



January 26, 2021

**CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS**  
State of the City Address

**6:00 PM**  
(via Zoom)

**6:00 PM**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**ROLL CALL**

**SALUTE TO FLAG**

**MAYOR'S DEPARTMENT**

1. State of the City Address

**ACCOUNTS DEPARTMENT**

1. State of the City Address

**FINANCE DEPARTMENT**

1. State of the City

**PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

1. State of the City

**PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT**

1. State of the City

**SUPERVISORS**

Matt Veitch

1. State of the City

Tara Gaston

1. State of the City

**ADJOURN**



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CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS

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6:00 PM

(via Zoom)

PRESENT: Meg Kelly, Mayor  
Michele Madigan, Commissioner of Finance  
John Franck, Commissioner of Accounts  
Anthony Scirocco, Commissioner of DPW  
Robin Dalton, Commissioner of DPS

STAFF PRESENT: Lisa Shields, Deputy Mayor  
Deirdre Ladd, Deputy Commissioner, Finance  
Maire Masterson, Deputy Commissioner, Accounts  
Joe O'Neill, Deputy Commissioner, DPW  
Eileen Finneran, Deputy Commissioner, DPS

Vincent DeLeonardis

Matthew Veitch, Supervisor  
Tara Gaston, Supervisor

**Transcriber's note: this meeting is being conducted in accordance with Executive Order 202.1 and is a full transcript of the meeting.**

**Transcript begins at 6:00 p.m.**

**Mayor Kelly:** Good evening. Welcome to our City Council meeting January 26, 2021 special City Council meeting – State of the City. Roll call please.

**Secretary to the City Council:** Commissioner Franck.

**Commissioner Franck:** Present.

**Secretary to the City Council:** Commissioner Madigan.

**Commissioner Madigan:** Present.

**Secretary to the City Council:** Commissioner Scirocco.

**Commissioner Scirocco:** Here.

**Secretary to the City Council:** Commissioner Dalton.

**Commissioner Dalton:** Here.

**Secretary to the City Council:** Mayor Kelly.

**Mayor Kelly:** Here.

**Secretary to the City Council:** Supervisor Veitch.

**Supervisor Veitch:** Here.

**Secretary to the City Council:** Supervisor Gaston.

**Supervisor Gaston:** Here.

**Mayor Kelly:** Please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**All:** "I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

**Mayor Kelly:** Good evening and welcome to the 2021 State of the City Address for Saratoga Springs. I am Mayor Meg Kelly. I appreciate the opportunity every January to reflect on the previous year. And what a year it was...2020 will soon - not soon be forgotten. For the fourth year, my fellow City Council members and our County Supervisors will join me in this presentation tonight. Throughout the year of challenges, including COVID-19 Pandemic, we have strived to work collaboratively, and always in the best interests of Saratoga Springs. Normally at this time, I would recognize the current and former officials who would join us at a venue like the City Center. Instead, we are on a Zoom meeting for the sake of everyone's health, so I welcome all who are joining us via livestream.

There was a time when we thought we had faced a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence: the lightning strike that closed City Hall in 2018. This extraordinary event tested us, took us out of the safety and comfort of our workplaces, and relocated us to the Recreation Center for almost two years.

At our last State of the City address, the highly anticipated move back to the newly renovated City Hall was atop the list of a very full schedule of projects and activities. Obviously, 2020 unfolded in a very unexpected ways. We had to pivot and work remotely, social distance, and meet in Zoom rooms. City Hall business and City services did not stop however. Projects moved forward, new initiatives were launched, and the Council came together to overcome the tremendous challenges of the City's budget, finding ways to save jobs and maintain service levels.

The challenges are not all behind us, as we know, and I imagine that our concerns are shared with most cities in New York State, across the country and around the world. The health of our residents and the local economy are my primary focus for 2021, and more than ever before, the factors that are critical to our success are not entirely within our control. Still, the incredible people in this City inspire me, and I know that the team on this City Council will work to meet the challenges and be stronger together.

At this time, I would like to take a moment of silence for all who have passed during this horrible pandemic. Thank you.

I will leave the full discussion of the City's response to the pandemic for Commissioner Dalton in Public Safety and to our County Supervisors. And I expect that Commissioner Madigan will provide us with the comments about the financial outlook for the City. In another year of uncertainty, our city employees will persevere. It is a privilege to say for the second year in a row "hats-off, and endless thanks to the employees of the City of Saratoga Springs".

Now, I am pleased to present the highlights from each of the Mayor's departments. My presentation centers on the work of recreation, planning and building, but as we all know very well, every department relies heavily on Vince DeLeonardis, Tony Izzo and Robin McFee in our Legal Department, and Christy Spadaro and Nicole Kommer in Human Resources. We appreciate everything you do.

I must comment on the resiliency of our Recreation Department. They literally had the “hardwood floor” pulled out from underneath them when City Hall offices took over the Rec Center after the lightning strike in 2018. Fast forward and return to City Hall was just underway when COVID-19 hit and halted most recreation programs. As summer approached, the state released new guidelines, and the Rec Department worked with the Fire Department and the Office of Risk & Safety to ensure all protocols were in place for a safe and successful Camp Saradac.

Thank you to the leadership of our Recreation Department, John Hirliman, and the support staff Kathy Lanfear, Doug June, Jill Ramos and Wesley Clark, and the guidance from our Recreation Commission. The Recreation Department has recreated programs to stay in compliance with the state protocols and offer much-needed sports and leisure activities. Let it be known, that our rinks are ready for hockey when we are approved by New York State. Pickle ball and racquetball have returned to the Rec Center already.

The offices that provide services in support of development and construction in our City, otherwise known as the Planning and Building Departments, are now located on the beautiful office space on the third floor in City Hall. I am always so impressed when I have a chance to look at the range of services provided by this talented group of professionals.

