

Good morning, thank you Congressman Tonko for the kind words and timely information about the opportunities the Biden Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill offers Saratoga Springs; and of course, thank you for your tireless work in getting it passed. Also thank you to Assemblyperson Carrie Woerner and former Mayor Yepsen for your introductory remarks.

It is an honor to have Supervisors Veitch and Gaston and our City Council members: Commissioners Sanghvi, Montagnino and Moran here for the 2022 State of the City. Of course, we eagerly anticipate Commissioner Scirocco's return and wish him all the best as he recovers. Finally, and most of all thank you to all those Saratogians who took some time out of their weekend to join us here today—normally the State of the City is held in February, but we decided to delay it a few weeks in the hopes that we could meet together safely, without masks---and here we are....

As we emerge out of a two-year pandemic, a deep recession and local challenges around race relations and civil rights, Saratoga Springs has emerged a stronger, more resilient and benevolent community and its future is bright as long as we continue to build our community through honest dialogue, hard work and true reform.

Before I turn to the State of the City, I'd like to tell you a story from those dark early days of the pandemic that I only learned about after I was elected your 22nd Mayor in November 2021. I think it illustrates the strength and resilience of our city. All of us remember the uncertainty and fear that pervaded this community, this nation and the world exactly two years ago when we were forced to all isolate and quarantine as a pandemic raged. There were too many questions, too much uncertainty, a vacuum of reliable information and at the time no known treatments or vaccines. Of course, there were public officials, including our very own Supervisor Tara Gaston who immediately took action as the pandemic deepened that helped fill some of the void. There was also a group of volunteers in our community who simply stepped up, without any mandate or authority and armed only with their zoom account, cellphones and deep desire to help out our community as it struggled through the unknown. They don't have a name even to this day, they were all volunteers and early in March 2020, led by Todd Shimkus of the Chamber they began to meet on a weekly basis via Zoom to see how they could assist our community, its small businesses which are at the very heart of our local economy, and all Saratogians survive a pandemic. The members were:

Darryl Leggieri of Discover Saratoga

Deann DeVitt of the DBA and Adirondack Trust

Ryan McMahon from the City Center

Samatha Bosshart of the Preservation Foundation and

Shelby Schneider then with Saratoga Prosperity Partnership

The only motivation for these Saratogians was their love for this community and their desire help in any way they could. They had no play book, no "how-to-manual." They just knew they had to help, while also keeping themselves and everyone else safe. They started small, sending out emails, making phone calls, checking in with their associates and colleagues. Over time, they sent out over 50,000 emails to a list of almost 10,000 people in our community. Providing information on everything from the latest advice from the Centers for Disease Control to how to apply for Payroll Protection funding and best practices for restaurant "take out." They consulted with other members of our community, such as the Saratoga Hospital, business and non-profit leaders and local government. Each of them stepped up without even being asked and they epitomize why this city, this community is so strong and so very resilient. I believe some are in attendance today, and if they could just stand to be recognized

Just as these individuals demonstrate the strength and resilience of Saratoga Springs, over the past three months I have seen for myself those same qualities in City Hall. Saratoga Springs is blessed to have an effective, conscientious, hard working group of public employees. Over the past years they have endured not only a pandemic like the rest of us, they also were forced to move from this building to the Recreation Center after a lighting strike and return, in the middle of a fiscal crisis, all while doing the City's business. Their resourcefulness, ingenuity and perseverance were and are remarkable. These qualities become even clearer when you focus on each of the City's Departments and their accomplishments and plans.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

As some of you know, Commissioner Scirocco has been out of the office focusing on his health. Nevertheless, with the support of his productive, hardworking staff, including his Deputy Joe O'Neill and Business Agent, Michael Veitch he hasn't missed a beat. Some of the projects that you can look forward to in the coming year are:

- A Water Pipe Distribution Project representing a \$2.1 million dollar investment, will soon greatly enhance the capacity of our water infrastructure.
- Almost \$1 million dollars will be spent at 3 of the City's Sanitary Pump Stations to enhance our sewer infrastructure.
- Veterans Memorial Park Field House which serves our southwest neighborhood and is utilized by Saratoga Miss Softball and Spa Catholic baseball will get \$375,000 worth of renovations.
- The City's water distribution system will also get a facelift when 24-inch gear reduction valves are installed up on North Broadway.

