

**MAYOR LINDA WITTE'S
STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS
January 3, 2013**

Welcome to Father Gregory Dobson, Boy Scouts Troop 621, members of the media, our new Ward 3 Alderman, Paul Gonzalez, and our six returning aldermen of the Olean Common Council, our distinguished Department Heads, and City Workers. Most of all, welcome to you in the audience here in the Council Chambers and those of you who are watching at home.

As many of you know we have had a productive year in 2012 and we have accomplished a lot by bringing the city together with many different groups, agencies, the Cattaraugus County IDA and

EMS, and New York State agencies. I want to continue the momentum and hit the ground running as we begin a new calendar for 2013.

The New York Empire State Development Corporation and the Western New York Regional Development Council are at the top of the list, making \$2.6 million available to complete the much-needed upgrade to East State Street, the Manufacturers Hanover building development, launch a redesign project for North Union Street and provide additional hangar space for our growing municipal airport. These are some key elements that have already begun to polish the city's image at several entry points, and we believe this can attract more attention (and residents and businesses?) to our city in 2013.

On the topic of our airport, I have to just mention how excited I was to learn that our partnership with Cattaraugus County has brought a \$54,228.22 county grant for a new airport tractor/mower.

We have enjoyed excellent cooperation in shared services with Cattaraugus County and other important government entities. This cooperative spirit extends into the NGO community as well and this has born fruit in the shape of a community - wide Warming Center for victims of emergencies who need immediate warmth and/or shelter. We hope to see continued expansion of shared government services and emergency aid as they are needed – and there is a time when each and every one of us find ourselves in need of help from our neighbors - - across the spectrum of life in our city.

But I would like to share with you some of the nuts and bolts of our city government for the factual picture of our condition as we enter 2013.

***Financially,* we are in good shape and I intend to keep my proposed tax rate flat or to repeat the past year's 1 percent cut, even as we continue down the deficit financing path. We are obliged to pass our**

preliminary budget along to the state for approval by a March 15 deadline. Our Auditor Fred Saradin tells us we are ending 2012 with a \$5.7 million surplus, while we are counting a 25 percent increase in Rec Center revenues, a 5 percent increase in sales tax income over the past six months, and a boost in airport revenues of 37 percent that can only climb in the future with the improvements under way there. Guided by prudence, we have turned away from any new debt and paid off \$1.5 million in long term debt. But balancing that great news, are some weighty factors: we can't forget that our pension costs – over which we have no control - - continued to climb 21 percent during the 2011-2012 fiscal year and another 13 percent in 2012-2013. Also, despite surpluses and improved systems we may expect to see an increase in water and sewer rates in 2013, in part due to increased debt service costs. We finished 2012 with a \$720,000 water fund surplus but will have to make up for the revenues lost in Dal-Tile's

closing. The Sewer Fund finished with a \$725,000 surplus but it's facing a major upgrade due to the state DEC Consent Order to fix the aging plant.

Many of you have noticed adjustments in the *City Clerk's* realm. This means a budget savings by cutting one full-time position to part-time as a result of a retirement and replacement by a part-time Vital Records clerk earlier this year. For greater efficiency, we have seen several IT updates.

***The Department of Public Works* rose to the pleasantly surprising challenge of overseeing two East State Street reconstruction projects once the funds were secured. Relining and repairing adjacent sewers and utilities was also commenced and the effects of completing these milestones will pay off for all the East End residents in 2013. I don't doubt that those neighborhoods will see expanded development in the very near future! 36 streets were**

resurfaced and two playgrounds were replaced, with a third scheduled in 2013. We increased the area of sidewalk repairs to 4,900 square feet of four-foot sidewalk, 1,010 square feet of six-foot sidewalk, and 22 handicap ramps were replaced, not including the work done on East State Street sidewalks and amps. The city workers also used 720 tons of blacktop patch at a cost of \$56,713. They replaced water lines over two large areas of the city. During the year we replaced some retirees, hiring two Streets workers, three in the wastewater division, one in the water department, one mechanic and one electrician. We have continued to put our workers where they are needed most, repairing 10 water main breaks, 20 service line breaks, replacing 1,765 feet of 6" main with 8" main (on East Riverside Drive), eliminating any main breaks on that section, and replacing 1,550 feet of 4" main with 6" main on West Fall Road. Director Tom Windus informs me that our new water metering system has helped us notify many

customers about possible leaks in their homes, thus saving customers money and saving the city's water for more beneficial purposes.

