



January 26, 2021

CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS
State of the City

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



January 26, 2021

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 of 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

RECORDING OF PROCEEDING

The proceedings of this meeting were taped for the benefit of the secretary. Because the minutes are not a verbatim record of the proceedings, the minutes are not a word-for-word transcript.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kelly called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

MAYOR'S DEPARTMENT

Mayor Kelly welcomed everyone to this year's State of the City. She stated this is the fourth year her fellow Council members and the supervisors will be joining her in presenting the State of the City. Last year, 2020 provide to be full of challenges including COVID-19; still they worked together and in the best interest of Saratoga Springs. The challenges are not behind us; rather the focus for 2021 will be the health of our residents and our economy.

Mayor Kelly asked for a moment of silence for all who lost their lived due to the pandemic.

Most recreation programs came to a stop with the pandemic. The Recreation Department, with the help of the Office of Risk & Safety and the Fire Department, they were able to put the proper protocols in place for a safe and successful Camp Saradac.

The Offices of Planning and Building have returned to City Hall on the third floor. The Geyser Road Trail will open to the public this spring and the City's first Natural Resource Inventory was adopted in 2020. The COVID-19 Emergency Housing Assistance Program prevented homelessness for thirteen Saratoga Springs households. Community Development worked with Judge Vero and Transitional Services Association to help establish 'homeless court' for individuals charged with non-violent offenses, which also facilitates the connection to human service providers. Significant progress has made towards the adoption of the Unified Development Ordinance. 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. Last year there were two hundred fifteen new applications before the land use boards and 178 decisions were issued. All property files were digitized prior to moving back into City Hall. Residents can visit the City's website to identify the status of their building application. Complete applications are accepted and reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis. While access to one's application status does not predict a date a permit will be issued, it does increase visibility to our permitting process.

ACCOUNTS DEPARTMENT

Commissioner Franck stated he has had the privilege of serving as Commissioner of Accounts since 2006. This year he is completing his 8th term and this is his 16th State of the City Address. He thanked Mayor Kelly for her graciousness this evening in giving him the opportunity to share the City's Accounts Department community initiatives. He also thanked his family and wife Stephanie for her patience.

The past year was a tough year for all of us, especially as a community. His 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 to keep them in business during the pandemic. We are already working on putting the program back into place to be ready for the 2021 season.

One of the main areas his department focused on during the pandemic was to become as electronic as possible. This was necessary, as in-person interactions were limited by the pandemic. The assistant purchasing agent 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. The City Clerk's Office turned the permit process into an electronic format to keep it moving forward and set up marriage appointments.

In addition to the Office of Risk & Safety 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 various program. These programs include 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. This office was also instrumental in completing and closing out the claims for 211 Division Street and 474 Broadway. We had fires in both places. All monies collected from the insurance carrier were returned to the City's reserve account.

The Assessment Department also worked hard to scan 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.

His 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.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Commissioner Madigan stated tonight marks her 10th State of the City address. She is proud of her department's (Finance & IT) resiliency. The majority of the Finance Department staff has been working at City Hall for over 5 years, some over 10 and a few for over 20 years.

Despite a move back into City Hall in the midst a global pandemic, they persevered. 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. They met all these challenges and we still found time to improve processes and gain efficiencies.

Last year was especially challenging due to the shortage of business revenue, state aid, and not being able to enjoy our typical summer tourist seasons. This resulted in much lower sales tax, occupancy tax, service fees and other City revenues declining. However, on November 30th, in the middle of the COVID crisis, they adopted a balanced 2021 budget.

In August of 2020, they had the opportunity to refund \$7 million in outstanding bonds. This provided an aggregate budgetary savings of \$1.2 million. 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. She estimated all the refinancing has resulted in over \$5 million dollars in savings.

"Mask Up, Saratoga Springs!" was created to raise awareness. It also ended up raising community spirit and 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.

Commissioner Madigan estimates the solar park has saved the City upwards of \$80,000 in electricity cost and plan to expand solar energy cost saving efforts by applying accumulated solar credits to more City-owned buildings, further reducing our electrical costs. Recently the City contracted with the NY Power Authority to implement its energy-conserving LED streetlight conversion initiative. In addition, the City contracted with Sifi Fiber Networks to begin putting fiber in the ground and hope that that will start this spring.

Commissioner Madigan again thanked her staff, the Council and the community.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Commissioner Scirocco stated like every other department, the Department of Public Works had a challenging 2020. A year ago, he was planning a large community celebration for the Canfield Casino's 150th anniversary, having no clue what the year would actually bring. DPW delivered routine and emergency services to the public every single day and implemented COVID protocols to keep the work force, employees, and the public safe.

