

State of the City Address 2008
Mayor David J. Carucci
City of Olean
1-2-08

Welcome members of the Common Council, guests, family members and citizens of the Great City of Olean, New York.

When I ran for office and was sworn in as your Mayor, I pledged to run the City like a business and put it back on sound financial footing. Understandably, this requires fiscal discipline and making difficult, but, necessary decisions. Some of the decisions and policies I have implemented include the following:

- A. I have reduced the number of full-time City employees from 180 when I took office to less than 145 presently. This occurred principally through attrition and retirements.
- B. Permanent part-time City employees have likewise been reduced during this time from 26 to 7. The net result is that the City's payroll today is less than it was when I first took office.
- C. We have raised real estate taxes to bring them in line to where they should have been in past years...although still not at the levels levied by the County or Olean City School District.
- D. We have likewise increased water and sewer fees, which had been neglected for all too many years.
- E. For the first time ever, we are actively prosecuting individuals who have ignored parking tickets. Last month alone, the City Clerk received in excess of \$2,000 for delinquent parking tickets alone.

These measures, along with many others which I shall not now enumerate, have produced tangible, concrete results.

An independent, outside audit by Buffamante Whipple Buttafara on December 18, 2007 advised and confirmed that my first annual City budget for the City's three funds, General, Water and Sewer, for the period ending 5/31/07, was BALANCED...and in fact, resulted in a surplus for all three funds of more than \$265,000. This is the first time in this decade that these funds in combination have been balanced...that is, the revenues received by the City have been sufficient to pay the expenses incurred, without having to use surplus funds or savings to balance the books, as had been done in 2002 and before.

Let me pause to say this is a very good first step in the right direction. However, there is still a lot of hard work ahead of us.

None of this could have been accomplished without the exceptional work of our Department Heads and City workers.

Fire Department:

- Chief Robert Bell and his staff were able to secure a \$220, 000 grant to purchase a new fire truck to replace Engine 39, which was purchased in 1979.
- Another separate grant of some \$120,000 allowed the Fire Department to acquire and have installed a state-of-the-art and necessary exhaust system in our fire stations.

Community Development:

- With the help of Mary George from Community Development, the City has a partnership with the new owners of the former Felmont and Agway properties and will look to assist private developers to make substantial financial investments that will expand our tax base and create employment opportunities.
- The Urban Renewal Agency is working with a private developer for the 13.39 acres of land remaining for development on Constitution Avenue. Agency and City officials look forward to working with this developer to facilitate the successful development of this high-priority site.

Department of Public Works:

- The Department of Public Works Director, Tom Windus was instrumental in the planning and implementation of the rehabilitation of the Main Hangar at the Cattaraugus / Olean Airport. On November 15, we had an open house to show off our new Airport to the State, County and Local officials, as well as the public and the press.
- Mr. Windus and his staff also organized and implemented the rehabilitation and opening of the Main Street Bridge. This \$1 million project came in within budget, with the Federal and State Governments contributing in excess of 90% of the cost of the project.
- He is also planning for long range investments, such as an energy audit and capital planning.
- The City is moving forward with the East Olean sewer project. The plans and specs are completed and the project will be going to bid in the

Spring. We've also started the survey work for the 2-mile sewer project and will continue to move forward with this project in a timely basis.

Assessor's Office:

- For the first time in more than 50 years the City has undertaken a City-wide revaluation and an ad hoc committee consisting of a cross-section of our community including realtors, bankers, insurance people and the like has been created and will provide valuable input to guard against pit falls experienced by some neighboring communities.
- In February 2007, the Common Council passed a Resolution to enter into a contract with JD Brearley & Associates to conduct a revaluation of all real property in the City of Olean. Each phase of the revaluation is being monitored and overseen by Assessor Nancy Champlin and the committee that was formed in 2006.
- Mrs. Champlin organized and managed the photographing of all properties in the City of Olean, and that task was completed during the month of May.
- She has effectively kept the public informed during the process and is right on schedule.
- During the Spring, Summer and Fall of 2008, the Assessor's Office will be sending property owners documents that depict their properties before the final valuation, which the property owner will review, sign and return to the City before the informal hearing in Spring 2009.

City Attorney:

- In addition to his regular duties as City Attorney, Dan DeRose has personally handled all of the City's Labor and other Litigation. He has represented the City in our local courts, the State Supreme and Appellate Courts, the Labor Relations Board, as well as Federal District Court at Buffalo. Prior City Attorneys have "farmed this work" out to Buffalo law firms, typically at a cost to the City of some \$100,000 to \$200,000 per year. This single item alone has saved City taxpayers more than a quarter of a million dollars.
- Mr. DeRose has also drafted legislation and is implementing procedures to prosecute unpaid parking tickets, which have been ignored in the past.
- He also handles all loan and mortgage closings for the City's Revolving Loan Fund. This, likewise, had been previously "farmed out" to outside counsel.

