

State of the City Update

Mayor Michael J. Villa

January 17, 2017

With an exciting, learning, but most of all an accomplishing first full year serving as the Mayor of the City of Amsterdam now in the history books, I am pleased and eager to share a number of our successes and talk about some of the challenges that lie ahead.

First, I want to thank the common council for working pro-actively together this past year, a hands-on working relationship that I am confident will continue in 2017.

The same appreciation to the city's department heads, who step up to the plate daily to ensure that the internal business of the city is conducted professionally.

Financial Forecast

Great strides have been made by Controller Agresta and his staff. In 2016 they have completed two years of financials; fiscal years 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 we are currently awaiting the completion of the audit for the 14/15. Controller Agresta is anticipating the 15/16 fiscal year to be completed by early April. This is the closest to current the city has been in well over 6 years. The Controller's office has also been implementing a new time keeping system that can save the city on average 2% of payroll each year when fully implemented. Currently approximately 50 % of staff is online and full implementation is expected to be completed by early summer. Controller Agresta was instrumental to the Mayor's office in crafting a balanced budget that did not increase taxes by more than 1%, which in our situation is not an easy task. The city also completed its first full foreclosure in years and we will be undertaking a new foreclosure process this year as well. This year we will address not only delinquent taxpayers but those taxpayers that are delinquent on their installment agreements. In the coming weeks letters will go out to those who are seriously delinquent on their repayment agreements that will specify a date by which they need to come in and make themselves current or face reversal of said agreement which would then add back all of the previously frozen interest and penalties.

City Initiatives

There are many initiatives that are underway and many that we can look forward to in the near future. I have highlighted some of those for you below and will keep you updated on their progress.

Brownfields Opportunity Areas

Amsterdam's Downtown and South Side areas were formally designated as a BOA (Brownfields Opportunity Area) under the NYS Dept of State BOA program. This designation will provide large tax incentives to developers who redevelop old industrial sites within the designated BOA, and will serve as a major financial incentive for re-investment in the City.

The City has also been invited by the Dept of State to apply for funding to designate the City's East End and Northern Neighborhoods areas as Brownfield Opportunity areas, providing further incentives for redevelopment in our City.

Sewer System Upgrades, Phase 5

Phase 5 of Amsterdam's sewer system upgrade program was completed in 2016. This project, paid for with \$600,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds, included the replacement of a major portion of the sanitary sewer on Florida Avenue, and re-paving of Florida Avenue.

Housing Rehabilitation Program - Reid Hill Phase 2

With \$400,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds, rehabilitation of 16 residential buildings in the Reid Hill neighborhood were completed. This program was completed as of the Fall of 2016.

Housing Rehabilitation - Grand Street

The City was awarded a \$400,000 Community Development Block Grant to carry out a housing rehabilitation program in the Grand Street area. This program is up and running, and has completed rehabilitation of four buildings in that neighborhood, and several more are underway.

Housing Rehabilitation - HOME Program

With a \$400,000 grant under the HUD HOME program, the City has undertaken the rehabilitation of 4 apartment buildings in the City, which have leveraged substantial private investment in upgrading rental properties in the City. Six more apartment buildings are in process, which, in addition to HOME funds, will leverage over \$500,000 in matching investment.

Land Bank

The City, in cooperation with the City of Schenectady and Schenectady County, was successful in obtaining a major grant from the State Attorney General's office to address blight in the City. To date, the Land Bank program has demolished 14 units of dilapidated housing on Division Street and Guy Park Avenue. This Spring, the Land Bank program will undertake the rehabilitation of 13 units of housing around the City, and generate almost a million dollars in investment in demolishing or improving deteriorated properties in the City.

City Hall Restoration

With a \$224,000 grant from NYS Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, a project to rehabilitate the portico on the southeast side of City Hall is taking place. An architectural firm has been hired to prepare plan and specifications, and it is hoped that this project will be completed during 2017.

Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook

With a \$325,000 grant from the New York State Department of State, and another \$325,000 from New York State DOT, the City will be undertaking enhancements to the MVGO. These will include amenities such as bathroom facilities, and art work for the MVGO. At present, an RFP to select an artist to undertake design work is underway.

