Good afternoon and a happy new year to you all.  
  
I thank you for joining us here for our annual reorganization of the Governing Body as well as the boards and commissions of our City.    
  
I want to recognize our Council-- Council President Stegman, Councilwoman Asaro, Councilman Sanders, and Councilwoman Warner.  Their strong voices, good ideas, and active cooperation make the work of governing not only productive, but enjoyable—at least most of the time.  
  
And special recognition to City Clerk Cindy Ege, who goes the extra mile to, make sure we keep it all together*.*  
  
Today, I am pleased to be able to say that the State of Our City is good. I am confident that this year, working together, we will continue to make it even better.  
  
In this time where people seek to divide us, Lambertville stands out as a place where all are welcome.  No matter your race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual preference here you are treated equally and with respect.  I am proud of the fact that we received the second highest score in New Jersey, a nearly perfect 98 on the 2017 Human Rights Campaign Municipal Equality Index. Our high score reflects how inclusive our municipal laws, policies and services are for our LGBTQ residents and that the LGBTQ community is well represented on the governing body as well as the boards and commissions of the City. Here in Lambertville, we know that our diversity enriches our community and makes it stronger  
  
Another fundamental pillar of our City’s strength is that we have established a solid fiscal foundation. Simply put, our city is on a sound long-term fiscal path.  This year Standard & Poor’s boosted our credit rating to AA, saying our “strong budgetary performance” and “very strong liquidity” were major factors in the rating increase. Over the past three years, our budget surplus has averaged over $1 million. And we continue to hold the line on taxes for municipal services.  
  
This fiscal success didn’t happen by accident. We work hard to identify ways to make city government more cost-effective, seeking new ways to save tax dollars. We have streamlined every department in the City, effectively delivering more services with less staff.  
  
And we proactively seek private, state and national grant funding for needed projects.  This past year, for example, we competed for a merit-based grant from the NJ Department of Transportation and won $250,000 for continuing to make improvements to Clinton Street. These kinds of awards greatly help us continue the ongoing work of upgrading our roads and sidewalks, keeping our City a safe place to walk, bike or drive as well as enhancing its physical appearance and doing so without using city tax dollars.  
  
Here in Lambertville, we know we live in a special place surrounded by natural beauty. This past year alone, USA Today named our City the most picturesque in New Jersey and NJ.com named Lambertville the best location in the state for a day trip.  
  
Perhaps, because we so appreciate our beautiful surroundings, we remain strongly committed to forging a green future.  That begins with doing our part to curb climate change. This past year, I joined with more than 300 other Mayors from around the nation in committing that their City will meet the climate change goals the United States committed to in Paris as part of the landmark global Climate Change Agreement. Taken together, the efforts of cities, states and businesses can enable the United States to meet its Paris commitment—no matter what Washington does.   
  
On Climate Change, we are not just talking the talk, we are walking the walk. This year we expanded our Third Can Initiative, targeted at the 15% of the waste stream that is food waste and organic material. All restaurants that use the City for garbage and recycling pick-up are now required to participate. This will not only increase the $40,000 we have saved annually since we launched our single-stream recycling program, it will reduce our carbon foot-print. Every pound of food thrown away produces more than 3 pounds of greenhouse gases. Taken together, our comprehensive recycling efforts remove more than 1,000 tons from the waste stream annually.  
  
We also launched an initiative to install energy-saving LED street lights   Each light cuts carbon emissions by a ton annually. The installation is beginning on Bridge Street and will continue in 2018 throughout the City. These new lights-- which are much longer lasting--, bring the added benefits of saving us money and of shining more brightly, enhancing over-all safety.  
  
These new initiatives are in addition to our stepped-up use of renewable energy through the South Energy Regional Energy Cooperative (SHREC) and dramatically increased energy conservation through government building improvements as we work on all fronts to reduce our carbon footprint.  
  
We stand up against environmental threats in our own backyard, continuing to strongly oppose the proposed PennEast Pipeline. This ill-advised project threatens our water supply, will trigger more flash flooding, and puts all the progress made in cleaning up the Delaware River at risk.  
Through the coordination and leadership provided by our PennEast Pipeline Committee that combines environmental and community activists with local government officials, we are leaving no stone unturned.  
  
We continue to make upgrading and maintaining our parks and protecting open space a high priority. This year we added new bleachers to Ely Field and made the Snack Shack accessible to people with disabilities, among other improvements.  And the spectacular view of the woods from Ely Field will be there forever, thanks to the purchase we made through our Open Space Fund.  
  
The Lambertville Police, under the stellar leadership of Police Director Bruce Cocuzza, continues to do an excellent job of protecting public safety. This year the police coordinated a Street Smart public education campaign aimed at making Lambertville a safer place to walk, bike and drive. I am pleased to report that a recent evaluation of the campaign determined that it was a big success, resulting in improved pedestrian behavior in using crosswalks, motorists stopping for pedestrians in crosswalks, and motorists and pedestrians avoiding hand held cell phone use while driving or crossing streets.  
  
And we upgraded our web site, which is now designed to function as an online City Hall. The site’s user-friendly features provide a convenient way for residents to get any needed municipal forms, pay taxes, learn about upcoming government meetings, or place requests for city services. Our new online City Hall provides the information needed for more residents to become active participants in the community.  The more we can draw on the talents ideas, and active involvement of our residents, the more our City thrives.  
  
So as you can see, Lambertville enters 2018 well positioned to build on a strong foundation of accomplishment. Let me share a few of my top priorities.    
  
This year, we will continue to work to hold the line on taxes and seek other ways to leverage city spending and resources to save residents money. A critical goal is achieving a Level 6 Community Rating for the National Flood Insurance Program. This will increase the discount policy holders get from 15% to 20%.as well as make our city even more resilient.  
  
We will continue our fight against the PennEast Pipeline, enlisting the support of our new Governor Phil Murphy and working to defeat this ill-advised project once and for all.   
  
I will continue to make upgrading and maintaining our infrastructure a high priority with phase 2 of the Clinton Street project and cleaning and restoring the front of this building-- Our Justice Center-- among the priorities for 2018.    
  
Demonstrating our continuing commitment to open and transparent government, we will begin videotaping our City Council meetings this year.  
  
 We will continue to work on all fronts to reduce our carbon footprint, ensuring that Lambertville meets the commitment the United States made in Paris.  
  
And we will continue to do everything we can to make sure everyone-residents and visitors-alike feels welcome in our City.  
  
We enter the New Year, optimistic that we can do even better.  Thanks to everyone present here today and to all of our residents, I am confident we will continue to ensure Lambertville is a place we are all proud to call home.