

CHARLES V. PATRICELLI
MAYOR

CITY OF WATERVLIET

JOSEPH LACIVITA
GENERAL MANAGER

BARBARA A. DIAMOND
COUNCILWOMAN

CHRISTOPHER DAUS
COUNCILMAN



State of the City 2021

When I presented the State of the City address last year in February, none of us could have imagined what was to come. 2020 was an unprecedented year due to the Covid pandemic. Yet, in spite of all the challenges we faced, we accomplish a great deal. I am so proud of our entire City workforce delivering essential services to our residents under extremely difficult and uncertain conditions. This State of the City Address reflects and recounts on our successes in 2020 and what we hope to accomplish in 2021 and the years to come.

We had some significant staffing changes in 2020. After being elected Mayor in November of 2019, my Council seat was left vacant. Councilman Torncello and I agreed to appoint lifelong resident Barbara Diamond as my replacement. Joe LaCivita came on board in January as our General Manager. Joe was employed by the Town of Colonie for several years and brings with him a wealth of experience in municipal operations and planning and development. In January, our finance director, Michael McNeff, resigned to take a position with the newly elected Albany County Comptroller. Fortunately, our Deputy Finance Director, Amanda Austin, was more than qualified for the position and was promoted. The Police Chief position was vacated. We recently posted the position, and we are eager to find a replacement. In September, Deputy General Manager Mark Spain made the decision to leave the City to pursue other endeavors; and in December,

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Chris Daus, Supervisor of the Sanitation Department retired, and our long-time legal counsel, Yorden Huban, accepted a full-time position with Albany County. We filled the Corporation Council position with the law firm Goldberger & Kremer.

Recreation has always been a focus of mine. From my perspective it had been ignored far too long. If we expect to attract families to our city, we need to have the amenities for them to enjoy. Prospective residents look at the whole picture when deciding where to reside. They are looking for quality schools, parks, transportation, and the feeling that they are part of a community.

The bike path has been a discussion of many since its construction, and we anticipate it will be finished in early spring. This extension to the New York State bike trail will not only benefit our residents but visitors as well. Due to some strong discussions, we were able to convince the Department of Transportation to fund the repaving of Broadway from the 4th Street tunnel to 23rd Street. To encourage visitors to not only ride the trail but to stop and enjoy what Watervliet has to offer, I had two kiosks installed to show visitors a map of what they can find in the vicinity of the bike path, such as restaurants, convenience stores, and some of our attractions, for example the Watervliet Historical Museum to name a few. We were lucky enough to have a resident voluntarily design the map which saved the City several hundred dollars. The Watervliet Tree Committee had an active role in selecting the types of trees recently planted along the bike path. They

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continue to work on a tree inventory and on programs to increase the number of trees within the City. In addition, we were the recipient of a tree maintenance grant which will allow us to remove many of the tree stumps left all around the City. The City also applied for a tree planting grant with National Grid to replace over 50 trees throughout the City which we hope to hear soon.

Right from the beginning of this administration, it was apparent the Dome needed a facelift. Simply cleaning out several truckloads of obsolete items was a major improvement in itself; and we continued to upgrade the interior of the lobby with a new floor, painting, and the installation of security cameras - all of this done by volunteers. We had another volunteer seal the parking lot and then Albany County DPW striped it for the price of materials. Lastly, we had a sign installed on the side of the building making it appear like an official recreation building and not just a warehouse.

In early March, we applied to the Tri-City ValleyCats "4 in 24" field renovation program to have our girls' softball field at the Civic Center renovated, and we were accepted. In September, a full team of ValleyCats personnel, along with a few city volunteers, worked to create a certified, official girls softball infield. This project alone would have cost over \$35,000, but thanks to this initiative, the City came out the winner.