Tina Carton leads the City’s planning work in the areas of parks, open space, sustainability and historic preservation. We are proud to report that the Saratoga Greenbelt Geyser Road Trail will open to the public after final touches at the Route 50 intersection. The Geyser Trail is an eight-foot wide, 2.8 mile-long three-season trail that follows Geyser Road, from Milton town line to the Saratoga Spa State Park. We are so excited to celebrate its opening with the community, and we look forward to the ribbon cutting this spring. Progress continues on other sections of the Greenbelt Trail, including the downtown connector, and Crescent Avenue from South Broadway to Nelson Avenue. The City’s first Natural Resource Inventory was adopted in 2020 and will help to identify and document key natural resources throughout the city. It will provide guidance for critical land use planning, development and conservation initiatives that will help the City sustain its most important resources for generations to come. March of 2020 makes us think of COVID. It is also notable because the City of Saratoga Springs became a bronze certified Climate Smart Community. Certified communities are the foremost leaders in the state.

Lindsey Connors leads the Community Development Programs. As COVID-19 caused new economic hardships, we were positioned well to deliver several new federally funded programs, including five hundred forty thousand in CDBG-CV funding to local services, the COVID-19 Small Business Grant Program, and the COVID-19 Emergency Housing Assistance Program. The latter has prevented homelessness for thirteen Saratoga Springs households at this writing. Working with Judge Vero and Transitional Services Association, we helped establish ‘homeless court’ for individuals charged with non-violent offenses, which also facilitates the connection to human service providers. More than four hundred ninety thousand in Block Grant funding assisted three-thousand households, and the Economic Revolving Loan Program was expanded to include job retention loans, in addition to job creation loans. CDBG funding is supporting various affordable housing projects, which will provide up to five hundred and ten new units.

Significant progress has made towards the adoption of the Unified Development Ordinance, which will align the Zoning Ordinance with the Comprehensive Plan. Draft one and two were released in 2020, and we anticipate the release of the final draft in the next month or so.

The dedicated, volunteer members of our three land use boards are remarkable. First, we asked them to review applications online instead of on paper, then we asked them to run their bi-monthly meetings on Zoom, and they have mastered this too. The land use board members committed - commitment is invaluable service to development of Saratoga Springs. This year alone, I appointed seven new members in 2020.

The planning staff worked with the Deputy Mayor Lisa Shields to implement workflow automation in their application tracking system, including project communication with the applicant, engineering and the building staff too. This is giving us more timely status and reporting data and helping us to identify how to improve our processes. Last year there were two hundred fifteen new applications before the land use boards, they

issued one hundred seventy-eight decisions. Currently, there are ninety-six active applications in the review process. With the recent retirement of Brad Birge, Amanda Tucker is working with both the Design Review Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals until we have hired a replacement planner to join the team with Susan Barden. Lisa Shields is providing managerial oversight for the department while we continue to assess the best way to organize and allocate duties in the Planning and Building Departments. The team in the Building Department is responsible for issuing construction permits, performing inspections and enforcing compliance with New York State Building Codes. Patrick Cogan, Duane Miller, Jeanna Fritz, John Barney, Rich Tiersch and Katie Farone all work closely with the planning staff in reviewing all applications for zoning compliance.

The project to digitize all property files was critical for the department's move back into City Hall, in order to reduce its footprint. The IT department works closely with us to import files into the Laserfiche archive system. We expect this project to continue through most of this year, as building staff resources have to be prioritized for inspections and permit reviews.

We took advantage of the two and a half month construction 'pause' to further implement our permit tracking system with workflow automation and create an online inspection scheduling. While COVID gave everyone more at-home time and another reason to move into Saratoga Springs out of the big city, it also led to an increase in new and residential construction projects.

We have received permit applications for over one hundred million estimated construction value since January 2020, which translates to additional property tax revenues when the projects are completed, and is on par with 2018 levels. About forty-nine million or half remains in the queue right now at various stages. We know that permit turnaround times are unsustainable. We do understand the impact it has on jobs in the construction industry, on access to financing and on our local economy as a whole. We do hear you.

It's important to understand that the current workload demands on the Building Department represents an average workload of one thousand one hundred seventy seven hours, which translates to seven inspectors. With our five inspectors, we can only deliver eight hundred hours a month. Even considering that larger commercial projects often pay for the City's designated engineers to do the review; there is still zoning review and additional time required by one of these five inspectors for the application. So "Where is Your Permit?" Visit our website for a real-time status of where your application is, relative to other applications that are in the queue. Complete applications are accepted and reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis. While access to your application's status does not predict a date your permit will be issued, we think it does increase your visibility to our permitting process and to the 'busyness' of our City.

At this time, I will now turn it over to my fellow Council member, Commissioner John Franck of Accounts.

**Commissioner Franck:** Thank you mayor. Good evening fellow Saratogians. I have had the privilege of serving as your Commissioner of Accounts since 2006. This year I am completing my eighth term and this is my sixteenth State of the City Address. I would like to thank Mayor Kelly for her graciousness this evening in giving me the opportunity to share the City's Accounts Department community initiatives with you. As always, I would like to thank my family and my wife Stephanie for her patience. It is not an easy task being married to a politician, as all the other members here know.

Twenty-twenty was a tough year for all of us, especially as a community. My department found as many ways as possible to take the opportunity to make something positive out of it. With the assistance of Risk and Safety, the City Attorney, the Department of Public Safety, the Department of Public Works, and of course the downtown community, we expanded outdoor seating for the local restaurants. With the installation of jersey barriers, we were able to help the restaurants expand their seating area outdoors to help keep them in businesses during COVID. We also took the opportunity to turn the permit process into an electronic format to keep it moving forward and not miss a beat. The outdoor seating project proved to be very successful and it resulted in a number of extensions right to the end of the year before we had the big storm. Therefore, we are already working on putting this program back into place to be ready for the 2021 season.

As I mentioned, one of the positives my department took out of the pandemic was moving towards becoming as electronic as possible. This was necessary, as in-person interactions have been limited by the pandemic. If you have any questions on licensing procedures, please call or e-mail the City Clerk's Office. They will guide you through the process to complete licensing and/or schedule an appointment for a marriage application.