We have already heard good news out of the *Youth & Recreation Department*: the increased Rec Center income brings a continuing future payoff in more healthy young and old residents and a more vibrant and active community. In the Spring we hope to see completion of the multi-use area, and more updates on the William O. Smith Center Building. Much work is being done in-house. The seniors will be happy to know we plan some minor repairs to the John Ash Community Center and some changes will bring increased revenues. There have been ongoing improvements to the North Barry Street parking lot and we are looking forward to painting of the Bartlett House this spring and summer. We are anticipating our second year with the Oilers and we will continue renovating Bradner Stadium.

The *Community Development Department* is leading the effort for the North Union Street Redesign and has spent a lot of time working with Empire State Development, holding two public hearings to get community input to make our city a more Walkable Community. Two meetings have been held for the North East Development Project, our Brownfield Opportunity Area Phase 2, with one very well attended in North Olean on Election Day, and the information was used in a Steering Committee meeting that followed. We should see movement in 2013 with developers on the Manufacturer's Hanover Building. We have seen several new businesses on North Union Street and today I helped cut the ribbon for a new business, the Bella Ruche Bridal Boutique on the West side of North Union.

Our *Fire and Police Departments* continue to serve and protect the community. We have seen a lot of

activity to curb drug crime and violence and we can look forward to continued protections by our firefighters and emergency medical service responders, agencies that have really answered the change with their community involvement. We all continue to work hard toward completion of a countywide emergency services disaster plan update. This will lead to coordination with the Army Corps of Engineers for some badly needed upgrades in the Allegheny River flood control dike system. Also, our Police Department improved the heating and air-conditioning units on that wing of the city building and all departments are represented in our Fleet Management Committee to control repair and replacement costs of the city's vehicles.

I am very proud of my volunteers who have spent an estimated 2,000 hours of work sprucing up and tidying the views, setting an example and promoting a sense of pride in the community. The Neighborhood Preservation Committee's volunteers

number a couple hundred and really make a difference in the appearance of our city. We saw a successful and beautiful second annual Adopt-a-Planter project; we installed new trash barrels in high-profile areas; and a number of youth and county weekend workers brightened up numerous city facilities (the Fire Department, City Building, City Garage, Rec Center) while saving us a great deal of money. You can expect to see neater landscapes in Lincoln Park, as volunteers bend to the task of weeding and planting in 2013.

With all of our successes we sometimes have to take the bitter with the sweet. One of our companies that played a 98-year role in our history, Dal-Tile, was purchased by another concern, experienced a downsizing and now a relocation, closing the city's plant. We helped, along with the county, state and federal governments, but Dal-Tile has now closed. Many workers have already found jobs and some

have retired and others are going back to school to prepare for other work. We will miss this important business for a long time to come.

On the other hand, we have to look forward to the completion of a new “Good Times” bowling alley, a project adjacent to Forness Park costing a group of local investors \$5 million and signaling some positive elements for our community.

I am proud of the city employees who helped raise money for numerous causes that the public probably doesn't hear about. One of those was a boot drive by our firefighters that raised \$1,800 to aid Breast Cancer research, while more than \$1,000 was a raffle to help with funding the Child Advocate Center.

I'd like to close by saying I look forward to another productive year helping Olean become the city

**people recognize and working with everyone to
improve the city's quality of life.**