These projects are on top of DPW's 24/7/365 day work maintaining our streets in all types of weather, keeping innumerable buildings maintained and our parks and natural resources pristine. By the way, this room that we are in today is testimony to some of the great work that DPW does. As many of you know this room was heavily damaged just a few years ago—look at what a great job Skip and his staff did in restoring our beautiful Music Hall for generations to come.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Commissioner Montagnino, with his capable and experienced Deputy, Jason Tetu have embraced their roles as leaders of our Police, Fire and Code Enforcement Departments in the few months they have been at the helm:

- Commissioner Montagnino issued a report on the Darryl Mount death pinpointing deficiencies by prior Police Department leadership and requesting that there be further investigation of this tragic incident
- The Department has successfully moved the proposed Eastside Fire Station forward by confirming inspection contracts, applying for Federally funded SAFER grants for new staffing and planning for the recruitment, hiring and training of additional Firefighters/Paramedics for 2023.
- Commissioner Montagnino has improved the chances of recruiting experienced Firefighters/Paramedics by rationalizing the pay and benefits offered to "lateral hires." They have proposed and implemented a phased plan to get more police officers on the

street, without adding personnel expenses nor impacting management oversight.

- Finally, with the mayor's office, Commissioner Montagnino has led the effort to consult with Caroline Street businesses and other stakeholders to formulate a plan that will create a safer entertainment district while still maintaining its well-known vibrancy and diversity.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

Since taking office less than 3 months ago, Commissioner of Finance, Minta Sanghvi has been very busy working to strengthen our city's tech operations and finances:

- Her team hired a new Information Technology director and expanded the staff to accommodate the City's growing reliance on technology. This new team is working to upgrade the City's systems and services to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.
- Commissioner Sanghvi initiated an innovative participatory budget program that expands upon the City's transparency while encouraging civic engagement.
- Finally, our new Commissioner of Finance, has presided over a record breaking 2021 Sales tax collection of 14.9 million dollars, exceeding projections by 51.4%! This is the highest sales tax ever collected by the city. As NYS Comptroller, Thomas DiNapoli reported recently at the New York Conference of Mayors, Saratoga Springs has the highest increase (32.5%) in sales tax from 2020 to 2021 of any City in NYS!

Congratulations go to Commissioner Sanghvi, her Deputy Heather Crocker and her entire staff!

ACCOUNTS DEPARTMENT

Commissioner of Accounts Dillon Moran had big shoes to fill when he took over for long serving former Commissioner of Accounts, John Franck, but in the short time he has been in office, he has shown himself equal to the task. With his excellent deputy, Stacy Connors he has:

- Successfully extended Outdoor dining legislation for 3 years—one of the critical components that helped restaurants and bars survive the pandemic.
- Redesigned the special event process to facilitate these activities throughout our city. The result of Commissioner Moran's work will be seen very soon as more than 60 public events are planned for 2022.
- Aggressively responded to COVID with the able assistance of County Supervisor Gaston, by holding 5 community distribution events where more than 12,000 rapid tests were distributed to Saratogians throughout the City.
- Upgraded a number of City Clerk records so they are now available electronically and searchable by the general public.