The Purchasing Department has also gone fully electronic. They have tailored our internal voucher and requisition system; cutting the cost of paper and in-person handling. The assistant purchasing agent has also set up a system using an existing program, which allows for scanning, recording and filing of all purchasing documents by year and vendor. This has increased transparency within City Hall for all employees.

Twenty-twenty proved to be especially challenging for the Office of Risk and Safety. In addition to being one of the City's main contacts for the pandemic, they worked in partnership with the City Safety Committee, the Saratoga Countywide Emergency Preparedness Committee, and the Saratoga County Local Emergency Planning Committee to develop protocols for the following programs: Communitywide Hazard Mitigation, Community Emergency Preparedness, Community Response, Pandemic Resource Procedures for Personal Protective Equipment or PPE, FEMA Funding for COVID-19 Pandemic, Pandemic Operational Programming Initiatives per NYS Mandate.

The Office of Risk and Safety was also instrumental in completing and closing out the claims for 211 Division Street and 474 Broadway. As the mayor mentioned earlier, we had fires in both places. All monies collected from the insurance carrier were returned to the City's reserve account. Enhanced and expanded the City's security systems in accordance with the needs of Public Safety and Public Works. And, the Office of Risk and Safety completed the City's contract database, which has improved interdepartmental efficiencies. This too is a completely electronic system.

In 2021, the Office of Risk and Safety will continue to be a resource to the City's Climate Smart Committee and other departments to integrate risk management in the City's programs and with the Safety Committee, they will continue to work with the City's Complete Streets team and the community to implement health and safety measures and expand pedestrian opportunities.

As you can tell by now, the theme through 2020 in the Accounts Department is electronic and efficient. The Assessment Department also worked hard to scan the records to reduce paper and make the retrieval of records more efficient. Due to the pandemic, the New York State Legislature signed into law the COVID-19 Emergency Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention Act. This requires all local governments to carry over senior citizen homeowner exemptions and disabled exemptions from the 2020 assessment roll to the 2021 assessment roll at the same level.

The Records Retention arm of the Accounts Department was successful in the completion of scanning all Planning Board case files from 1946 to 2018. They worked on and will continue to work on in 2021 the scanning of files in the Finance Department and the Mayor's Office including zoning records, design review records, civil service records, and tax sales records. This will reduce the amount offsite storage currently required.

In 2021, the records retention team will continue to identify records with historical research value to permanently retain these records according to Section 57.25 of the Arts and Cultural Affairs Law; and continue to work closely with IT to identify routine daily processes that can be automated to reduce the accumulation of paper moving forward.

In conclusion, the Accounts Department team is composed of eight professionals who manage a variety of tasks. My charge is leadership, based upon transparency. We are driven by the needs of the community, and together we are committed to excellent service.

My Accounts' Team makes every dollar you earn and pay in taxes a working "number" for you. Streamlining government to make it as efficient by becoming as electronic as possible helps all of us. I'm always open to

your suggestions and your concerns. You are important to each of us as elected officials. We try our best given the resources we have to serve you and your family's needs each and every day.

God Bless all of you, God Bless America and most importantly God Bless Saratoga Springs. Thank you mayor.

**Mayor Kelly:** Thank you commissioner. Now we'll go on to the Commissioner of Finance, Michele Madigan.

**Commissioner Madigan:** Thank you. I just need a moment to get this....I think it's sharing now. Yes? Alright. Good evening. Tonight marks my tenth State of the City address. I have now been the Commissioner of Finance now for an entire decade and that has me feeling a whole slew of emotions – reflective, optimistic, confident, but mostly, I'm feeling very proud of our department's resiliency - both the Finance Department and the Information Technology Department. With that, I would also like to thank Mayor Meg Kelly for sharing the stage for tonight's State of the City. Thanks you mayor. I've just gotta figure out how to move my slides. Okay.

The Finance/IT Dept. handles everything from cash flow to budgeting, from City Hall payroll to City-wide taxes, from systems management to cyber security, and from web and some social media to mail and phone communications. In the past two years alone, the Finance/IT Dept. has dealt with whatever has been thrown at it really without skipping a beat. How? Because of their incredible dedication, experience and expertise.

The majority of our Finance Department staff has been working at City Hall for over five years, some over ten and a few for over twenty - I am so grateful and appreciative of their many years of public service they've provided. Despite a catastrophic lightning strike that caused all three-hundred plus City employees to have to move out of City Hall to the Rec Center; we persevered. Despite a move back into City Hall in the midst a global pandemic, creating the need for IT systems to be up and running, not just at City Hall, but also at the Casino and the Music Hall; we persevered. And, despite an unprecedented health crisis, which led to an unprecedented budget-crisis, which, in turn, resulted in some furloughs, lockdowns and the need for a number of special services for our local businesses and essential employees, we persevered. Yes, we met all these challenges and we still found time to improve processes and gain efficiencies, in order to achieve both short and long term cost-savings. And, that is because the state of our City is very strong.

As the custodian of all City monies, I am ultimately responsible for trying to ensure our revenues and expenses are well managed. Whether it be the purchase of new computers, Zoom licenses, dashcams, ransomware, emergency vehicles, backup servers, etc. – the money the public has entrusted us with has always remained in financial balance. This has been especially challenging due to the shortage of business revenue and state aid this year. Not enjoying our typical summer tourist seasons, such as when we have concerts at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center and thoroughbred horseracing, meant much lower sales tax, occupancy tax, service fees and other City revenues declining. And yet, on November 30th in the middle of the COVID crisis, we did manage to adopted a balanced 2021 budget.

Our department is also responsible for managing our City debt - making sure our bond approval rates remain strong to maintain borrowing confidence. In August of 2020, we had the opportunity to refund seven million dollars in outstanding bonds. This provided an aggregate budgetary savings of one point two million dollars. Likewise, the 2011 and 2012 bonds that were also refinanced provided savings. In 2021, the City will refund the 2013 Bonds for an additional estimated budgetary savings. I estimate having done all this refinancing the Finance Department did has resulted in over five million dollars in savings from refinancing on bonded debt funds.