West End Storm Drainage Improvements

With funding provided through the Governor's Office for Storm Recovery, almost \$1.4 million in storm drainage improvements in the City's West End are being undertaken. The project is currently in the design stages, with construction start hopefully taking place during the summer of 2017.

Water Quality Improvement Project

With a \$183,000 grant from the New York State Dept of Environmental Conservation, improvements are being made at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. An effluent chlorination system is being installed, which will reduce potential contamination of the Mohawk River. This project is currently in the design stages, and is expected to be completed this year.

Dove Creek Flood Walls

With funding from FEMA, reconstruction of the flood walls along Dove Creek will be

undertaken. This project, estimated at \$1.4 million is currently in the design stages and is expected to commence construction during the summer of 2017.

Sewer System Improvements - EFC Funding

This year, the City was awarded \$5 million in funding to undertake improvements to the City's aging sewer system. In addition to addressing the crises that the City has faced during a very challenging 2016, this funding will focus on major upgrades to the City's sewer pump stations. Failures at these pump stations have been a major factor in discharges of untreated waste, and major capital investment in these is required to bring these stations up to current standards, and provide a high degree of reliability. Design work for these improvements is currently underway, and construction activities will take place in 2017.

Zombie Property Funding

The City has been awarded a \$150,000 grant through the Local Initiatives Support Corporation for the purpose of enhanced code enforcement, and tracking of vacant and abandoned properties. This grant will help the City more effectively deal with blight.

Employee Relations Department

The Employee Relations Department provides support services and resources to all city employees, department heads and elected officers to enable the City to meet all goals, consistent with the council, New York State and Federal requirements and compliances

In addition the office preserves all employee personnel records, staff development and training, benefit programs, affirmative action issues and negotiations with the seven city bargaining units

As this department deals with confidential and sensitive issues of the city's workforce a review of the meetings and workings with multiple city staff cannot be addressed in an annual report.

Regarding that area however, the city can be confident that all staff issues are dealt with immediately and professionally.

During the past year a percentage of time was spent on bringing the city into compliance with a number of state mandates that had not been completed... For example, an incomplete New

York State Department of Transportation Drug and Alcohol Compliance review was fully addressed and resolved.

As director, the course Reasonable Suspicion for Supervisors was taken and passed providing the city with a needed resource from this office.

New Employer's Drug & Alcohol testing policy was implemented and passed by the council

The office has been diligently working on settling a decade old State of New York Department of Labor PESH (Public Employee Safety & Health) issue and a conclusion should be reached with the next month.

A 2002 employee handbook is in the process of being updated and presented to the council.

Negotiations and labor management meetings have been scheduled on a regular basis with the city's bargaining units and any grievances have been resolved.

CED (Community Economic Development)

Our partnership with the Montgomery County's IDA and Amsterdam's IDA has proven to be one of the most successful ventures our city has seen in years. From County Executive Matt Ossenfort and his staff, especially Ken Rose and Danielle Whelly and AIDA director Jody Zakrevsky let me share with you some of the projects that are underway;

- Memory Lane Daycare grant
 - Relocation and expansion from home based business in Perth to City of Amsterdam. 14 jobs will be created with this project
- Train Station Relocation feasibility study
 - RFPs are out and due at the end of January. A firm will be selected to do a study for the feasibility of possible sites for relocation and the expansion to a multi-modal mixed use facility in the heart of the City
- RESTORE NY
 - Grant application with Cranesville properties, LLC. to renovate the former Wrestling Hall of Fame building.
- Sanford Clock Tower Incubator
 - New York Main Street grant for \$500,000 to renovate the 6th floor of the clock tower to create a small business incubator and accelerator program. The program will provide affordable rental space, shared resources, and mentorship with various organizations including: SBA, FMCC, the building owners, the City, the County.
- Amsterdam Microenterprise Program