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Finally, just like my fellow Council members, our office has been very busy. I have been blessed by the best Deputy Mayor this City has ever known, Angela Rella, and an effective and efficient Executive Assistant, Kerry Huyben. In addition, the Planning Staff, Building Department, City Attorney and Human Resources Offices have been excellent. Together we have accomplished much in 2022:

- First, we have set a different tone at City Council meetings. Instead of 3 pages of rules on how public comment is to be conducted at City Council meetings, I replaced it with

one rule and three suggestions:

- Rule: you have 2 minutes to make a comment and the time is yours and yours alone.
- Suggestion 1: Remember YOU are a member of a community speaking to other members of that same community.
- Suggestion 2: Be kind. Kindness is never wasted.
- Suggestion 3: Be factual. Accuracy and truth are foundations of our democracy.
- We threw the doors open to the mayor's office and put into practice the phrase: "all are welcome here." Since January 1, we have met with almost 200 people from all walks of life about issues ranging from "Arts Tourism" to the backstretch workers, to land use and zoning matters. The Mayor's office welcomes ALL Saratogians. "
- With the capable assistance of City Attorney, Tony Izzo, Building Inspector head, Pat Cogan, and Planners Susan Barden, Amanda Tucker, Aneisha Samuels, we put the Unified Development Ordinance on firmer legal footing by passing it 4-0 at the last City Council meeting. In the coming City Council meetings, we will be considering amendments to the UDO that will help define uses, protect the greenbelt and guide are all important land use boards.
- After years of delay, and with the critical assistance of Tina Carton on my staff, we moved the Saratoga Downtown Connector project forward. Happily, it is now in the design phase and soon we will have a multi-use trail extending from City Hall to the northeast gateway of our city. This project will eventually be part of a comprehensive City-wide bike/pedestrian system that will offer transportation alternatives and help build a carbon-neutral future for our children. By the way, it is said we stand on the shoulders of those who come before us, and I'd like to recognize that this project and all the other work we hope to do in the coming months and years to create a City-wide bike/pedestrian system was paved (no pun intended) by the pioneering work of Supervisor Matt Veitch in partnership with many others when he nurtured the creation of the Geyser Crest Trail a number of years ago.
- We have appointed a number of qualified individuals to the City's boards and commissions a testimony of that volunteerism that I spoke about earlier.

We are also working on the following initiatives:

- Establishing greater security in the Caroline Street entertainment zone with the Department of Public Safety.
- Creating a "hub" for transportation alternatives at the City Center Parking garage that will allow visitors to park their car and then bike, walk or ride through the core of our City, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Creating a public/private partnership with our arts Community with the goal of establishing Saratoga Springs as one of the foremost arts destinations in the nation.
- Addressing homelessness by partnering with local non-profits and County officials.
- Encouraging the construction of low income and work force housing in the city; and
- Ensuring that we stay the "City in the Country" by preserving our greenbelt.

Finally, we established a diverse, smart and hardworking Infrastructure Task Force after Congress, with our very Congressman Tonko's leadership passed the Bipartisan Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act. This Task Force, under former Mayor Joanne Yepsen, is as we speak:

- Reviewing grant making programs available in the Act.
- Assessing the City's infrastructure needs by reaching out to experts and members of the public; and
- Providing the City Council with prioritized guidance on infrastructure projects and funding sources.

In fact, at the end of this address, we are going to ask each of you to tell us what YOU think is the most important infrastructure projects to address in our city.

Saratoga Springs has emerged from the pandemic and the stress of a fiscal crisis stronger than ever.

- Commissioner Scirocco continues to provide exceptional, cost-effective services to the city while capably addressing important water and sewer infrastructure needs.
- Commissioner Montagnino has brought strong leadership to the Department of Public Safety and thoughtful planning for the City's future needs.
- Commissioner Sanghvi has fortified our important information technology systems while putting us on solid financial footing.
- Finally, Commissioner Moran has ensured that our downtown will continue to be a vibrant place for dining and entertainment, notwithstanding any re-emergence of the pandemic, while upgrading the City's records so they are more accessible and transparent.

Together we serve this City as a team, and on behalf of all the members of the City Council, thank you for giving us this opportunity to serve you. I know I speak for everyone up here when I say it is a privilege to steward the future of Saratoga Springs and we look forward to the coming months as we work to make a strong, reliant Saratoga Springs, even better.

Mayor Ron Kim
March 19, 2022