



**City of Port Jervis 2020
State of the City Address
By: Mayor Kelly B. Decker
January 29, 2020**

Councilwoman-At-Large Randazzo, Council members Campbell, Mann, Trovei, Foster, Oney, Santini, Siegel and Simmons, Department Heads, distinguished guests, and ladies and gentlemen of the City of Port Jervis.

I am proud to be here in front of you again tonight presenting my seventh State of the City Address. An address that shows that our city continues to prosper with leaps and bounds along with a carefully planned procedure of growth and maturation.

To look at where we are, we must remind ourselves that the past is not far away. If our future is not precisely planned and implemented our amazing transformation could slip away.

Let us begin with the oldest “new” project. Our Frank D. Bell Tri-State Memorial bridge, road widening and sidewalk project is shaping up to be a wonderful addition as the entrance to our fair city. When completed this inviting corridor will capture travelers into taking a peek at what our city might have to offer to them. It begins with the new city entrance signs that present our heritage of bluestone and steel, while offering yet a simple elegant touch of new; to a foundation that was set over 167 years ago when this city first became a village. Throughout the city, street signs have begun to change as will directional signage that will lead visitors to our Historic Downtown, Elks-Brox Park and Watershed Trails, Tri-State Rock, Fort Decker, Erie Turntable, D&H Canal, the Dog Yard, Riverside and West End Parks to name a few.

While ongoing projects will continue this year shaping up our downtown with new sidewalks, refacing our 1886 Civil War Monument and paving the rest of Elks-Brox Park our Department of Public Works will move

out of sight and underground beginning to reline our very old and dilapidated sewer pipes that will once again flow for future generations.

While millions of dollars are being spent sprucing up our city through numerous grants, our city's finances have recovered as well. Our fund balance has reached a comfortable level of protection while your city department heads and city council have worked hard to offer you low and acceptable tax increases over the last two years. This has been done through precise planning and goal setting as outlined in our strategic plan.

This has been another banner year for business growth and expansion in our city. Bon Secours Community Hospital is currently under a multi-million-dollar construction upgrade and when finished will offer our residents and visitors a state-of-the-art facility for our healthcare needs. Speaking of health care, the Veteran's Administration determined that 100 Pike Street Port Jervis Plaza to be the next location for this area's largest outpatient medical facility with expanded services that just opened this past Monday. It will draw United States Veteran's from all over the Tri-State area to our city.

To handle all the current construction and the planned growth in our city, Orange and Rockland has committed to upgrading the electric output and reliability by beginning construction on a new multi-million-dollar sub-station. That construction will continue this year.

The draw? Well that would be the 50 miles of premiere hiking and biking trails that have been designed, created and maintained by volunteers that are bringing tourists here from all over the world. The word is out, and the Port Jervis Outdoor Club has put our city on the

world map for recreation. This past year we opened what is believed to be the largest pump track on the eastern seaboard, allowing people of all ages to experience a physical activity while enjoying a ride with friends, family and colleagues. Our city cannot thank these volunteers enough for the time and energy they have put into this transformation.

These visitors are and will be seeing revitalization and construction to the likes that hasn't happened here in nearly 100 years. The Beast Project at 4 Fowler Street will showcase or downtown with its incredible architecture and open gallery floor plan. It will provide space for artisans and a gallery to watch a master create incredible pieces of work under that roof. Of course, back to back, the new hotel near the promenade will start construction this spring adding to places to stay for visitors.

We will continue to develop the railroad turntable property with the tow path connection, and at least a partial revival of the D&H Canal that is set to come to life soon. This will present a flashback of what life was like here during the 19th Century with transportation here in America. Our BOCES summer work program also returned for its 7th year and cleared the canal basin as well as working on the newly revived and soon to open campgrounds at Elks-Brox Park. This free labor is paid for through a grant from BOCES and is a supervised program that teaches our local teenage resident's responsibility, coupled with hard work, equals success.

The Snowball's Chance Fat Tire Bike Race, Citywide Yard Sale, Soap Box Derby, Art in the Park at Orange Square, Dinner Along the Delaware and Fireworks Show, Fireman's Day Parade, Fall Foliage Festival, Monsters on the Mountain, the Erie 80 and Christkindlmarkt

are a few of the event that draw thousands of visitors to our city. We once again have incredible volunteers that plan and lead each of these events successfully and need to Thank them from the bottom of our hearts.