In January 2020, I stood before you, in-person, within six feet of my fellow Council members without wearing a mask. What a difference. At that time, I outlined our plans for the upcoming year. I restated our commitment to a variety of community collaborations, including our partnership with Saratoga Performing Arts Center in support of their global tourist marketing effort. Additionally, I discussed the continuation of our relationship with Sustainable Saratoga in support of their many programs, including the City's annual

purchase of trees. At that time, our focus was to also remain true to our SMART City efforts and I reviewed our plans for Community Choice Aggregation and our citywide fiber network project.

But, then in March 2020, just three months after that State of the City address we had to pivot. As the first wave of COVID hit, we had to begin thinking about how we were going to amend the budget in order to keep jobs and maintain services with revenues on a decline. Then in the fall, during COVID's second wave, our job maintenance and service level concerns intensified and in the end, they became the primary goals of the 2021 Budget.

With no SPAC or track season, our community partnership focus was also redirected toward our downtown. We worked hard to help bolster retail sales and outside dining by joining forces with the Chamber of Commerce, Discover Saratoga, the Saratoga City Center, and the Downtown Business District to develop and promote a successful, Saratoga-themed, health-safety campaign.

Mask Up, Saratoga Springs! It was created to raise awareness; however, it also ended up raising community spirit at a much-needed time. It included PSA's, coloring Pages, posters, lawn signs and social media posts and promotional collaborations. We are still getting very positive feedback from this customized Saratoga marketing effort.

And, we did not lose sight of our SMART City commitments. This due-diligence paid off in spades. As of now, we estimate that the solar park, which went live in August 2017, has saved the city upwards of eighty thousand dollars in electricity costs; that corresponds to two hundred eighty two gallons of fuel or the powering of three hundred twenty thousand homes. In fact, we plan to expand our solar energy cost saving efforts by applying accumulated solar credits to more City-owned buildings, further reducing our electrical costs.

In January of 2020, it seemed focusing on being a SMART, tech-savvy, energy-efficient City was more of a vision, but in 2021, I'm proud to say it is becoming a reality. We are well on our way to using technology to not only save the City money, but to help generate it. Recently we contracted with the NY Power Authority to implement its energy-conserving LED streetlight conversion initiative. In addition, we've contracted with Sifi Fiber Networks to begin putting the fiber in the ground and we hope that that will start this spring. This will significantly increasing Wifi speed and connectivity issues in our downtown. We no doubt believe this will attract more businesses.

On a smaller scale, we continue to reap the cost-saving benefits of paper-reduction. Finance still remains on track with the help of the Accounts Department to be the first paperless department in City Hall via our digitization and scanning efforts.

At this time last, I committed to joining forces with the Mayor and the Commissioner of Public Safety to fight for the restoration...at this time last year – I'm sorry – I committed to joining the forces with the mayor and the Commissioner of Public Safety to fight for the restoration of VLT Aid. I'm happy to report those efforts were successful and I'm also happy to report we will be back again to restore aid for the 2021 budget. Likewise, we will keep working on Complete Streets initiatives. We know improving the walkability of our downtown makes complete sense (s-e-n-s-e and c-e-n-t-s). I have no doubt that bringing our many SMART and sophisticated partnerships to fruition will help us manage though the pandemic economy and into recovery.

Pictured here is the new, historically-renovated Finance Office, a true asset within our City's historical assets. I look forward to seeing it filled with happy and healthy City residents once again. Right now there are eleven thousand tax notices getting ready to go into the mail, sitting in the finance office.

In closing, I'd like to reiterate my deep appreciation for my department and my staff. Specifically, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my Director of Finance, Christine Gillmett-Brown for her twenty-five years of public service. I could never have had such a successful decade as Commissioner without her two-and-a-half decades of dedication and expertise. I also extend my gratitude to the Council and the community for helping us stay stronger together as we face the Finance and IT challenges we know that are in store for us

in 2021. I promise I will not only mask up, but I will keep my sleeves rolled up to serve this City as best as I can and ensure that the state of our City is strong. Thank you.

**Mayor Kelly:** Thank you commissioner. Let's turn it right over to the Commissioner of Public Works, Skip Scirocco.

**Commissioner Scirocco:** Thank you mayor. I'd like to talk a little bit about 2020 and 2021. Like every other department of the City, the Department of Public Works had a challenging 2020. As I reviewed my remarks for last year's state of the City, one item immediately jumped out. Twenty-twenty was the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Canfield Casino, and a year ago I was planning a large community celebration for our City's most treasured landmark. In those early years of 2020, we had no clue what the year would actually bring.

But in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, DPW was still able to accomplish a great deal. While much of normal life was interrupted, DPW delivered routine and emergency services to the public every single day. We implemented COVID protocols to keep our work force, employees, and the public safe. The work and services the public has relied upon from DPW continued, and our employees answered the call to serve without hesitation.

While a significant amount of time was dedicated to the COVID response, DPW was able to plan and complete major projects during COVID. The City Hall renovation and restoration project is an example of that. In the middle of moving employees back to work in City Hall, COVID shut down everything. It shut down the job site for two weeks while we assessed New York State guidelines for allowable construction. Once reopened, the project was completed, the rec center vacated, the employees returned to City Hall. Unfortunately, COVID prevented a ribbon cutting to recognize this significant project and the public has not fully experienced the beautifully renovated building. But I hope to welcome the public and show off city hall this year.

In Congress Park, the Katrina Trask Stairway renovation project was completed, and new sidewalks were installed around the small pond to increase access and solve some drainage problems in the park. For the Canfield Casino, the parlor area restoration continued and the chandeliers enjoyed restoration and structural reinforcement; in addition to renovations for old wiring, lighting, and an upgraded sound system for events.

In 2020, DPW worked diligently to provide a thorough paving program in a reduced time frame. Although CHIPs funding were uncertain from the state, under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner Joe O'Neill, DPW was able to spend \$481,958 to pave twelve main roads and intersections including Walton Street, Adams Road, Eureka Road, Eureka Avenue, West Circular Street, Regent Street, Excelsior Avenue, Marion Avenue, Madison Avenue, Henning Road, Julians Way, Vista Drive, and Kaydeross Avenue East.