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We have a total of four outside basketball courts in our parks; and all but one was in good condition. The Clinton Park court was breaking up and needed to be upgraded for the past few years. The need was obvious, but the city was unable to financially come up with the necessary funds to resurface the court. Chris McCabe and others stepped in and purchased the blacktop and provided the labor to resurface the court and have it striped. The estimated value of this was nearly \$20,000; but more importantly, we now have a court that our kids can use properly and safely.

Hudson Shores Park has been a work in progress since last spring. Over 30 elm trees were diseased and needed to be removed before someone was injured from the falling branches. They were removed in the Fall. In addition, the shoreline was so full of weeds and trees that it was nearly impossible to see the river. With the help of Albany County DPW workers and our own DPW staff, we removed the overgrowth and now have a clear view of the river to enjoy. We also collaborated with Albany County to stripe the road from 787 to 23rd Street. The estimated savings to the City was approximately \$23,000.

Our area Boy Scout troop painted the 30 picnic tables as one of their service projects. This, along with so many other volunteer groups, helped free up our city crews to allow them to concentrate on other needed projects.

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Work didn't stop there - the Watervliet Housing Authority's summer crew came in to stripe the parking lots which spruced up the entire site. Gravel was also placed in the off-road parking areas to provide a clean base without visitors stepping in mud when wet. Also, a volunteer group, the Riverkeepers, came in to clean the park's shoreline in October. They cleaned up hundreds of pounds of garbage.

The intent of this park is for visitors to relax and absorb the beauty of the river edge. We purchased some charcoal cookers and plan to add more picnic tables this spring. In addition, we will be installing some "couple swings". This is yet another place for someone to sit and enjoy the river view. As with so many of the other projects, Redburn Development Partners donated the cost of the swings and materials and Tom Connelly of Connelly Construction in Green Island installed the framework structure to hold the swings. Again, we accomplished this at no cost to the city.

Typically, Hudson Shores Park was used for birthday parties, graduation parties, showers, and cookouts. Although these are great uses, we wanted to seek out other activities. For example, in the fall we hosted a theatrical play, a craft fair, and a socially distanced Halloween party for our City children. In 2021, we plan on hosting car shows, a farmer's market on Sundays and more theatrical performances. During the holiday season, we mounted nine steel Christmas trees near the pavilion. These were donated by Streck's in Watervliet (with the help of Ackroyd Metal Fabricators in Menands) and

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decorated with LED lights donated by residents. This made a beautiful decoration for everyone to see and enjoy (especially from 787 and downtown Troy). We hope to expand this next year as well.

Scheduling the use of our ball fields, the Dome, and parks can be a challenge for residents and organizations. For this reason, a scheduling program was developed. Those interested can go to www.Watervlietbooking.org to check on the availability of the venue they are interested in. This program simplifies the process for both administration and prospective users. If anyone needs assistance in booking a location, please call Chris Chartrand at 518-270-3815. We have seen a huge increase in interest in the facilities and want it to continue to benefit everyone.

Due to Covid, we had to cancel annual City events such as Breakfast with the Easter Bunny, the Memorial Day Parade, the Arsenal City Run and the Annual Tree Lighting. But we ended the year with a wonderful Christmas parade throughout the City. Volunteers organized the participants and the parade route - again not letting Covid stop us from some sense of normalcy.

Speaking of the Annual Tree Lighting, the city has traditionally handed out ornaments. I felt that I could not justify spending nearly \$2,000 for ornaments and thought that maybe someone could make homemade ornaments that look like masks. Lucy Ryan

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took on the challenge and made over 300. They were handed out primarily at the Victorian Christmas exhibit at the Dutch Reformed Church. We still have a limited quantity of ornaments. Call my office at 518-270-3815 if you would like one mailed to you.

Last, but certainly not least, a dog park was installed at Clinton Park through the generous donation of the Watervliet Charitable Foundation. The foundation donated approximately \$4,500 for the fencing needed to separate large and small dogs in the park.

Covid certainly did a number on everyone - not just here but throughout the world. Many of our friends and family were touched by the virus, and unfortunately some succumbed to it. Our deepest sympathies and condolences to the families who lost a loved one.