At the end of this year our Canal Street Solar System went online. This is predicted to have a substantial savings for our city over the next 20 years as well as providing for green energy and helping our environment. Speaking of our environment, while we have trails in our watershed, we are also selling carbon credits there too. Because of the woodlands we preserve in the watershed, we have contracted out those carbon's created thus creating revenue for just having trees. How can we improve on that? How about expanding our Watershed? That is exactly what we will be doing this year. We have received a substantial award and working with the Orange County Land Trust and the William Penn Foundation our watershed will expand at no or low cost to the taxpayers of the city.

Not only have we kept tax increases low as promised after the first 5 years of reset, but we are now expanding our personnel. We have added a fulltime Fire Inspector as well as creating a contracted position for Human Resource. Additionally, this past year we have upgraded our entire computer system and networked the city with a contracted IT firm and began converting all electronic correspondence to our @portjervisny.gov accounts. Our new state of the art high definition citywide camera system has had the 1st phase installed and is continuing to provide the eyes needed for our police officers.

Although I revealed earlier some of the new projects that will impact the growth of our city, the annexation of property from the Town of

Deerpark will increase our property tax base substantially and will also include development that will lead to new jobs. Speaking of new jobs and construction Cornerstone Healthcare will be putting \$5,000,000 of renovations into their healthcare facility on Hammond Street while expanding medical services there as well. Additionally there will be construction in the Tri-State corridor with the intended move and rebuild of Dunkin Donut's, the old TSE Property on Jersey Avenue has been bought and will be totally remodeled into a multi-location facility, and the MTA has announced that the Metro-North platform will be replaced with a new State-of-the-Art Accessible Train Station beginning this spring. We will see a focus of redevelopment of the Riverside Park and attempt to obtain the Downtown Revitalization Initiative again to capture the \$10,000,000.00 prize for that development. We will be presenting to the public in the next few weeks the Farnum Community and Evacuation Center project. By combining a total rehabilitation to the historic Farnum House that was used as the caretaker home for the D&H Canal and attaching a multi-use facility; we could potentially have a state-of-the-art facility for all our residents. Additionally, we will begin pre-planning on a DPW facility at our city landfill area as well as a multi-use emergency services facility that would be centrally located in the city.

Our city building department is in the forefront of this effort to focus on compliance when it comes to dilapidated, un-kept, and unsafe buildings throughout the city. This department issued 213 permits and raised nearly \$450,000.00 in revenue. Residents continue to take advantage of 421-f called the "Capital Improvements to Residential Property." This exemption allows homeowners, who are putting an addition onto or rehabilitating their main structure, the ability to apply for a tax exemption on city taxes over the course of 4 years thus offsetting any

new tax burden. Our businesses are also using their tax exemptions to do the same thing. The building department also oversaw the demolition of six city owned condemned buildings that were subsequently sold for redevelopment or neighbor expansion.

Our city Assessor's Office performs a multitude of tasks including the determination of Assessment and taxable value as well changes to those assessments. That office reports that transfers of property in the city during 2019 has increased at a very good rate this past year and that foreclosures are getting released quicker and put back on the market for sale. Investors are rehabilitating at record rate and selling the properties as single family homes to young families and first-time home buyers who are eager to settle in our city that is quickly becoming a mecca for those that love the outdoors and small city life. This office will be working very hard this year to make sure that every resident is counted in the 2020 census so that we are accurately identified to the federal government that is imperatively important for shared tax dollars. There are 3200 parcels of property that need to be verified. This office also monitors 1830 exemptions to make sure they are all still valid. They strive for office efficiency, great public relations, help in educating, and intradepartmental cooperation to get these tasks completed.

Our Community Development Agency, is contracted by the city and plays an extremely important role in our city's future growth as they deal directly with business owners on low interest loans while seeking to get the best dollar for the city when it comes to grant or low interest loan projects. The CDA writes and requests grants for the city as well as administratively works, updates and completes the tedious paperwork task of those grants.

Our city Recreation Program provides year-round activities for our city's youth. There are countless events throughout the year that the staff and volunteers work on to make our city a better place to live. Free movies, free concerts, sports camps, special events, and field trips round out events while we continue to see park equipment upgrades. Additionally, the recreation department is working closely on the development of the Farnum Community and Evacuation Center to be revealed soon.