- Will work in conjunction with the incubator to provide financial assistance in the form of grants to small businesses and startup businesses in the City of Amsterdam. These grants will range from \$5,000- \$25,000. The Microenterprise program will be first come first serve. Applications will be reviewed by a committee and participants will also be take part in an introductory entrepreneurial training workshop.
- Chuctanunda Creek Trail
 - Applications out for grants to formalize this trail. The City and the County DPW are working together. They will both contribute to the physical trail development as in-kind service match if awarded a grant for interpretive signage and exhibits.
 - Working with the Preservation League of NYS to fund a study of the Mohasco Powerhouse building to determine safety of use as part of the trail
- Chalmers redevelopment
 - Working with a multitude of developers and investors to actively solicit this property for a variety of uses.
- Northern BOA designation
 - Grant due March 1st. This will give tax credits for the properties in this area as well as eligibility for possible future grant funding.
- Eastern BOA designation
 - Grant due March 1st. This will give tax credits for the properties in this area as well as eligibility for possible future grant funding.
- Culinary Incubatory Feasibility study
 - Interviews/meetings have been conducted with potential academic/training partners, local restaurateurs, representatives of ethnic/cultural communities
 - Real estate analysis and some financial modeling is being undertaken
 - A rough preliminary sketch of some square footage numbers for the incubator concept has been completed.
- Sanford Historic District
- Helping to make updates to zoning to improve business climate in the City
- Continued assistance for businesses in the City of Amsterdam
 - A recent example- Flooring Authority- MCIDA gave a loan for their relocation and expansion

Centro Civico Park

Invested \$150,000 in new park located behind Centro Civico on East Main Street. Public / private partnership made this possible. Donations from St. Mary's Healthcare, Bob's Paving, Dr. Rao, The Tesiero family, the Lion's Club, Mr. Wilary, Home Depot and Rivercrest Development Corp,. The park includes a steel frame skate park, full court basketball court, large area of playground equipment and picnic tables. Work was performed by Amsterdam DPW and Montgomery County DPW.

Phase two is in the works and includes a \$40,000 half pipe, newly designed innovative playground equipment and a water park spray pad.

MVGO Opens 2016 saw the opening of the Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook, Amsterdam's new pedestrian bridge. Many events were held since it's opening in August. The highlight event was Italiafest in September. Approximately 10,000 people attended and enjoyed great food, music, games, vendors, large scale amusement park rides and so much more.

Other first time events at the bridge included the Amsterdam High School Homecoming Bonfire. Power Pallet donated all the wood we needed which allowed students, their families and residents the opportunity to wish our AHS teams well for the upcoming season.

Trick or Treat on the MVGO--- another first-time event that was a tremendous success. Over 40 volunteer community groups and local businesses lined the bridge and handed out treats to the City's children.

Amsterdam's' First Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony ended the year's festivities. Music, vendors and of course Santa and his elves were on hand. A beautiful 20 foot Pine tree was donated by Dave Falso, (Dave's Landscaping)

Plans are in the works for many more events on the bridge in summer 2017 including Sunset Celebrations on Friday evening's.

Event Success

Our Annual events such as; Spring Fling, Homecoming, National Night and Summer Camp also took on larger number of attendance for sponsors, participates, and community members, thus opening the door for large scale events for the future.

Free Swim Lessons at City Pool

The Children's Aid Association made possible for over 400 kids to receive free swim lessons throughout the summer. A new composite deck was also added under the pavilion in part thanks to the donation of Joseph Pingitore Construction.

Movies in the Parks

For the first time Movies were shown in Arnold Avenue Park and Sirchia Park on the City's 25 foot inflatable movie screen. Vendors sold food, ice cream to the hundreds of people who attended. The Movies in the Parks will return in 2017.

Sirchia Park Renovation

A collaborative effort by the City of Amsterdam and Montgomery County DPW's spearheaded efforts to add a large area of green space to the west end of the park. Old blacktop and large dead trees were removed. Five new trees were planted and this year we will add other amenities including a picnic area.

9/11 Monument Completed

Thanks to the generosity of the Amsterdam Police SOA and PBA the Amsterdam Firefighters Officers, Dave's Landscaping and the many who donated via a crowdfunding site the beautiful monument was finally erected. The monument sits in Riverlink Park and can be accessed by walking over the MVGO or by entering through Riverlink Park. Additional signage is planned for 2017.

Southside Veterans Monument

Thanks to the Southside Veterans Commission the monument received renovations in 2016. Flowers beds were removed and a hedge row was installed behind the monument making for a beautiful backdrop to the handcrafted stone structure.

Shuttleworth Park

The baseball facility played host to many Union College Baseball games and hosted their Liberty League NCAA Baseball Tournament. The tournament brought four colleges from around the state for the four-day event held in May. Beginning In 2017 Union College will now play all their home games at Shuttleworth Park.