City Clerk's Office:

- City Clerk Alexander Utecht has worked hard to save the taxpayers money and has implemented some cost-cutting measures including the following:
- The parking lots which have previously shown losses will, with the addition of meters and elimination of attendants, will show a profit in 2008-09 budget.
- Mr. Utecht re-negotiated terms with our cell phone carrier and the City is now saving thousands per year for cell phone service.

Police Department:

- The Police Department was able to secure a grant to purchase and install 4 on board computers in 4 police cars allowing officers to directly access data on vehicles and people. These computers were installed this year and will help our officers be more efficient.
- The Police Department Union Contracts were ratified in March 2007, thanks largely to the Police Officers, the Union membership who understood that the City is working its way out of a most difficult financial circumstance and did their part to help alleviate some of the burden to taxpayers. I commend them for their dedication to the City.

Auditor's Office:

- All bills are being paid on time – **some early.**
- The City received deficit financing, which once bonded, will eliminate our deficit and has helped with our cash flow problem. The bonding will occur as soon as the City's credit bond rating is significantly improved. This financing allowed us to repay all the monies previously taken from the Capital Fund to offset deficits in the General Fund.
- Ms. Jones made our retirement payment early to take advantage of reduced rates.
- For the 2006-07 budget year, the General Fund showed a deficit of \$141,000. This figure pales against the million dollar deficit predicted by the NYS Comptroller's Office. With the surpluses achieved in the Water and Sewer Funds, the three funds in combination are in the black to the tune of \$266,000.
- With the invaluable assistance and expertise of Ms. Jones, we reduced the amount of the outstanding RAN from \$3.8 million to \$3.5 million and look to reduce it again, and anticipate paying it back on time again this year.

- I want to personally thank Gregg Procton for assisting Janet Jones and myself with the current budget.

We had another great Summer much like last year! The partnership that was formed last year between the City, NeighborWorks and Greater Olean Area Chamber of Commerce is very effective in cleaning up and beautifying our downtown. Among other activities, we had several youths paint and make minor repairs to Bradner Stadium.

The Woodland in the City project that was created by Amy Sherburne has been a great success. The 4-foot squirrels that have been placed throughout the City have attracted residents and visitors alike, and there has even been a demand for more.

The Rally in the Valley that is sponsored by Greater Olean Area Chamber of Commerce, was held for the first time in Bradner Stadium and was a great success, attracting approximately 600 participants and over 4,000 spectators.

This year the City will be hosting the first Gus Macker Tournament August 15th, 16th and 17th and we anticipate it will draw large numbers of people to Olean from the surrounding areas to participate and enjoy the tournament.

Future Project and Activities:

- We are in the final stages of acquisition of lands between East State Street and JCC for the extension of the Allegheny River Valley Trail.
- The East State Street Bridge Project is awaiting final approval from NYS so that the LC Whitford company can begin construction in the Spring – traffic flow will be continued.

The year in review

- Call Center will bring several hundred jobs to Olean and is expected to be operational in the Spring. A personal thanks to Jim Snyder and Dresser-Rand for their key contributions.
- Plans for the Felmont / Agway site are moving forward and we will soon see positive activity at the site.
- A special thank you to Park Centre and Lou Magnano for their enormous contributions and investment in the development of our community:
 - Old YMCA building
 - BWB building
 - Continental School of Beauty

- Eade's Fitness Center
- The old telephone & answering service building renovations on North Union Street
- Tim Horton's
- PACE Senior Care Center
- Acquisition and refurbishing of Holiday Park Centre on West State Street.
- Other businesses that are new or have expanded:
 - Cohone's Cantina
 - Back Door Too
 - Butler Wick
 - NAPA Auto Parts
 - Kentucky Fried Chicken
 - Olean Food Pantry
 - The Bistro
 - Steve & Barry's
 - Linger Longer
 - Cell One (2 locations)
 - Main Street Pizza & Grill built a new Indoor Mini Golf course
 - Caya's Canopies has moved to East Olean
 - Smokenlicious

We are still in negotiations with the Fire Union and looking forward to working with the CSEA Union in the negotiation process. I remain hopeful that fair and equitable agreements can be achieved.

I also want to thank our Common Council members, City workers and Department Heads for their hard work and continued support. It is also my great pleasure to thank the citizens of this great City. Your support and encouragement over the last 2 years has been appreciated.