The City was once again recognized as a Tree City USA, thanks to the efforts of our arborist and urban forestry division. Downtown looked beautiful and welcoming as a result of our downtown beautification work. And DPW's recreation crews stepped up to provide options for recreation programming even with COVID restrictions.

Through the challenges of 2020, I want to thank the DPW employees for their continuous dedication to the public. I also want to thank the Council for all their efforts working through these hard times. We have faced challenges unmatched by many councils before us and we continue working for the public first. Heading into 2021 there are a number of projects and initiatives that our residents and businesses will be interested in knowing more about for DPW.

DPW has partnered with the Downtown Special Assessment District to create a Broadway Master Design Plan. This will incorporate many ideas in one cohesive plan that recognizes the welcoming historic charm of our downtown, while acknowledging the growing community and business expectations for public spaces. The approach to develop this plan will be to work with the Special Assessment District, a city designated engineer firm, and create a working group to provide input on the design plan. More information about this initiative will be forthcoming, and I anticipate participation by the Council and other interested parties to

develop this plan. I'm excited to undertake this endeavor with the Special Assessment District to make certain that Broadway continues to be an award-winning destination enjoyed by visitors, residents, and our business community.

Continuing our dedication to the maintenance and protection of our City's urban forest, the urban forestry division received a DEC grant to perform a tree inventory to assess the composition of our urban forest. This will be a year for analysis, review of the urban forest master plan, and planning for what the urban forest will look like into the future.

The Urban and Community Forest Master Plan was adopted in 2013, and has been a great success to date. It's one of the reasons why the City has been recognized by the Arbor Day Foundation as a Tree City USA recipient. But now is a good time to review this plan, and update it as necessary for the good of the urban forest.

Sadly, in 2020 the Civil War memorial in Congress Park was senselessly damaged by vandals. The statue, donated by local members of the 77<sup>th</sup> Regiment who fought during the Civil War, experienced significant damage. A community outpouring of support demonstrated how much care exists for our history, public spaces, and our City.

The vandals' efforts were in vain, as the Civil War Memorial will return to the park this spring better than ever. The preservation firm has nearly completed the restoration, and the statue is in excellent shape. The repairs were covered by insurance, and additional costs will be incurred for new security cameras and improvements to the site. I'm planning a ceremony to celebrate the return and installation of the statue back to Congress Park. I look forward to showcasing the great restoration work that had been completed so that the public can appreciate having the soldier back in our treasured park.

DPW will continue its focus on improving the City's infrastructure in 2021. This includes major water infrastructure work. The construction of a new water intake at the water treatment plant will update the oldest portion of the treatment plant, dating back to the 1870's. This will improve water flows and controls into the plant. Engineering design is currently underway for the four-year, greater than four million dollar phased water infrastructure improvement plan to upgrade undersized water mains identified in an engineered water model. It is anticipated that the first phase of construction will begin by the end of this year, and start the construction phase for over eighteen thousand linear feet of water mains.

For our sewer infrastructure, plans continue on upgrading the City's pump stations and identifying problematic sewer lines. In 2020, the utilities crew completed replacement of over two hundred linear feet of sewer line on Long Alley, an area that experienced significant failures over the last few years. Our utilities crew and Deputy Commissioner Joe O'Neill will continue to identify these localized issues that can be repaired with the City's work force.

Another project undertaken by the utilities department this year will be providing the availability for digital billing and communication to water and sewer customers. The initial stages of this improvement are being worked through now, with the goal of allowing customers to receive their bills through email. Another benefit will be an improved method of communication to customers, such as notifications for repairs or unexpected services disruptions. It also provides a new tool for the department to contact residents in an emergency situation.

These outlined improvements are just some of the critical water and sewer projects that continue the multiple million dollar improvements the City has undertaken to these critical aspects of our infrastructure.

In DPW, we turn to 2021 with optimism and hope for a return to normalcy. I'm confident that DPW employees and the work force will rise to any unexpected challenge while exceeding the expectations of our community. I personally look forward to working with the City Council to accomplish both our individual and collective goals. I've said it before and I'll say it again, this council has dealt with and solved an unparalleled number of problems.

I want to thank the public for their continued confidence, and for working with us through these challenging times. Thank you.

**Mayor Kelly:** Okay. On to the Department of Public Works, Commissioner Robin Dalton.

**Commissioner Dalton:** So, Department of Public Safety. Thank you all, thank you Mayor Kelly. Good evening to those joining us tonight. I'm Commissioner Robin Dalton and I oversee the Public Safety Department of Saratoga Springs, which includes: Police Department- made up of patrol, investigations, parking enforcement/animal control, dispatch and traffic maintenance, The Fire Department which includes code enforcement, fire prevention and EMS, and an administrative unit in City Hall that includes the deputy and commissioner positions.

Typically, the State of the City address for public safety would be a review of the various departments, their responsibilities; personnel and items like call volumes and demand. However, because of the uniqueness that was 2020, instead I will be going over some of the extraordinary efforts made by the Public Safety Department in response to the pandemic crisis this past year. Everything that would have been included in the traditional state of the city address for DPS can be found in our annual report, which will be published and shared on the City website and social media channels.

I'd like to begin by saying that despite the tragedy of this pandemic and the horrific toll it has taken, one of the few bright spots in all of this has been seeing how our department responded to the biggest public health threat in our city's history. Under unfathomable stress, they not only rose to the occasion, they went above and beyond to protect the health and welfare of every Saratogian and the City itself.

Over the last almost eleven months, preparation, adaptability and communication have been the hallmarks of our COVID-19 response. This journey started on March 13th, when a state of emergency was declared in Saratoga Springs and the City began operating in accordance with our Emergency Management Plan, effectively putting public safety in charge of managing our pandemic response. As Public Safety Commissioner, I lead our response along with incident commander SSFD Chief Joe Dolan and the support of a COVID-19 task force, in consultation with the City Council. This gave the city the critical ability to respond to the viral outbreak with a streamlined, efficient and direct response.

