now.

On December 18th, we had in Saratoga County 1,457 active COVID-19 cases.
Today on January 5th, we have 2,770 active cases, which is, you know, a huge increase.

In the city of Saratoga Springs on December 18th, we had 175 active cases. Today, we have 343 active cases in the city of Saratoga Springs. The county had a seven-day rolling average positivity rate of 6.75 on December 18th. Today, our positivity rate is eleven percent. So almost double.

On December 18th, we had thirty-three people hospitalized. Today, we have fifty-two people hospitalized. On December 18th, we had twenty-nine deaths. Today, we have thirty-five deaths. So as you can see, the numbers are just so deep with the continued surge. And so I would advise every Saratogian to be as mindful as possible about where they're going and what they're doing. And, of course, always wear your masks, social distance, do all the things that you know you need to do. But really be cautious about where you're going and
what you're doing, because this is, as you know, community-spread.

We don't -- people who are getting infected don't know how they're getting infected or where it came from. Often times, we're making all the right choices, and so I really encourage people to be safe, stay home, order in. You can support our local businesses without having to go in and physically be in the places and be in contact with them.

Secondly, schools are open for in-person learning. They opened yesterday after winter break. I applaud all the protocols and their diligence. They've done a spectacular job. And if that changes at all, I will keep the community apprised. But as of now, all Saratoga Springs city schools are open for in-person learning.

Thirdly, I just wanted to make people aware again, that we have three locations within the city where you can pick up free face masks at any time. One is just inside the entrance of the Police
Department. You literally open the door and there's a big box right there of disposable masks that are available to anyone. We also have them at the entrance to the Recreation Department on Vanderbilt as well as at the Franklin Community Center. So if you or your family are in need of masks, please feel free to come and take as many as you need. It is just on an honor system. Take whatever is necessary.

Then, I wanted to talk about the emergency room at the hospital. Just a reminder to people that, obviously, if you are feeling ill or have an injury of any kind, do not hesitate to seek out the prevalent need, but lease remember that we have twenty urgent care centers in the area, (audio interference), Wilton Medical Arts, and then, also, in (indiscernible) Adirondack Urgent Care. And then also, Saratoga Hospital has terrific telemedicine. And so if you're experiencing a condition that's minor and you feel it could be initially rest at
home medicine, that would be a terrific first step so we could take some of the pressure off of the emergency department that they're experiencing right now.

Next, I would like to talk about -- we have entered the first stage of vaccinations. The first group of people being vaccinated are in phase 1-A. These are our frontline high-risk workers. These are people who are working in a hospital. They're doctors or nurses. Our Fire Department, as you all know, are also EMS and paramedics. They have begun getting vaccinated, but the appeal that we're putting out there from -- to the public is that we are very much in need of people to help facilitate these vaccinations. So if you're a former doctor, a former nurse, medical student, so on and so forth, there's a whole list online. If you want to volunteer to help facilitate these vaccinations, that would be tremendous. That is what we need right now.

The city and the county are also
working together to identify points of
distribution, PODs is what they're
called, for people to go and get
vaccinated. We're in the very early
stages of doing that. One of the places
that has been suggested and looked at is
the City Center for residents of Saratoga
Springs. Again, in the early stages,
there are a lot of requirements from the
state that you have to meet to become a
point of distribution for -- to be a
point of distribution for vaccinations.

Aside from that, lastly, I wanted to
just add a lot of people have continued
to ask if we have been designated a
micro-cluster zone. We have not. If
anything changes in that regard, I will
let you know. The emphasis really seems
to be, though, on hospitalization rates
and how many beds we have available,
which has remained relatively stable in
our area, and that's a very good thing as
opposed to the positivity rate, which
has -- I just mentioned, gone over it
directly.
Does anyone have any questions on any of those?

MAYOR KELLY: I do -- I do, Commissioner, thanks. And I know you and I have spoken today, but I don't know if there's any update at all on the county's program and their rollout for this vaccine.

I have not heard anything. I'm the mayor of the biggest city in the county. I've had no communication with the county. And I talked to the hospital today who has had no communication with the county. I talked to Carrie Warner (ph.) who has had no communication with the county.

So I'm a little perplexed at what this plan is. I'm talking to any services who went to Warren County, Glens Falls Hospital, to get their clients vaccinated. Where there's living resources in Saratoga Springs is trying to get into Albany and they're having difficulty doing that.

So why are we sending people living
here outside of the county? That's my question. And I just don't know. People are asking me as a mayor how is this happening. I have no clue and I don't get any answers.