We have a great community with residents who care a great deal about keeping it strong. During the pandemic many stepped up and helped make the situation a little less stressful. Groups still gathered to help clean up our streets, parks, and buildings knowing the enormous burden it was placing on our manpower. Unfortunately, due to the financial shortfall and not knowing how deep the financial cuts would be, we needed to furlough three of our full-time employees and four part-time employees. Providing the same level of service with less manpower was certainly a challenge, and

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we are very appreciative to the many residents who understood and recognized that we were all in this together.

As a person who has seen firsthand the difficulty of residents struggling due to their financial situation, we immediately started to work on food distribution. Beginning in March, many of us joined in by unloading trucks, filling boxes with food, and distributing them to residents at least twice a month. Then the most amazing partnership happened, Redemption Church was approached to help, and they not only provided the help but also took over the entire operation of the distribution. Distribution was originally located at the Dome and eventually was moved to their church location on 6th Avenue. We now average over 200+ boxes donated every two weeks to our residents and to whomever needs them from the area.

The organization, *Feed Albany*, was also approached on several occasions, and each time, they graciously and generously provided over 250 hot meals for our residents. Our volunteers picked up the meals in Albany, returned to Watervliet and distributed them at the municipal center in the evening.

We tried to make sure our children didn't miss out due to the pandemic. A small group of us got together and delivered balloons to the home of every child who had a birthday between March and June. Over 600 children received balloons to give them a sense that we were with them and their special day would not be forgotten. Many, of course,

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would have had parties at their home or in school, but with the pandemic, this couldn't happen. A huge thank you again to all those who did this every day of the week for three solid months. In addition, the Watervliet Police Department and Watervliet Fire Department participated in numerous birthday parades – which became a popular alternative to birthday parties throughout the Country.

With the pandemic, many of our recreational programs were either partially or fully cut. We were not able to open our swimming pool last summer, probably the first time ever. Financial uncertainty, strict occupancy and social distancing guidelines to comply with Covid and the lack of certified lifeguards were some of the main reasons. However, this afforded us an opportunity to do much needed work to the pool house which was in deplorable condition. We made repairs to the roof, painted the inside of the building and worked on the overall appearance; we'll be ready, if permissible, this summer.

To adhere to the social distancing protocols that resulted from COVID, we were forced to close the parks. This also was unheard of before, and I'd like to thank the residents for complying with this order. Thankfully, in early summer we were able to reopen the parks. We operated the three spray pools for our younger children. Volunteers turned the pools on and off which allowed us to open earlier, stay open later and operate the pools seven days a week. Yet another example of a strong community partnership!

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The City Hall building itself has been ignored for many years. The heating system had issues back when I first worked for the City in 1977. Since then, “patches” were made and the system is still unreliable – either overheating or not heating at all. Also, the windows are so old that some of them have the glass falling out and all need plastic over them to just keep out the cold air. Within weeks of taking office, Assemblyman John McDonald and Senator Neil Breslin secured funding to help with both projects in the amount of approximately \$600,000. Then Covid hit and the State pretty much shut down slowing the paperwork process. As of today, we are still waiting for the funds; but I am told it is close. In the meantime, we have been discussing the specifications with both architects and engineers so we can hit the road with bids as soon as the approvals are given. This will save the city thousands of dollars in wasted heating costs; but more so provide decent working conditions that everyone should have at their place of employment. No one can dispute City Hall is a beautiful building, but cleaning was not up to par. The marble floors were all stripped, cleaned, and polished and now have a presentation that is respectful to the building’s aesthetic. This was all pre-Covid and we’re glad we were able to squeeze it in.