In the early weeks of the pandemic, Chief Dolan and I worked hand in hand with the task force to prepare for every possible eventuality that could arise from a widespread viral outbreak. Protecting the front-line workers in our Fire and Police Department was also critically important – This included everything from making sure we had sufficient amounts of PPE to working with infectious disease experts in analyzing models to predict what community spread and surges in infections would look like for our emergency services. In addition to making sure we had adequate equipment and policies to protect our front-line workers, we addressed a near constant stream of new and unexpected areas of concern. For example, finding our police officers and fire fighters a place to quarantine in the event of exposure, so they did not have to risk the health of family members or others in their home. To that end I would like to thank Steve Sullivan and Longfellows who worked with the chiefs and I such that our department had access to a hotel room at a moment's notice- to quarantine for fourteen days and not have to worry about putting a loved one at risk. We did not publicize this at the time, but I wanted to take this opportunity to thank Steve and the entire staff at Longfellows for their generosity in accommodating our needs, they exemplify the best of what our community is about.

Communications - The magnitude of this public health crisis made communication to City residents of the utmost importance- to educate Saratogians on what risks the virus posed and how to keep themselves and their families safe and healthy - through the various stages of New York State on PAUSE, to New York Forward and re-opening phases and as 2020 concluded, vaccination information and eligibility. Some examples of our communication efforts include: designing and publishing over 50 infographics as a public awareness and educational campaign-shared online, via email & with community partners; establishment of a system to hand deliver information about COVID-19 to homebound residents and do welfare checks on behalf of concerned family members, neighbors and friends; we hosted dozens of live-streamed question and answer sessions, on a variety of topical issues, including a special series addressing mental health and well-being; we delivered thousands of masks to vulnerable populations, establishment of free face mask pick

up spots; we hand delivered reopening guidelines, New York State Safety Plan templates and additional resources to businesses; we participated in neighborhood association meetings via Zoom to address specific concerns and worries about COVID-19; we went neighborhood to neighborhood checking in on families and residents with the SSPD's Mounted Patrol; we compiled a variety of resources online from takeout directories, to fitness classes and museum exhibitions to assist residents online while they were in quarantine.; we organized community moments of unity, like 'Clap Because We Care' to thank our frontline workers at Saratoga Hospital and foster a sense of connection between residents.

Compliance - Compliance with New York State has been equally crucial to support our efforts throughout this pandemic, for both the health and welfare of our residents and the health of our ailing business community. Compliance with our businesses, retailers, and restaurants and bars has been exclusively handled by our code enforcement office, which is led by Assistant Chief of the Fire Department Aaron Dyer and includes Jack Donnelly and Julian Fonseca. Our three-person Code Enforcement Department had their workload increase exponentially by COVID-19, but have risen to the occasion and then some. They were responsible for following up on nearly every complaint or violation reported in the city, from non-compliance with face masks, to reports of gatherings, to keeping every business compliant with reopening guidelines and every mandate from NY State and while restarting major areas like youth sports programs.

Not only was their diligent approach necessary to mitigate the public health risk, but with the extremely fragile state of our economy, a fine from the state for non-compliance or loss of a liquor license could easily shut down a business permanently - to that end, education and warnings are always our first step in enforcement, when opportunities to put more stringent enforcement in place arose, we did. Like in March, when we took steps to work with the governor's executive order specific to maintaining social distance and a ban on mass gatherings and with our own city code, were able to put together fines to enforce both mandates. We rescheduled or postponed every special event and continue to do so, but when we could, facilitated new, reimagined COVID compliant events – like December's Victorian Stroll or the upcoming Chowderfest.

After an avalanche of calls, emails and messages in the spring, reporting violations for not distancing and face mask non-compliance have dropped considerably, and in the summer months were replaced with calls about re-opening phases and guidelines. I am proud to say that education and warnings were enough in almost all of these instances for people to change their behavior – the numbers confirm our widespread compliance and effectiveness of our code enforcement office. In total, only a very small handful of citations have been issued in Saratoga Springs by the state, none of which to date have resulted in closure or loss of license of a business.

Our department also worked within the city code to when at all possible, accommodate new and creative ways to entice customers in the COVID-19 landscape. This prompted initiatives like the expanded outdoor dining for downtown restaurants and other creative approaches to help businesses survive. Together, with the Department of Accounts and Public Works Department, we created an expedited process for approvals and permits that was put in place less than two weeks after outdoor dining was re-opened this June in the Capital Region.

These are just some of the countless efforts we have taken and continue to take to respond to the current pandemic. The department also faced a dramatic budget shortfall and so we worked together to cut millions of dollars from our budget. While we have maintained essential services, the effects of the budget cuts and ongoing financial crisis will be felt by the city. We are also in the midst of an extensive inventory and review of our policies and practices in the Police Department, to grow with the community and respond to calls for social justice, while delivering the best possible law enforcement for Saratoga Springs.

In conclusion, to the residents of our city, know that the depth of talent and passion in your Public Safety Department is second to none. And in all the doubt and fear and uncertainty that has come along with this pandemic, you should always feel confident knowing that no matter the circumstances, we will always be here for you in your time of need.

We honor and grieve the tragic loss of life of forty members of our community to COVID-19 and will continue to do everything possible to usher Saratoga Springs to brighter days ahead.

I want to give a special thank you to SSPD Assistant Chief John Catone, who worked around the clock throughout this pandemic, taking the lead on several massive re-opening efforts and in countless other areas – his experience and expertise guided us through the stormy waters of 2020, and I am deeply appreciative. Thank you to my Deputy Commissioner Eileen Finneran, our Fire Chief Joe Dolan and Assistant Fire Chief Aaron Dyer and our Police Chief Shane Crooks for their patience, leadership and camaraderie, as well as our outstanding administrative staff and last but not least, the men and women of our Fire and Police Departments.

Thank you to the City Council for making this very challenging first year bearable and thank you to Mayor Kelly. That concludes the Public Safety Department's State of the City for 2020.