So I don't know if you can help me out. I don't think you can because I know we discussed it. But I wanted to put it on the record that I have no idea. People ask me every day. I get as many emails as all of you commissioners. And I'm going to tell you, I don't have any answers and I don't get anything from the county.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: I appreciate your frustration very much. As you know, we don't have a public health department. So we are reliant on the county health department for information, whether it's about vaccinations or metrics.

I don't have an answer for you. I would definitely defer to the public supervisor who I'm aware we're going to have an update at the end of this meeting. I'll refer the question to
them. I think they will have the information that you're looking for. But I do not have it at this time.

MAYOR KELLY: Okay, thanks.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Sorry I can't be more helpful there.

Anyhow, that concludes the COVID-19 updates. The second item on my agenda is pre-foreclosure and foreclosure prevention announcements. Which is in March of 2017, we received a grant from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation for the (indiscernible) property mitigation and prevention initiatives.

Over the past two years with the money from this grant, our department has been able to create a vacant structural ordinance and registry, hold community outreach informational meetings, create a database, help to reform code enforcement costs, and mail postcards and letters that can help proactively address foreclosure or pre-foreclosure prevention.

I just wanted to make the council
and the public aware that the last
requirement of this grant is to send out
informational letters on foreclosure
prevention. If you receive this letter,
it does not mean you are in foreclosure
or pre-foreclosure. It is simply a
letter that we send out to residents of
the city that has resources and
information if indeed they are in that
position.

So the letter is attached to the
agenda. People can read it. But I just
wanted to stress to the public and also
make the council aware that if you get
this in the mail, do not immediately
panic and assume that for some reason
your property is in foreclosure or pre-
foreclosure. This is simply
informational to help people who may or
may not be in that situation.

Then finally and third, a very happy
announcement, and I think he is on our
call, is regarding Chief Dyer. Are
you -- has he got there yet? Hello.

So I'm delighted, delighted to
announce that Battalion Chief Aaron Dyer has been promoted to the position of Assistant Fire Chief, effectively December 26th, 2020.

So I just wanted to applaud him on this promotion. He has been an incredible asset to us, especially throughout this pandemic. He has managed COVID enforcement and every element of this pandemic in front of making sure businesses stay compliant to just everything, truly, as it comes from the state and it's delivered to the city about COVID-19. Chief Dyer has been on top of all of it and managing it with our very small (indiscernible) COVID enforcement staff. And we have some terrific candidates who applied for this. But I feel that Chief Dyer is very deserving of the position. I just wanted to briefly also read the announcement from our fire chief, Joe Dolan (ph.).

(Indiscernible), it is a privilege to announce Battalion Chief Aaron Dyer's promotion to assistant chief. Battalion
Chief Dyer's promotion to assistant chief is effective on December 26th. He has been with the department for over twenty-two years. His presence on the administration has been positive and supportive and (indiscernible) role. Chief Dyer has reflected a calm demeanor and positive attitude throughout his tenure with the Saratoga Springs Fire Department. He has repeatedly demonstrated leadership, knowledge, and abilities throughout his career, most recently during this pandemic, as he was responsible for the safe reopening of businesses in Saratoga Springs.

He has elevated the Fire Prevention Office to higher levels despite the loss of civilian staff.

There were many well-qualified candidates for the position of assistant chief. I thank those who interviewed. It is rewarding to see how many people (indiscernible) who have who are willing to interview for such an important promotion. I will ask you to join me in
wishing Battalion Chief Aaron Dyer sincere congratulations of his promotion to assistant chief. Congratulations, Joe Dolan. So congratulations, Chief Dyer. Well deserved.

CHIEF DYER: Thank you.

MAYOR KELLY: Can I say a few words?

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Absolutely.

MAYOR KELLY: Chief, I think it's great. It's great news. It's not just COVID. We went through the fire with you, too. So you have been there through everything with us. And I think Commissioner Dalton said it best. Your calm demeanor, you don't get excited about anything. And that's good when you're dealing with Meg Kelly. So that's great, right? But I do appreciate the responsiveness that you had given me personally is truly amazing. It could be 10 o'clock at night, it could be 2 a.m., and you will always answer me. It's really, really amazing. And I appreciate that as someone who needs answers rapidly, you're always right there. But
more than anything, I think that the choice was well-deserved, and I wish you many, many years. So congratulations.

CHIEF DYER: Thank you. I'll do my best.

COMMISSIONER MADIGAN: I'd like to say congratulations. I'd like to say congratulations to you also. And of course, I always put my Commissioner of Finance hat on, and just so the public knows that we are not going to be replacing the battalion chief position. We're going to leave that unfunded, as if we did actually have a retiree and left it unfunded. But congratulations to you.