After the severe rainstorm in August, it was discovered that there were breaches in the underground foundation of the Civic Center, which caused flooding in one of the basement exercise rooms. The floor had to be taken up, the sheetrock had to be removed and replaced, and the room needed to be repainted. Thanks to volunteers

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Michael Testo and Rich Foley for donating their time and the materials to put the room back together. Also, we secured a contractor to remove the soil around the affected area on the outside of the building, and parged and patched the foundation to avoid further damage. This may not seem like an major accomplishment, but the repairs were completed in a reasonable amount of time and at minimal cost to the City.

The Dutch Reformed Church, which includes the Watervliet Historical Museum, needs repairs and improvements. The tower was completed in 2020, and bids were approved to have a heating system installed in the building. A committee was formed to come up with different uses for the church. We have had discussions with the State of New York to possibly convert the Church into the City Court. Also, we are preparing to use the church portion of the building for public meetings, recitals, small plays, and possibly wedding ceremonies. A group of volunteers from the museum recently held their Victorian Christmas exhibit highlighting the museum, church, and artifacts they have on display. We will continue to work to make this beautiful building a viable use of space.

When the bell tower was taken down from the church, the bell was removed and stored at Streck's. We have been working on securing a location for the bell that would highlight the history of our City. Meneely bells were made right here in Watervliet only a few hundred feet from the church. Keeping in mind that finances were short in supply, we realized the City wouldn't be able to afford to build an appropriate shelter. We were fortunate enough to secure a grant from the Watervliet Charitable Foundation and plans

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are now in the works to build the shelter. We have designated the entrance to the Congress Street Bridge on the south side as its new location. We are hoping this will provide a gateway to the City and welcome visitors to explore the history that Watervliet has to share.

Our veteran military banners have been growing significantly, we now have over 450 banners. The large number has made it more difficult to keep up with the usual installing them in the spring and removing them in the fall. We made the decision to leave the banners up year-round and do maintenance on them as needed. We have found that many of the original banners were so badly weathered they needed to be replaced. Those which are not replaced by the family are removed out of respect for the veteran.

New York State's bail reform changes went into effect on January 1, 2020 presenting many challenges for the police department. The department overcame these challenges and has fully adapted to the new requirements.

During 2020, the Watervliet Police Department answered 14,816 calls for service and made 472 arrests. As we all know, there has been unprecedented violence in the communities surrounding us. We are extremely fortunate to report there was no significant gun violence in our City, thanks in part to the tireless job our police force puts in day and night.

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Following the tragic death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, there were nationwide protests calling for police reform in the United States. During the protests in Albany, our police force was there helping to regain peace and stabilize the situation. When a peaceful protest was scheduled for June 7th in Troy, our police force was put on standby to support our neighboring city ensuring those in attendance had their 1st Amendment rights to peacefully protest protected from those wishing to mask the protest as a means to engage in criminal activity.

In June, Governor Cuomo signed Executive Order 203 requiring each local government in NYS to adopt a policing reform plan that will maintain public safety while building mutual trust and respect between police and the communities they serve. We put together a committee of qualified city residents, and after regularly meeting for the past five months, compiled a preliminary plan. A final plan is due to the Governor's office by April 1, 2021. Acting Chief Brian Strock and several members from the police department have been instrumental in ensuring this endeavor is successful. You can view the proposed plan by going to our website. You'll find it both interesting and very professional, a tribute to our department.

Always taking steps to protect our residents and businesses, the WPD distributed 1,681 masks. This was especially helpful in the beginning as the pandemic caught everyone by surprise, and this gesture by the PD helped relieve some of the stress.

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I would like to thank Lieutenant Brian Strock for taking on the duties of Acting Chief in May. He has done an excellent job, and we are extremely thankful that he stepped up during this very difficult year – a difficult year not only for our police department but for departments across the country. I'd also like to congratulate Sergeant Walter Ellis on his retirement in April, and welcome our two new hires in 2020 – Patrolman Joseph McQueen and Patrolman Jared Ellis, and our first 2021 hire, Sean Kusaywa, who will be sworn in this month.