**Mayor Kelly:** Thank you commissioner; the Commissioner of Public Safety, I want to say that again. Robin Dalton. On to the County supervisors, Matthew Veitch.

**Supervisor Veitch:** Okay. Thank you, mayor. Thank you Mayor Kelly, for giving me some time at the State of the City address to share some of what I have been working on as supervisor. I'm proud to be able to represent this great City at the County level, and to serve our constituents in my capacity as supervisor.

First, I will review 2020. Twenty-twenty was a difficult year at the County overall, and the pandemic dominated everything we did at Saratoga County last year. That was the main focus. And at the Board of Supervisors as a whole, there were at times, different factions and some issues, that made for some long, contentious and controversial meetings and actions last year. As for me, I stayed focused on the committee assignments I had, namely the chairmanship of the Buildings & Grounds Committee. The new public safety facility at the County Farm Road complex is now complete and in use, and the final closeout of the various construction contracts is occurring. We successfully moved both the Probation and Public Health Departments from where they were to the new building. We continued our progress on implementing changes at the County Airport and accomplished many smaller projects at County facilities last year. We also provided for the Code Blue overflow location, at the Woodlawn Avenue building for Shelters of Saratoga, and it is currently being used for that purpose until the end of the Code Blue season in early April. Small things like updating on-site parking regulations, that had not been looked at since 1978, were recently updated and approved.

For 2021, I will continue as the Buildings & Grounds Committee Chairman, and the goals for 2021 include upgrading our facilities wherever we can, to provide for appropriate space and a good working environment for our employees, but also with a focus on improving our connections to our constituents. As we all know, the current method for listening to County Board meetings during this pandemic has been not very good, dismal at best. The lack of good technology in the Board of Supervisors' meeting rooms has been an issue since I was elected supervisor in 2008. Until now-it never seemed to be much of an issue with the Board, and there was no desire to make improvements. With that, I had proposed an amendment to our 2021 budget and got approved \$350,000 for technology improvements to our Board meeting rooms, as well as better improvements overall, such as installing public Wi-Fi in appropriate areas, so the public can have connections when they are getting their service from the various County departments. Our on-complex directional signs for people doing business at the County appear to be the original ones since the 1950's when our complex was built. Many times, I arrive at the County and find residents confused as to where various departments are located. The plan is to redesign all of that, to improve the experience of our constituents and get them to their appropriate department easily. And lastly, from buildings and grounds, the plan for 2021 is to sell the Woodlawn Avenue building after the Code Blue season is over.

At this year's organizational meeting of the Board of Supervisors, a new committee was established called the Government Review and Efficiency Committee. This Committee has a very broad responsibility of looking at all of the County's laws, policies, and procedures, our appointed boards and committees, as well as reviewing each departmental operation, to see if there are ways, we can improve our operations. I have been asked to Chair this committee in its first year, and our work will be to begin to break down and review

our County process, to find outdated items, redundant process, duplicated work; and to look at how each department relates to each other, not only to make County government work better and more efficiently for itself, but also for County residents. Everything we do at Saratoga County should consider how it impacts our residents, and will be a priority for this committee.

I will continue to advocate for the needs of City and County residents at both the state and national levels as a member of the New York State Association of Counties, and the National Association of Counties. I serve as the vice-chairman of the Public Safety Committee at the State level, and in that capacity we work as a committee to make sure that the State addresses issues like mental health in Jails, the impacts of criminal justice reform, improving technology in the criminal courts, addressing the shortage of emergency volunteers in more rural fire and ambulance departments. At the national level, I serve on the Community, Workforce, and Economic Development Steering Committee, where we advocate for things like continued funding for the CDBG program, better federal policies to more easily construct affordable housing, and looking at ways the workforce can be developed to meet the needs of modern business. I also serve as vice-chairman of the International Economic Development Task, and the IT Standing Committee at the National Association.

Last year at the State of the City, I talked about the goal of finally getting AirBnB under the umbrella of being subject to occupancy tax. The pandemic derailed the progress on this, as focus was shifted to public health response. I hope to bring this back up again in 2021. The County will need to get a home-rule legislation passed at the state in order to begin collecting the occupancy tax from the Online AirBnB type operators.

My other assignments this year include serving on the County's Human Resources & Insurance Committee, the new Technology & Resiliency Committee, and the Long Range Capital Planning Committee. I have also been appointed again to the Law & Finance Committee, and I am proud to represent my City on the County's top committee. I will continue to serve as Treasurer of the Saratoga County Capital Resource Corporation, and remain on the NYRA Local Advisory Board as well. Some of the Board Chairman's appointments have not yet been made, so I will keep the public posted as we learn more about those appointments.

There is a lot to do, and I am looking forward to many accomplishments in 2020. I look forward to working with all the City Council members, as well as my fellow colleague, Supervisor Gaston, to continue to serve the residents of Saratoga Springs at the County level. Thank you mayor for some time today on your agenda.

**Mayor Kelly:** Thank you supervisor. I'll turn it over to the County Supervisor Tara Gaston.

**Supervisor Gaston:** Thank you to Mayor Kelly, and the rest of the Council, for this opportunity to share some of my work at the County on behalf of the City of Saratoga Springs over the past year. One year ago the view from this seat was, quite literally, very different and not from this seat.

At this time one year ago, Saratoga County's priority was ensuring that every resident was counted in the 2020 Census. With ever-changing direction from the federal government and the need to prevent any reduction in state or federal representation — much less government funding — we expected this heavy but necessary lift to be the focus of our year's work. My goal in this work was to make sure that traditionally underserved populations, such as our agricultural workers and those who are chronically unhoused, were counted and their needs heard.

At this time one year ago, at the start of my third year on the Board of Supervisors, my focus was on building the resiliency of County government to respond to stresses, especially climate chaos, and increasing transparency and accessibility through use of technology. I would like to say that I had some special foresight - I even mentioned vector-borne illnesses and coronaviruses in last year's address — but these are honestly long- standing issues for governments across the state and nation that had simply not been placed at the top of the list of County priorities.