The park also saw the Amsterdam Mohawks win another championship as well as host the Empire State Baseball Games and many other events. The baseball field brought in over \$20,000 in rental fees to the City.

City Maintenance Staff

The four-man vegetation crew cleaned over 250 properties in 2016.

City of Amsterdam Project List

Completed our Road program with a few minor issues yet to be addressed.

Brookside Solar- Operating all of 2016 Estimated cost savings to the city is 40,000+/-

Route 67 Solar-----Recently connected to National Grid (December) estimated cost savings of \$120,000+

Public Safety Bldg Doors--- Purchase order issued work to be completed spring of 2017

Water Street reconstruction- Construction to begin spring 2017

MVGO Grant---RFP has been issued

Carpetland site West end of city- Request submitted to complete purchase. Restoration work underway.

Main Street (downtown) Completed parking change to increase available parking spaces. Change is always difficult but this will be beneficial as we continue to grow our downtown.

Dam evaluations complete- Ready for submittal to NYS DEC

Francisco Road Water Extension- Project recently completed

Installation of 3 Generators (City Hall, DPW, and Barkley School) project completion February 2017

Codes and Housing Dept.—Revising fees and upgrading permit forms

Tecler & Locust Ave Water tanks- Working with outside firm for a long term solution to managing the tanks.

Demolition—Work to begin later this month (January 2017)

Amsterdam Transportation Department

As of Dec.1, 2016, the Transportation Department has put in place a loop route system with 25 stops all over the city and set up the signs designating each stop. Additionally we have expanded services to our major employers including Hill and Markes, Target DC, Beechnut, Amsterdam Power Pallet, and Amsterdam Print. Lastly the department has extended its hours to service our community till 8pm on weekdays and from 11am-6pm on Saturdays. Our new stops and services aim to get not only our families to work and to the shopping plazas, but also to school. The bus stops are within walking distance to our schools to better support the Greater Amsterdam School District's mission of student achievement and Parent involvement. For 2017, the transportation department is looking to start the year by finalizing state and federal funded projects which will install cameras and gps systems on our busses, upgrade our intercom system, and support our mechanics with added tools. We are preparing to add service to Schenectady on time for the Casino's grand opening and Spring semester beginning at SCCC. Lastly, transportation department is preparing to implement a "Summer Route" which will add about a dozen stops to the current route and run only from the months of April-November when bad weather is not a detrimental factor.

AMSTERDAM FIRE DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORT

The Fire Department suffered a great loss in October 2016 with the passing of Battalion Chief Michael DePasquale. Chief DePasquale served the City of Amsterdam proudly for over 32 years. He is greatly missed.

ALARMS & INCIDENTS

During calendar year 2016 The Amsterdam Fire Department (AFD) responded to 2,657 alarms. Included are 78 fires (structure, vehicle, etc.), 1905 emergency medical responses, 83 hazardous conditions, 309 service calls, 121 good intent calls and 161 false alarms.

SHARED SERVICES

AFD has entered into an agreement with Montgomery County to provide Hazardous Materials Response to any Haz Mat Incident within the County. AFD also responds to Haz Mat Incidents as part of the Regional Haz Mat Team with Montgomery, Fulton and Schoharie Counties.

AFD has also begun providing Stand by Rescue for Confined Space Entry for Montgomery County and Liberty Enterprises.

AFD will also become part of the Automatic Mutual Aid plan for Montgomery County. Previously, AFD responded only when specifically requested by the authority having jurisdiction. We anticipate a moderate increase in call volume with a majority of responses to the New York State Thruway.

STAFFING

Department is currently budgeted at 33 members. This is unchanged from 2015. There are currently 6 members certified as EMT- Basic, and 26 EMT-Paramedic. 140 hours have been lost to job related injuries/illness, while lost time due to non-job related illness totaled 891.75 hours.

APPARATUS & EQUIPMENT

AFD has taken delivery of a high capacity foam trailer from the NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control as part of the New York State Foam Task Force. We will respond when needed for any rail emergency involving flammable liquids such as the unit trains carrying Bakken Crude as well as ethanol that are travelling through our city daily. The Foam trailer will also be available to respond to any local

Hazardous Materials Incident on the roadways throughout Montgomery County as well as neighboring Counties.