CHIEF DYER: Thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER MADIGAN: It's well deserved.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: I'm glad you said that, Commissioner Madigan, because Chief Dyer is going to continue to be overseeing the COVID Enforcement Department as well as take on the responsibilities of the assistant chief,
which is just unprecedented. He already
has incredibly just an enormous work
load. I know he's capable of doing that,
but for him to make this sacrifice really
reflects how seriously he takes the
situation we're in financially. So I
thank him so much for that.

CHIEF DYER: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: All right.

Thank you. That concludes my agenda.

SUPERVISOR VEITCH: Congratulations.

MAYOR KELLY: Okay, thank you. On
to the supervisors, Supervisor Veitch.

SUPERVISOR VEITCH: Thank you.

Happy new year, everybody. I haven't
seen any of you, I don't think, since
January 1st. So happy new year, city
council. Good to see you.

My first agenda item is just to
review quickly the 2020 budget from our
Saratoga County that was approved on
December 9th of 2020. Just a couple of
quick highlights that are in the budget.
The first is that we did find -- did
actually approve the 350,000 dollars for
IT improvements to our county supervisors' boardroom. It's going to include a lot of different things like integrating our audiovisual system with conferencing software, upgrading all the microphones in the AV system, upgrading our boardroom and our committee room with better screens and things for when we maybe finally have people back in our room so that we can see what's going on in the meeting, and also allowing for video and streaming of our meetings, and also adding some public Wi-Fi in some of the areas where the public will be at the county, such as the treasurer's office, the clerk's office, Board of Supervisors, and the Social Services Department. We don't have any public Wi-Fi at the county right now, so it would be good to have that upgraded.

I am really excited that we're going to finally be video streaming our meetings. I can't believe I'm saying that in 2021 that that's a big deal because everybody does it, as well as
getting our meetings so that people could
hear what's going on in the room because
right now, when you call into the county,
it's really awful and you can't hear
anything. I feel bad for the public and
for anybody else who calls in for our
meetings right now who can't really
determine what's going on.

It's a big boardroom. There's
twenty-three supervisors. And the way
that we handle it right now does not meet
the needs for what we want to do.

So it's going to take a little while
to get it all installed because it's a
large expense, but I'm glad that we're
moving forward with that this year in our
budget.

We also added 75,000 dollars to our
budget to add a public information
officer. I think part of the problem
with what's going on with the current
pandemic among other things is sometimes
a lack of communication as the mayor had
stated. So we need some better
communication, and I think this will help
a little bit to get the message from the Board of Supervisors to the public as to what's going on, number one, with what we're doing at the county but on other matters as well.

And then we also did several other personnel changes in addition to the various departments to hopefully serve the public more efficiently in the departments.

We did really scrutinize all those justifications for those positions that the department heads wanted because I think its good for us to understand what they need and to meet those needs. Because really our job is to serve the public of Saratoga County from our departments.

And that's it for the budget. Again, it did pass -- did pass at the meeting, so I'm glad that we're moving forward with that.

Next on the agenda is just a quick update on the Buildings and Grounds end-of-year report for 2020. I do serve as
the chair. I did serve as the chair of
the Buildings and Grounds Committee for
the last two years. I just wanted to
notate a couple of things that are going
on at the county with Buildings and
Grounds.

The first thing I just want to
mention is that we are constructing a new
airport perimeter fence up at Saratoga
County Airport, which should be done this
year. We completed the construction of
the new public safety building this year
as well. We rehabilitated our County
Farm Road water tower which supplies
water to the jail, which should be
complete a little bit later on this year.
We remodeled the Fire Training Center
after it was used as a Code Blue shelter
early last year. Generator replacements
for the Operation Center in Milton,
Providence, McGregor, and Spruce Mountain
cell sites. We set up the COVID call
center this year. We had to do that from
scratch. We also prepared and worked on
going the Woodlawn Avenue building
ready for Shelters of Saratoga, who is
currently using it.

And just as a quick statistics here,
the Buildings and Grounds Department at
Saratoga County maintains 609,000 square
feet of county building space. They also
maintain exterior grounds and they do
lots of maintenance requests throughout
the year. So I just want to say, as the
committee chair, I want to thank our
Public Works Department at the county and
the Buildings and Grounds staff for doing
all the tasks that we asked of them last
year, and we appreciate that very much.