I say this every year but the employees of our Department of Public Works hardly receive the recognition they deserve as they are involved in every single aspect of what makes this city work. This year alone the DPW not only did their routine pickup of garbage and recyclables, plowing, and outside maintenance but they prepared the manholes and built the ADA compliant curb cuts on West Main Street. They prepared and assisted when needed for the Tri-State Bridge, corridor widening and sidewalk replacement. They prepared the mini-mall lot for repaving and created the aesthetic dumpster enclosure. They prepared for paving of half of Elks-Brox park road and built the new Dog Yard at the Turntable site. The DPW members repaired 40' of a 24" storm line, cleaned 2000 trunk sewer mains and installed 140' of storm main and basins. The water department not only produces 50 Million Gallons of pristine water, for our residents, from our watershed but repaired and installed over 20 services, repaired and installed 7 hydrants. The Dial-A-Bus picked up a total of 11,499 riders among them were seniors, those with disabilities, students and regular passengers. As I said before, they are prepared to embark on a journey that they have never done before with the relining of sewer main trunk lines in our city. You won't see the work but know that our sewer lines will now be good for generations to come. We will also see multiple major streets repaved after the bridge, road widening and sidewalk project at complete.

Our highly decorated and professional police department define the mission of safety and security to all its law-abiding citizens. Our men and woman work tirelessly to provide safety to our residents and visitors alike. Our officers take a Strategic Policing Approach to our Community, It begins with Policing-Problem Solving, Effective Shift Staffing Resources, Intelligence Led Policing, Proactive High Visibility Patrols, Traffic Enforcement, Proactive Investigations, Outreach, Crime Prevention and Education, Updated Training, Policy Development and Officer Wellness. We again have seen part 1 crimes in our city reduced by 7.45% from 2018 and over 65.4% since 1996. We have enhanced HD surveillance not only in city hall but the entire street wide camera system. The department has done outreach recruitment for diverse applications. They have implemented Shared Services with outside agencies including a Firearms Simulator Training in conjunction with the Town of Deerpark, Eastern Pike Regional, Delaware Valley School District and the Port Jervis City School District; yes we cross borders. They have expanded federal and state partnerships to combat illicit sales of opiates, continued and added new programs such as Trap Spay & Neuter, Hope Not Handcuffs and Jump Out Parties. The department has plethora of Goals and Projects this year that will only enhance and improve this department well into the 20's

As I said before our city finances have really turned in a positive direction and that is thanks to our City Clerk's office. Not only are they streamlining their services but they are working to make sure that our city gets the best product for the right cost. They are also reviewing for duplicate purchases making us run more efficiently and effectively. Traditionally this office has the unappreciated job of collecting taxes,

finer and fees. As we continue to see a net in positive results, we must also continue to be vigilant and cautious for potential harder times.

Now what can I say about our 100% volunteer Fire Department? This dedicated team of 6 companies as well as the special ops team and fire police responded to 367 calls and 70 mutual aid runs in 2019. 11 of these calls were working structure fires with 5 being second alarms or greater. Day or Night these volunteers risk their lives to save ours without fearing the risk that they take jeopardizing their own. They answer calls to structure fires, brush fires, floods, accidents, drownings, and much more. In addition, they do countless hours of training, time away from their family, to make sure your family is safe from harm's way. Our fireman work with other departments to make sure that coordination and cooperation work hand in hand as they protect each of us. The department is diligent in getting grants for their protection as well as the protection of our citizens. They have been awarded money for brush firefighting equipment and personal safety systems for interior firefighters. They raised funds to purchase a new brush fire skid unit for the hiking and biking trails and through careful budgeting they now have handheld thermal imaging capabilities on all fire department apparatus.

So here we are. We are prepared to continue improving our city into the 21st Century. Our council has answered the call of the will of the people. It is resounding that you want the change to continue and we will make every effort through careful planning, coordination and cooperation to make sure our city continues to move forward and prosper.

The election of 2019 is over, it is time for us to roll up our sleeves and make our city the best that it can be. Residents let your council

members know they were elected to serve the 8600 residents that live here, not just a few. Tell them what you want, give them suggestions and if you can; please get involved.

God Bless the United States of America and God Bless our small city of Port Jervis, New York...Thank you!