Fire

The Watervliet Fire Department is led by Chief Tom Garrett and continued to provide services in 2020 and kept the department safe and functioning. Firefighter Tom Corcoran is the designated EMS Coordinator. He provided guidance and training on COVID 19 not only for the FD but for all the agencies and organizations in the City. Tom continued to keep pace with the constantly changing CDC guidance and promoted the suggested guidelines to all our residents. Tom was instrumental in all phases of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2020, the Fire Department responded to 2,472 calls, 297 of which were mutual aid calls, and had a total of 1,151 ambulance transports.

The Fire Department's continuing education training has been completely online since mid-March 2020 due to COVID-19. In addition to ongoing pandemic-adapted fire and



EMS training, there continues to be frequent "just in time training", where new information and knowledge on COVID-19 treatment and operations is provided on the Target Solutions electronic learning platform in a safe and effective manner. In addition, even though in-person public safety training was on pause in 2020, all-hazards event response planning that leverages the capabilities of the police and fire departments working together was a focus this past year.

In July, the City was awarded an AFG (Assistance to Firefighters Grant) from the Federal Government for over \$458,000. This award includes funding for cardiac monitors/defibrillators which allows our EMTs and paramedics to assess various vital signs and provide Advanced Life Support treatment for cardiac emergencies. Additionally, we received funding to send three members of the department to an 11-month State Certified Paramedic Program. The funding also enables us to be fully staffed, covering the firefighters who are attending the training, without incurring overtime. The training began in September of 2020 and will be completed in August of this year. I would like to take a moment to thank Captain Tom Eagan. Captain Eagan has been a member of the Watervliet Fire Department for over 27 years, and he writes these grants for the City. Over the course of his career he has received close to \$2.5 million in funding for the City of Watervliet Fire Department and has successfully assisted other departments within the mutual aid system.

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Also, Lieutenant Scott Rentz retired in early 2020 after 20 years on the job, and two firefighters, Timothy Delisle and Vincent Ellis, were promoted to Lieutenant.

The Water Department provides approximately 23 million gallons of drinking water a day, through a transmission line that is nearly 20 miles long, starting in the Town of Guilderland in what is called French's Mills. The department operates with 4 men and is responsible for the maintenance of the reservoir, the transmission line, the filtration plant on Route 155, and water and sewer distribution lines throughout the city. There are approximately 26 miles of waterlines, 500 catch basins, 250 fire hydrants, 35 miles of sewer lines and the 1.2 megawatt hydroelectric plant located at the dam in Guilderland.

We supply up to 4 million gallons of water to Guilderland per day and have emergency valves to supply or receive water from Menands, Green Island and Colonie in the event it is needed. This year the Water Department, with the help of Albany County DPW, cleaned out 52 catch basins and will continue until they are all cleaned out this year. In addition, volunteers painted ALL 250 fire hydrants throughout the city, again to show we care about our city's appearance.

We started a conversation with the Town of Guilderland to see how we can work together to maintain the reservoir to continue to provide clean and safe drinking water.

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We are also working on how to best eliminate or at least reduce the water chestnuts in the reservoir.

Our focus currently is to obtain approval of our license with the federal government for the operation of our hydroelectric plant. This is a 3-year process, and I am optimistic we will be obtaining approval soon.

This past year 9th Avenue from 16th St to 19th Street was torn up to install a new 8" water main. This project cost \$485,335 and \$177,000 of this project was covered under the lead lateral replacement grant. The road was repaved, and every water lateral that had a lead connection was replaced.

Other projects in 2020 included:

- Upgrade of our electrical interconnect between the hydroelectric plant and National Grid
 - \$3 million grant for filter plant improvements
 - \$1.2 million grant for the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) separation project
 - Installation of a new drinking water interconnect with Green Island last summer.
- In fact, for the past few weeks, Green Island has had some issues that required them to tap into our water service line.

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The Department of Public Works (DPW) has a total of five men. Their responsibility is to maintain the 46 miles of roadways, the various parks and fields, grass and snow removal on City-owned properties, the veteran banners, and some of the municipal buildings. We currently have seven vehicles, a sweeper and two front end loaders along with a host of lawn and snow equipment.