We also -- I also want to thank them
a little bit when we had our offices put
in here in city hall, the county
Buildings and Grounds as well as the city
Buildings and Grounds and DPW helped us
get in here, so I want to just thank both
of those departments for that as well
this year. So thank you for that. And
that's that item.

Next item is, just quickly, an
announcement. Again, I apologize for not
being at the last meeting. Saratoga County had a marathon seven-hour-long board meeting on the 15th of December. So we were still in the meeting when the city council was meeting. I don't think that's ever happened in my whole career as a supervisor. I've come late to city council meetings but not where I've missed the entire meeting. So again, I just apologize for that and just want to let the public know that that's where I was at the last meeting when it came time to do my agenda.

And again, last -- I think that's it, right? Oh, no. And last on the agenda is just to announce that tomorrow at 4 o'clock, the county will have it's organizational meeting for 2021 at the boardrooms in Saratoga County where we will choose a new chairman. We will make board and chairman appointments to all of our committees. It's going to be a very interesting meeting I think this year. I do foresee some changes in how we do business this year going forward. And
after 2020, I hope that we can do a
better job and work hard to serve the
community, be responsible, open, and
transparent, and work better, function
better as a county, eliminate some old,
outdated processes, and do better for
everybody.

So again, I'm looking forward to
tomorrow's meeting. It should be
interesting. And with that, that is my
agenda. So thank you.

MAYOR KELLY: Thank you.

On to Supervisor Gaston.

SUPERVISOR GASTON: Thank you.

Mayor, with your permission, do you mind
if I move my first item to the last? I
think the other two will be quicker, and
that leads -- knowing -- okay, thank you.

So currently, number 2 is just a
2020 board year-end. As Supervisor
Veitch said, a lot was learned at the
county over the course of this year and I
hope that we take these lessons learned
and make changes.

One of the things I'm super excited
about, at least on the draft rules that I hope to vote in tomorrow, is we will be removing the twenty-four-hour notice for county public comment. That’s been a concern of mine since I took office, and I’m delighted to be able to say that we’re going to be able to remove that so that individuals, even if they find out at the last minute, can come, share their concerns.

As I’ve done in previous years, I will be releasing a survey on tomorrow asking for any feedback concerns over the past year and any priorities for 2021. It’s open to any resident of the county. I do ask that you put in your residence just so that I can consider that and share as needed with other supervisors. So please look forward to that.

What is currently listed as my third item is the public forum. I will be having that on January 21st from 6 to 8 p.m. on Facebook Live. I will be reviewing the results of those surveys and discussing the events of the
organizational meeting tomorrow and what it looks like the direction of the board may be in 2021, which, hopefully, we'll know by this time tomorrow evening.

So on that note, I will go back up to what was my first item, which is a COVID-19 update. Commissioner Dalton discussed the numbers in our community.

Those numbers --

COMMISSIONER DALTON: I'm sorry, Tara -- Supervisor Gaston. I just -- I did forget to mention this new strain which (indiscernible). So I think you have it included in your agenda.

SUPERVISOR GASTON: I do. But if there is any particular question or concern about anything I discuss, any commissioner is welcome to ask any questions. And if I don't have the answer here, I will reach out and make sure I have it.

So our numbers do continue to increase. Whether they are a result of any particular new variant or just community spread is undetermined at this
time. That's not through any action or inaction of the county. That is because the rate of transmission is so significant.

Additionally, the commissioner did note that we have announced thirty-five deaths. That's an increase of four from our previous number. Those four are nursing home deaths that were previously took place within the county, were notified to the state, but were not provided to the Public Health Department.

That is an area of concern between the state and the county where the state responds specifically to nursing homes and we're -- we have cleared up that mirror of communication to make sure that there is no longer communication differences between the county dashboard in communication and the state dashboard in communication.

As the commissioner indicated, yesterday, the governor announced -- with about five minutes prior notice to the Public Health Department, that a sampling
of the UK variant or B117 variant of the COVID strain was found in Saratoga Springs. This is solely a response to the close relationship between Saratoga Hospital and the state lab at Wadsworth. Any tests that have went through Wadsworth they are monitoring regularly doing surveillance testing. And so this happened to pop up.

The investigation is ongoing as to how the strain arrived. Was it community spread? Was it transmitted through travel? And as that information is discovered and cleared for release to the public, because private health information should not be released, we will provide additional information.

While this variant is believed to be much more transmissible, it is not believed to cause any increase in morbidity or mortality. So this means more people are likely to get it, but the rate of potential consequences -- sorry, the word just left my head -- the increase in issues of serious illness,
hospitalization, and death do not
increase for a particular individual.