GRANTS

We are hopeful that we will be successful in obtaining Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) through FEMA that was applied for in 2016 to replace Rescue 10 that was taken out of service in May. We applied with several departments in the Capital Region for a regional grant to replace our Cardiac Monitors but were unsuccessful. We continue to look for funding sources for this replacement need.

FIRE SAFETY EDUCATION & COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

All K-6 grade school students received fire safety demonstrations at their schools and several schools and community groups toured the department facilities. Members also presented demonstrations and educational information at various civic functions. Firefighters were responsible for erecting and removing US flags throughout the city.

TRAINING

Each member completed at least 120 hours of in-service training. Training included the following subjects: OSHA Safety Training, Building Safety Inspector, Accident Victim Extrication, New Vehicle Technology, Aerial Ladders, Apparatus Operation & Driving, etc.

Additional training includes the department's participation in the NYS Department of Health EMS pilot re-certification program as well as several members attending classes at the NYS Fire Academy.

Amsterdam Police Department

APD has expanded their outreach to the public via electronic media with further improvements in NIXLE and Facebook;

"Tell us Tuesday" regarding wanted subjects where tips from the public have led to successful arrests;

Development of Animal Control site – "Furry Friends Friday" which assists with the adoption of local rescued animals;

Development of APD Arrest Blotter release with local media to get information out to public;

Continuing expansion of surveillance cameras in public areas of City;

Re-institution of walking beats in problem areas of the City;
Ongoing drug investigations and raids to keep the drug trade from gaining a firm foothold;
Random in school walking patrol program for the grade schools throughout the City;
Continued grant writing and reception of \$100,000 Homeland Security Tactical Team Grant and \$285,000 Sam Grant for APD Range;
Physical improvements to Public Safety Building with installation of new LED lighting to lower energy costs; Bullet proof glass in dispatch area

Projected firing range rehab to begin in 2017 utilizing grant funds. Civilian Dispatching was officially instituted in 2016. Growth of this program will free up police resources to better enhance public safety.

Savings from this program will be an ongoing benefit to the City budget.

Amsterdam Water Treatment Plant

Plant operator- Robert Discenza

In 2016 attendants at Glen Wild were able to dredge the intake pond without outside help at a savings to the city, this process is essential to the continuous flow of raw water to the city. They also maintain miles of road to both the Ireland and Steels reservoirs. The city's operators at the treatment plant were able to complete repairs to the Brookside bypass drainage overflow with the assistance of DPW and their heavy equipment operators saving taxpayers thousands of dollars. Other plant improvements are planned for 2017.

Amsterdam Municipal Golf Course

Amsterdam Municipal Golf Course (Muni) had a very exciting season in 2016. We hosted golfers who came to Amsterdam Municipal Golf Course because of our affordable pricing, reputation in the golfing community and the chance to play a course that was designed by one of the top American golf course architects, Robert Trent Jones. In the coming seasons we expect that our valued conditions will make Amsterdam Municipal Golf Course a golfing destination for all golfers near and far.

The quality of the golfing experience at Amsterdam Municipal Golf Course is being improved by making the necessary changes to allow for our turf to strive and exceed all expectations for this historic golf course. During the past season we have renovated 1 sand trap on hole #10 and 2 forward tees on holes 37 and #11. These renovations are very exciting and are a clear indication that quality improvements have a positive impact on the golfing experience.

With the continued support from the members, future members and the community along with the dedication and hard work from the staff, Amsterdam Municipal Golf Course has the opportunity to reclaim its title as one of the best courses in New York.

Corrective Action

In the interest of transparency, it should be noted that during the previous administration monies were borrowed from various capital project line items. These facts have been known for some time but now need to be resolved. We will work with our outside consultants Freed Maxick to reconcile all capital project accounts. It should be noted that due to these circumstances some capital projects may not be completed and some may not begin until we determine what funding is available. Once these project lines are reconciled we will institute a repayment plan to the General Fund to make it whole so that we comply with all standards that are set forth.

Closing

In the year ahead, we will continue to work for a thriving and innovative future for Amsterdam, the challenges are not insurmountable, and I know this by the successes that we have achieved this past year.

Thank you and God Bless You.