As mentioned, due to Covid, it was necessary to furlough three employees from the DPW and Sanitation Departments in the Spring of 2020. This required the three departments to work even closer together to keep up with services we provide to our residents. Some services, like the sweeper and some park work, had to be curtailed. Once our furloughed employees returned to work in July, we were able to continue to catch up on some of the postponed work items.

The department lacked modern-day technology such as a work order system, preventative maintenance system and/or a vehicle maintenance system. We purchased a computerized work order system, and we are working now on a preventive maintenance system as well. We are hoping that eventually residents will be able to report an issue that needs attention and it will be monitored electronically.

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The snowstorm in December was one for the record books. Just about two feet of snow was dumped in less than 24 hours. Our DPW department deserves a big round of applause for the hard work they put in to ensure our roadways are as safe as possible during these snowstorms. Remember a good portion of snowplowing happens during the night when most are asleep.

This year we hope to work with the Town of Colonie to repave 8th Ave from 1st St to 8th Street. This will save the city thousands of dollars by sharing the cost and labor.

Residential services, trash and recycling continued during the shutdown/quarantine period, and I would like to take a moment to recognize the Sanitation Department for their efforts. City refuse and recycling pickup continues to be a constant battle presenting so many different challenges. Maintenance cost of equipment, manpower and the ever-ongoing fluctuation of dumping fees and recycling costs are just a few. What was a lucrative program in the past changes on a daily basis. The City has three garbage trucks; and in June of 2020 we received a new sanitation truck donated by Twin Bridges owner, Scott Earl, who grew up in Watervliet. This is by far the largest donation ever received by the City, and we will be forever grateful to Scott. Knowing the financial stress, the City was under, his donation was valued at \$300,000.

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Watervliet has contracted with the Town of Colonie to pick up garbage in Maplewood. The annual agreement includes compensation for our workers' hours along with limited use of the Colonie landfill and other perks. This shared services agreement is a win for both communities.

Bulk item disposal is a service that has been always been provided to our residents, and my administration feels it should be continued in some form. We have designated one day per month for bulk pick-ups. Residents come to City Hall, fill out the form, and pay a \$25.00 fee. We are limiting the number of monthly pick-ups on a first come, first serve basis to provide a better service whereby making sure everyone who signed up has their items taken away on the day they scheduled. The City sponsored an Electronics Recycling Day in June; and in collaboration with Dalle Accounting, held a *Shred-It Community Day* in October. This allowed residents to safely dispose of important documents at no cost to them.

Another decision was made to discontinue the Watervliet Organic Waste, or WOW, Program. It's an excellent way to help reduce landfill tonnage and is a possible source of methane gas production for heating. However, we had major issues such as the lack of participation by residents, poor marketing of the program, and the lack of manpower to run the facility, which prohibited us from running a viable program. The total number of residents participating in the program was less than 30. This number was not nearly

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sufficient to produce enough of a product to produce the gas. If an opportunity presents itself, we could possibly resurrect the program.

As I mentioned earlier, Chris Daus retired in December. Chris was the supervisor of the Sanitation Department for the last 10+ years, but he worked for the city for over 30 years. We wish him well in his retirement.

Economic Development is the backbone to every city and Watervliet is no different. During 2020, I visited every business at least twice to talk and listen to the needs and issues the businesses owners were facing. We will continue to have a dialog to provide stronger and easier communication with all the businesses and the administration.

We are in the process of conducting a bridge study, with the City of Troy as a partner. This study is to find ways to increase the business attractiveness on both sides of the river. The focus is from 23rd Street, Hudson Shores Park to 16th Street and then up 19th Street to 5th Avenue. We are looking to increase the walkability of the area to attract more outside visitors to this section of Watervliet. The study also focuses on increasing safe access to the bike path.