Now, if more people have it, that
may mean that we are seeing more
hospitalizations. But that is a result
of a population effect, not on an
individual basis.

We appreciate -- oh, go ahead,
commissioner.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Interject
something. I've been asked how media has
publicized everywhere the reason that
they picked the strain up at, which was
(indiscernible). I just wanted to say,
and correct me if I'm wrong, that
(indiscernible) and their owners have
cooperated with the county Public Health
and shut down immediately when they had a
positive test of one of their employees
and had shut down for twelve days, and
were following all the protocols.
There's no way they could have ever been
aware that this was a new strain. No one
would have known that. And so they
really were doing everything right, as
far as I can tell.

And so I just hope people are being compassionate about the situation then and not placing blame. This is just not a situation where I'm placing blame. This is something I really -- it could have happened at any restaurant, any business, any place in the state. And so I just wanted to point that out.

SUPERVISOR GASTON: Yes, County Public Health is currently working with the business and with the state in the investigation. They are cooperating. Commissioner Kuhles has reached out to the CDC for additional information to make sure if there are any other steps that should be taken. His goal is, obviously, primarily public health and safety. But he also wants to make sure that the business is able to reopen as soon as possible, as soon as it is safe. And as soon as that information is available, he will be working on that. And he's working closely with the state on that.
They did do some testing of individuals today who are associated with the business. Four individuals have come up as positive. I've seen news reports that indicate that those individuals do have the strain. That is an inaccurate statement at this time. The way that it works, including the testing that's currently taking place at the state park, it's an ordinary COVID test that any individual gets. Now, as I talked to Commissioner Dalton about earlier, it is the ordinary in that it's the deep Q-Tip one, it's not the tip of the nose. But it is a standard one did -- I guess, COVID test. The sample is run through. If it tests positive for COVID, each of these samples are then sequenced. Or they're an attempted sequence, depending on where an individual is in the illness cycle or the method of testing. Whether it was deep enough or got enough of the sample, it may not be able to be sequenced. But the goal is to sequence it, determine the strain. And that's
where these four positive cases are right now.

All of the tests that are being performed at the state park of individuals who are concerned about potential exposure, they are also undergoing the same process. They will have a regular COVID test. If they turn positive, then that test will be sent and will be sequenced to determine whether there is any known prevalence of this B117 strain in our community.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Do you have the times for people who might want to be tested? New York State has said that anyone who thought that they could have had exposure to and thought -- or they're employees between the dates of December 18th and December 24th, are encouraged to participate in this testing. And it went on today. It will happen tomorrow from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. And if you go online, there's a link. You can register, you can reserve
a spot, and get your test done. So there are lots of available -- there's lots of availability for the remainder of the week if you think you may have been exposed in this particular instance.

SUPERVISOR GASTON: Yes, it does require pre-registration. It does not require any other medical evaluation. We do ask that it be limited to individuals who are concerned about their potential exposure in this case because the purpose is to determine potential prevalence through surveillance testing.

Are there any other questions about the particular variant?

The next biggest concern in our community is vaccination, as the mayor indicated earlier.

As the commissioner said, any individual who may meet the qualifications to administer vaccines, which has been broadened by the governor to include individuals such as dentists, EMTs, nurses who wouldn't ordinarily do it, they may register to volunteer at
capitalregionvax.com. This is the site that has been put up by Albany Med, which is leading -- well, what has been assigned, the role of leading vaccination in the capital region. Any individual who is ready, willing, and able to volunteer can go there, put in their license information, it is secure, and they will be provided access when available.

There is training that is required by the state under the governor's order, prior to issuing vaccines if you do not ordinarily do so. Regrettably, the state has only issued part of that training for those who are certified EMTs. We are pushing very hard for them to release the rest so that that gets done and we have those people available to vaccinate as we can.

It is important to note that vaccination is being solely controlled by the State of New York. Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, the state requested that each county develop a vaccination
plan to vaccinate and get each of their communities to herd immunity.

Saratoga County did this. We developed a plan. In fact, we engaged in pilot programs so that we could make sure that vaccines could be put out quickly and efficiently. However, the chamber and the Department of Health changed directions on that and indicated that we were going to the phased approach and it was going to be led by hospitals in each region.

As a result of that, Saratoga County does not have the capacity (sic) to determine who gets vaccinated, or how many vaccines we have, or even when we get them.

The vaccines, we are notified often twenty-four to forty-eight hours by the state that we will have any. We have been notified that we will get some and haven't, and we have been notified at the last minute that some are going to be transitioned from other federally-qualified health servers to our
facilities.