March 7, 2020 was the day that the County's priorities began to shift. The basic functions of Saratoga County government — maintaining roads, encouraging Census response, taxes, the DMV, and running elections — they all continued. But that day supervisors were informed of the first instance of COVID-19 in

Saratoga County, and the actions taken — or not — by County government in the time since March 7th have had many repercussions.

It was clear early on that the response to coronavirus would require the effort and focus of the entire County. As a partial service Public Health Department, with no epidemiologist or biostatistician on board, Saratoga County Public Health Services immediately marshaled the resources of the county as a whole under the supervisors' supervision to answer questions, contact trace, issue press releases, delivery food and masks to quarantine persons, and interpret the ever-evolving guidance from scientists and elected leaders alike. Administration attended each control room and monitored the Governor's press conferences for modifications — a job in itself, a full time job, while the treasurer's office kept abreast of changes in revenue. Public Works made sure buildings were safe and clean for those who had to be in the buildings, and IT had to build a remote-work system from scratch overnight. And, of course, the entire time, the Board continued to meet and oversee everything from money for COVID response and a lease for Shelters of Saratoga to use the old public health building on Woodlawn through this upcoming March, to a legislative agenda and holding our first entirely online real property auction.

In all this, we did lose some familiar faces around Saratoga County, with Director of Public Health Cathi Duncan and Commissioner of Public Works Keith Manz both leaving for, at the least, calmer days. We were fortunate that we did not have to look far for someone to take on the lead of the Department of Public Works, with former Deputy Administrator Chad Cooke taking the helm a few weeks ago and already getting in some fun challenges.

We also welcomed the County's first Commissioner of Saratoga County Public Health Services, our own Saratoga Springs resident Dr. Daniel Kuhles, who jumped feet-first into the pandemic fire and will help build this department into a full-service Department of Health. We also welcomed new County Administrator Steve Bulger.

While most of the resolutions that passed through the Board this year resembled those of years prior, the 2021 budgeting process revealed some of the biggest changes. On my request, for the first time in years the budget, as introduced included not only the recommendations for the 2021 budget, but also amounts as requested by departments and in a line-by-line comparison with the 2020 budget as passed. Additionally, I worked with other supervisors to include funding to improve technology in the boardroom, which will support live streaming of meetings and increased public engagement, as well as funding for a public information position to improve the frequency and quality of information from the County.

Lessons learned over the past year continued to present as changes at the Board's 2021 meeting — starting with my own election as temporary chair to run the meeting, the first member of the minority party to hold the gavel. While the position was only temporary, it did allow me to preside over the first open election of a chairperson for the Board. After that, we passed new rules of the Board, codifying many advancements I have sought since my first day as a supervisor. These include removing the notice requirement for public comment at Board meetings, and requiring — not just recommending — agendas with supporting documents for all meetings to be released well in advance. No longer can supervisors raise motions from the floor with resolutions to be drafted in secret after — instead, items that have not gone through the committee process must be raised in the form of a complete resolution for transparency. Each of these actions, along with the public information and technology improvements funded in the budget, support my goal of increased transparency and accountability.

In recognition of my work towards these and other aims in county government, though often behind the scenes in the past three years, I was named chair of two committees for the upcoming year. First, I was appointed Chair of the newly created Technology & Resiliency Committee. We will work on technology advancements throughout the County, building on the work of Supervisor Veitch, including the county website, access to meetings, IT infrastructure, public Wi-Fi, and supporting the development of a remote work policy for the County. The committee will also work with all county departments and committees to build the county's resiliency dividend, or the ability to respond to stressors such as changes in revenue, natural disasters, and, well, pandemics.

Second, I was appointed Chair of the Health & Social Services Committee, which will — as the name suggests — oversee much of the COVID-19 response in the upcoming year, as well as many aspects of the recovery as well. Public education, vaccination, and advocating for our community with state and federal leaders is all essential, as is the work of mental health as the needs of the community increase with the length and impact of the pandemic. The transition into a full-service health department will continue as we reorganize the department, hire personnel, and educate the community about the new role, including with our businesses.

To that end, I am delighted to also serve on the newly formed Government Review & Efficiency Committee, chaired by Supervisor Veitch, as well as the Law & Finance and Economic Development Committees. I continue to serve my community on the Mental Health & Public Health Committee, as well as on the Climate Resiliency Advisory Board, of the New York State Association of Counties, and on the National Association of Counties's Energy, Environment, and Land Use Committee as a vice-chair, and on Resilient Counties Advisory Board leadership, as well as a member on the Immigration Reform and GIS Task Forces. It will be in 2021, as one might say, a busy year.

The past year has been full of challenges, and some mistakes were made — including by me — but I have never been more honored to represent my City, and oversee our incredible and committed County staff. I look forward to continuing to work for the people of Saratoga Springs, and am thankful each day for the opportunity. Thank you mayor.

**Mayor Kelly:** Thank you Supervisor. In closing, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to be your Mayor. I would like to thank my office staff: Susanna Combs, my Executive Assistant; and Lisa Shields, my Deputy Mayor.

Most importantly, I thank my family Doug, Egan, and her husband David. Not only has my family enabled me to give my very best to the City of Saratoga Springs, they have galvanized me to give even more.

Thank you to our engaged residents, business and volunteers. Community engagement is outstanding in Saratoga Springs. We sincerely thank you for taking your time to reach out, speak up, advise and serve!

I would like to acknowledge my fellow Council members and supervisors. We do not agree on everything all of the time, but I believe that we are all here to serve our residents together. Collaboration and building consensus has never been more critical. Creating opportunities to work more efficiently is essential during times such as these.

I am proud to serve this city, one of the best cities in New York State. We have made adversity our friend, and I know that by continuing to work together, we will achieve the goals so important to our future. We have more to accomplish, and I look forward to doing so as your leader and public servant.

This concludes this year's State of the City presentation. Is there any other comments by the Council? Then we are adjourned. Thank you for joining us this evening.

**Transcription ended at 7:06 p.m.**

**Lisa Ribis, City Clerk**

Approved: 2/16/2021

Vote: 5 - 0