DPW was able to plan and complete major projects during COVID such as: completing the City Hall renovation project, moving all employees back into City Hall, completed the Katrina Trask Stairway Project and installed new sidewalks, and paved 12 main roads and intersections.

The City was recognized again as a Tree City USA, thanks to the efforts of our arborist and urban forestry division. Also, 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.

Sadly, in 2020, the Civil War memorial in Congress Park was senselessly damaged by vandals; but their efforts were in vain, as the Civil War Memorial will return to the park this spring better than ever. A ceremony will be held to celebrate the return and installation of the statue back to Congress Park.

DPW will continue its focus on improving the City's infrastructure in 2021 including 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. In 2020, the utilities crew completed replacement of over two hundred linear feet of sewer line on Long Alley. DPW plans to continue upgrading the City's pump stations and identifying problematic sewer lines this year. This year, the Utilities Department will be providing 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.

Commissioner Scirocco thanked the public for their continued confidence and working with DPW during through these challenging times.

PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT

Commissioner Dalton stated 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 the department responded to the biggest public health threat in our City's history.

On March 13th, a state of emergency was declared in Saratoga Springs and the City began operating in accordance with its Emergency Management Plan, putting public safety in charge of managing our pandemic response. Protecting the front-line workers in our Fire and Police Departments was 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. We addressed a near constant stream of new and unexpected areas of concern, such as, 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. She thanked Steve Sullivan and Longfellows, who worked with them so that the department had access to a hotel room at a moment's notice- to quarantine.

Communication to City residents was of the utmost importance. They needed to educate Saratogians on what risks the virus posed and how to keep themselves and their families safe and healthy. Examples of their 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; and hosting dozens of live-streamed question and answer sessions, on a variety of topical issues, including a special series addressing mental health and well-being. She is proud to say that education and warnings were enough in almost all instances for people to change their behavior.

Commissioner Dalton advised the department faced a dramatic budget shortfall and worked to cut millions of dollars from their budget, while maintaining essential services. They also in the midst of an extensive inventory and review of 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.

Commissioner Dalton thanked her staff and the City Council for making this very challenging first year bearable.

SUPERVISORS

Matt Veitch

Supervisor Veitch stated 2020 was a difficult year for the County. The pandemic dominated everything they did. He stayed focused on the committee assignments, namely the chairmanship of the Buildings & Grounds Committee.

The new public safety building was completed and they successfully moved Probation and Public Health Departments from where they were to the new building. They also provided the Woodlawn Avenue building as an overflow location for Code Blue.

In 2021, he will continue as the Buildings & Grounds Committee Chairman. The Committee's goals for 2021 include upgrading facilities wherever possible to provide for appropriate space and a good working environment for employees, but also with a focus on improving connections to constituents.

A new committee was established this year at the organizational meeting of the Board of Supervisors called the Government Review and Efficiency Committee. He will be chairing this Committee, which has a broad responsibility to look at the County's laws, policies and procedures, appointed boards and committees, as well as reviewing each departmental operation. They will be looking for ways to improve operations. They will look 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.

Other committees he has been appointed to this year include the County's Human Resources & Insurance Committee, the new Technology & Resiliency Committee, the Long Range Capital Planning Committee, and the Law & Finance Committee. He will continue to serve as Treasurer of the Saratoga County Capital Resource Corporation, and remain on the NYRA Local Advisory Board.

Supervisor Veitch looks forward to working with all the City Council members, as well as his fellow colleague, Supervisor Gaston, to continue to serve the residents of Saratoga Springs at the County level. He thanked the mayor for some time today on her agenda.

Tara Gaston

Supervisor Gaston thanked Mayor Kelly and the rest of the Council, for this opportunity to share some of her work at the County.

At this time last year, Saratoga County's priority was ensuring that every resident was counted in the 2020 Census. Her goal in that work was to make sure that traditionally underserved populations, such as agricultural workers and those who are chronically unhoused, were counted and their needs heard.

March 7, 2020 was the day that the County's priorities began to shift. The basic functions of Saratoga County government continued, but that day, supervisors were advised of the first instance of COVID-19 in Saratoga County. 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 evolving guidance from scientists and elected leaders. IT had to build a remote-work system from scratch overnight.

The 2021 budget process revealed some of the biggest changes. Upon her request, the budget, as introduced included recommendations for the 2021 budget as well as amounts requested by departments in

a line-by-line comparison with the 2020 budget as passed. She also 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.

Supervisor Gaston was appointed Chair of the new Technology & Resiliency Committee and chair of the Health & Social Services Committee. She was also appointed to the new Government Review & Efficiency Committee, and the Law & Finance and Economic Development Committees.

Mayor Kelly thanked the residents for the opportunity to be their mayor. She also thanked her staff and her family.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Kelly adjourned the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Ribis
Clerk

Approved: 2/16/2021
Vote: 5 - 0