Right now, we have -- all eligible New Yorkers in phase 1-A were able to get vaccinated last week. That includes high-risk hospital workers such as emergency room workers, EMS workers, coroners, medical examiners, and staff and residents at OPWDD, ONH, and Oasis facilities.

Urgent care providers were also available, and any individual who would be administering a COVID-19 vaccine.

Starting yesterday, we were in the expanded phase 1-A, which includes additional frontline high-risk health workers, anyone in direct contact with patients, including intake staff, public health workers who meet directly with the public, anyone who collects or processes COVID-19 specimens, and a myriad of medical workers including those in private practice.

A big concern that I've heard recently from our community is regarding dentists, and I did confirm with
Commissioner Kuhles that they are, in fact, one of the highest risk communities, and they are included in this list. So as of yesterday, they are able to be vaccinated.

Individuals who meet eligibility requirements thus far should have been notified through HCS, the Health Care Systems, which is what all medical providers with licensure get communications from. Dr. Kuhles, himself, sent our advisories to any individual who qualifies. If you believe that you are currently eligible for any of these phases and you have not received notification, your first recommendation would be to reach out to your professional association and see if they have any guidance. This is true whether they are -- whether you are a member of them or not.

Commissioner Kuhles has reached out to these organizations. They have the information and can connect you. If you are not a member, you don't know how to
get in touch but you do believe that you
are eligible, please reach out directly
to me at tngaston@saratogacountyny.gov,
or call me at (518) 934-1944.
Supervisors -- or Supervisor Veitch as
well. We are collecting this information
for our communities, for individuals who
believe that they are eligible and have
not yet received notification and are
collecting this to be forwarded to the
commissioner to make sure that they do
receive notification.

There is a state website to check
eligibility. At this time, there are
some problems with it, so I do not
recommend that you use that website.
However, within the next twelve to
eighteen hours, either that will be fixed
or Saratoga County will be putting up
their own website so that individuals can
determine their eligibility.

The next phase of vaccination is 1-B
and that is expected to be expanded to
individuals who are seventy-five and
older and/or who have certain pre-
existing conditions.

I understand that the information on vaccination is not where the public would like it, where the city would like it, where I would like it, also not where the commissioner would like it.

The state is, again, very tightly controlling these phases. The information that they are posting on their vaccine distribution page is all that has been released publicly or otherwise. We are requesting additional information, and as soon as we get it, we will be putting it out.

There are currently no facilities in Saratoga County that provide vaccination to the public generally. So there are no approved. If there are any, they are not under the purview of the Public Health Department and they are acting contrary to the orders of the governor and the Department of Health.

So I have not heard of any. I hope that's not actually happening. I will say that, despite the fact that we do not
have the full timeline, the county is working diligently to plan for broader release of this vaccine. As Commissioner Dalton indicated, the county is reviewing various sites throughout the city of Saratoga Springs and the remainder of the county so that we can institute PODs or deliver vaccines with less than twenty-four hours notice because that may be what we have.

The goal of Commissioner Kuhles is to vaccinate as many people as quickly as possible. So the moment that there is any eligibility, we will making sure that people have access to that and know where to go.

The -- okay, I've covered this part -- the vaccine --

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Let me jump in one more.

SUPERVISOR GASTON: Okay.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: I think -- I just want to point to the people that I am also incredibly frustrated with how this is being rolled out. But I do want
to point out, people, that this is not as easy as walking into either a Target or CVS and getting your flu shot. This is much, much more complicated in terms of how the vaccine itself is stored at the point of distribution. And then also, you have get two shots for this. I know there is a very specific time window that you have to wait in between those two doses. I believe one is twenty-eight days and the other is twenty-one days. So if people are coming in to get a vaccine, you're going to have to make sure they're scheduled to come back within those twenty-one or twenty-eight days, and that's going to be an ongoing situation.

You also need people to wait at least fifteen minutes after they've had the vaccine in the rare occurrence that they have an allergic reaction, in which case, you will not have Epinephrin or some kind of medical treatment on standby in the event you were to have an allergic reaction. And this is not -- this is not
as easy as walking into your local pharmacy or urgent care and just getting a flu shot and going on your way. And so, people need to be aware of some of the intricacies as we go through this process and are feeling frustrated. It's not as easy as it might appear.

MAYOR KELLY: I agree, Commissioner Dalton. It's not an easy task, but this has been since March. We should have a plan, I think. So --

SUPERVISOR GASTON: We do have a plan.

MAYOR KELLY: -- actually, I think that -- to sit there and -- where is Dr. Kuhles? Bring him on. Bring him on! Have him meet us, at least. He's unavailable to everybody. That's what I hear.

So he needs to speak to us, the public and he's not. So that's my number one issue, that I have not heard from him. And the public needs to hear from me. He's the new guy in town that we're all looking to for answers. And we get
more out of Tara Gaston than this new
doctor.

So this is kind of where I'm at.
And I am frustrated because have we
contacted the Navy? The Navy has staff.
They know how to give a shot. They have
facilities.

There's things that I'm hearing that
aren't being done at the county level.
Or maybe they are. I don't know.
Nobody's really telling me what's going
on.

So that's my frustration to the
county. The county has to deal with the
state. I get that. I get that piece.
And I get that they throw things at you
really fast. They did it all through
COVID to Commissioner Dalton and her
team. They threw things at her within
five minutes and everybody had to duck.
We get that.

But we do need as -- this is what
the public is waiting for. It's here.
And nobody is telling us anything other
than Tara Gaston at a council meeting
that how many people are watching? I can probably tell you there's probably nineteen people on here.

Where is the Commissioner of Public Health? That's what I want to know. Get him out and have him start making announcements to the public. We want to hear from him. Where is he? And I know that I'm preaching to the wrong person, and I don't mean to be taking it out on the supervisors, but that's a message that I want to get out there. Because people are asking me for those answers and I can't get them.

So have him come out. They did a Facebook Live today. I don't know if anybody watched it, but I did. Holy cow. I really think that we need to get the Commissioner to take a handle on this.

SUPERVISOR GASTON: The Commissioner is -- and I actually have a statement I was going to read at the end, but I'll just -- basically, a significant portion of the response to COVID, including vaccination, requires his physical
presence, based on the requirements of
the state as given.

What that means -- so where is he
right now? He's on his phone with the
state and pushing these tests and making
sure that our community has the
information they need. I was on the
phone with him --

MAYOR KELLY: Okay, Tara, I'm just
going to stop you there because he can't
be on the phone twenty-four hours a day.
I'm not going to -- you can say that he's
on the phone right now. Is he in the
room with you? You know that? I mean,
come on. I don't want to get into this,
but that's a little bit of ridiculous
statement.

Let's just say that he should take
time for the public, he's a public
servant just like we all are, to come out
and tell us what's going on. And that's
all I'm -- that's all I want to say. I
don't need to carry this on. That's my
message to the county. Where is he?

SUPERVISOR GASTON: Mayor Kelly,
we -- I am aware of that. We are working on that. There are -- is he on the phone right now? Yes. I know this because I was on the phone with him just a short time ago, and he's supposed to be updating me shortly.

Was he on the phone all day? No. But I also know that he was personally manning a vaccination distribution for particular workers that are under the 1-A eligibility because he has to be there physically in person because it is his medical license that they are under and the state requires that.

I agree. We are working on providing him additional personnel and support so that he does not have to be in certain areas at certain times.

Yes. I have said many times, the county has not acted as fulsomely as we could. This is a chronically under-staffed and under-resourced department. And as a result of that, we do not have the communications that we need. A hundred percent.
But I fully support Commissioner Kuhles and his decision to be in particular spaces in order to provide support so that the vaccination is happening. To be there in certain meetings -- I know for at least three hours today, he was in meetings with the state, making sure that he had the information necessary so that all local businesses could respond to this variant.

I agree. There is another meeting between myself and other emergency response individuals tomorrow morning. We are taking additional steps, including hiring personnel if necessary to support this and to make sure that we free up some time so that the commissioner himself can speak.

Regrettably, at the time that the Facebook Live was scheduled today, we tried to get the commissioner in and schedule around him, but he was on a call with the state at that time in response to this. I believe Mike did -- he's not the commissioner, but he provided
information as he could.

    And we are -- we are continuing to work on it. We -- it's a matter of constant improvement, absolutely. We have not at any point been perfect. And I'm only one of twenty-three, but I absolutely take responsibility for that because there's a lot that we could do.

    I am extraordinarily pleased with Commissioner Kuhles. The response that he has stood up -- he has been extraordinarily responsive. I'm sorry. But he has not been as responsive as you would like. I am happy, or I'm sure Supervisor Veitch, to discuss outside of this meeting any particular concerns, and to arrange communications, if that would be at all helpful --

    MAYOR KELLY: Well, communications with the mayor or the council in the largest city in his county and with the local hospital, the only hospital in the county, that he hasn't communicated with, there's an issue.

    So yeah, communicate to him, because
he's not communicating with us. That's all I'm saying. You can say how great he is. He's not great on my list.

SUPERVISOR GASTON: I have been in direct contact with the hospital, particularly in discussion with vaccinations and health care workers because that is part of their responsibility in our county.

MAYOR KELLY: So I -- listen, listen -- I talked to the CEO today. They have not spoken. I talked to a couple of doctors that lead the COVID. They have not spoken. I talk to them almost weekly. And I talked to them today.

I'm just going to say that that's where we're at. I don't want to belabor this, Tara. This is not about you. This is about a communication higher than you at the doctor level. And I'm just going to say, if you're going to give kudos to him, I don't give kudos to him. So we have a disagreement, and that's okay.

But I think the public's very
disappointed. I'm hearing it. So that -- I'm relaying the message from my constituents saying, we have this new doctor, we haven't seen him, we haven't spoken to him. Where is he?

COMMISSIONER DALTON: May I --

MAYOR KELLY: I call the hospital. We don't hear from him. Sorry. That's it. Please.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: Ma'am --

MAYOR KELLY: Excuse me, I'm not done. So just give me a second.

Okay. So I'm going to end this conversation. I appreciate your work. But I do have to say that there's a big problem here, Supervisor Gaston. And I know that you're trying your best. But I think that it's all about the public and being transparent. And that's what we're all about. And I don't see it at this level. So that's my last comment. Thank you.

SUPERVISOR GASTON: Can I -- then I would request that you contact me outside of this meeting as well to let me know so
that we can get these things handled.

It is unfortunate that I'm hearing about it now and I wasn't able to handle it earlier, but I'm happy --

MAYOR KELLY: I have been trying to get ahold of this gentlemen. So -- I don't want to go any farther. I'm done. So thank you. Thank you for your time.

COMMISSIONER DALTON: May I make a suggestion? One of the biggest challenges of this pandemic has been an enormous and overwhelming amount of information and data that the public has been asked to understand. It is constantly changing. Whether it is something about micro-cluster jobs, whether it's positively ratios, whether it's phases 1-A or 1-B of being vaccinated, there's been an enormous amount of information and it's wildly confusing to everyone.

And so I think that there's a lot of good things going on behind the scenes. But the public, generally speaking, is lost. And it's understandable. And so I
think that this -- what I'm hearing is
that perhaps we could just have some kind
of a special meeting, whether it's a
forum, a special city council meeting,
and invite all the necessary people,
including Commissioner Kuhles, to answer
some of the public's questions and go
over where we are right now. Whether
it's the contact tracing, a vaccination
rollout, testing, or what not. I just
think that what I'm hearing here is that
that's necessary. Not just for this
group, but for the public at large, for
the people that need to know.

MAYOR KELLY: Okay, Commissioner --
Supervisor Gaston, do you have anything
else?

SUPERVISOR GASTON: Yes, I would
like to read the statement that I had,
and then I will be done.

MAYOR KELLY: Thank you.

SUPERVISOR GASTON: "Saratoga County
Public Health Department is working hard
to respond to COVID vaccines, including
through contact tracing, emergency
response, and planning for vaccinations. Many of these aspects of the response must be lead directly by Commissioner Kuhles, including through physical presence at vaccine distribution. And unfortunately, many aspects of public communications such as today's Facebook Live, have involved other individuals. Much of the work of the Department right now is also not as visible and out in the public as it is planning, investigation, and research.

Our Public Health Department is doing their job even when it's harder to see. However, we do need the public to do their job as well. We ask you to wear masks, consider the risk in engaging in any activity outside of your home when given the risk profile of your community, of your household, minimize travel and gatherings to only that necessary, and to monitor for symptoms, and contact your health care provider with any concerns about symptoms or exposure.

When contacted by county or state
contact tracers, I ask that you answer completely and honestly. The goal of contact tracing is not punishment, but prevention, so that there is no more transmission or that transmission is reduced.

Neither the Public Health Department nor the community alone can overcome this challenge. It requires all of us working together.

Any individual who has any concerns about what Public Health is doing or not doing or any other concerns or questions, can contact me at any time. I have heard from many members of the public, and we are responsive to that and I will continue to do so as long as I hold the ability to do so in this position."

That concludes my agenda.

MAYOR KELLY: Thank you, Supervisor.

Any other business from the council?

Then we are adjourned. Good night.
CERTIFICATION

I, Paul T. Abramson, certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Paul T. Abramson

eScribers
352 Seventh Avenue, Suite #604
New York, NY 10001

Date: January 13, 2021

Approved: 2-2-2021

Vote: 5 - 0