This goes hand and hand with another study called the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI). We are looking to apply for State funding to support the development of the 19th Street area. This funding is a game changer, and we continue to work toward

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ideas and suggestions with residents, businesses, and consultants to look to the future of our city. Local communities that have successfully received this grant include Albany, Hudson, Amsterdam and Glens Falls. In November, Councilwoman Diamond, Councilman Torncello and I met with City officials in Hudson to see how they plan to use their DRI funding to develop their downtown. We walked away with some great ideas and possibilities for Watervliet. We will continue to work with local communities as their success is ours as well.

Covid has not only had a financial stress on the City but many of the City businesses, especially the taverns and restaurants. For this reason, we relaxed some of the regulations to allow tents, outside seating and anything else to give the businesses the ability to survive the pandemic. In addition, we reallocated funds to give grants to those businesses that were impacted the most by the pandemic. Several businesses were given \$5,000 checks that suffered financially to help get them through these tough times. We assisted our neighbors in Colonie and Green Island by loaning picnic tables to On the Hill Cafe and allowing Metabolic Meltdown to use Hudson Shores Park for their outside classes. I'm also proud to announce that the city will holding a 1st restaurant week from Feb 28th to March 6th to help again discover what we have in Watervliet and encourage our residents to enjoy some of Watervliet's finest dining.

In 2020, we did see some businesses shutdown or relocate; but fortunately, most locations quickly gained new tenants. I believe communication is of the utmost

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importance. I want business owners to know that we are in this together; and if the City can help, we will do everything possible. The City will continue to work with the Albany County Landbank to attract suitable businesses. We now have a seat on the Landbank's Board of Directors enabling us to help move these projects along at a quicker pace and make these vacant buildings tax producing parcels once again.

I am happy to announce that before the pandemic started, we applied for and received approval to install electric charging stations on City-owned properties. These charging stations will be installed in the coming weeks.

We had an opening on our Planning department and we were fortunate to have a resident that is an architect appointed to the board. This will help provide some additional expertise to move our community forward. Thank you, Eli Sands, for volunteering for this position.

In 2020, the Watervliet Building Department issued 188 permits and conducted 453 Residential Occupancy Permit inspections. Code Enforcement Officers wrote 520 violations for various reasons. Due to COVID, courts were closed or had to follow new procedures not allowing the Building Department to summon property owners to court or fine them if they did not show for their court appearance. This made enforcement

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difficult, but we continue to do our best to provide safe and decent housing for all our residents.

The building department's Vacant Building Manager continues to monitor and inspect the vacant buildings within the City. Through these efforts the City has been able to identify 70 vacant properties and will continue to do so. Through the vacant building program, the City can hold bank-owned properties accountable and force them into compliance. If you would like to report a possible vacant building, please call 518-270-3800-EXT 104.

In government, the finance department is one of **the** most important departments. It is not only where bills are paid or taxes are collected but where budgetary monitoring is done daily and close attention is paid to the present and projections of financial decisions that look into the future are financially sound and business like. Administrations leaderships change in government and it is important to look ahead to ensure these transitions are efficient and sound.

To say 2020 was unpredictable is an understatement. We had no idea how COVID would affect sales tax revenue, government grant payments, State aid, etc.

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Adjustments were made daily, and all departments took responsibility to reduce their expenses and where applicable, their overtime. I am proud of the entire staff and grateful that all department heads pitched in to make this a reality - especially our Finance Director – thank you for your constant input and guidance in this process. I believe in the use of technology, and it is especially important in finance. It is near impossible, especially with limited staff, to be able to handle day to day activities, reports, and forecasts without a proper software system. This has been on the want list for years; and finally, this year, we made it happen. In 2019, the City was approved for funding under the NYS Fiscal Review Board (FRB) with the stipulation we follow the Board's recommendations. Updating our computer system was part of this report. We paid the vendor for the new system and now, due to Covid, we are in limbo waiting to hear if we will receive the funds as promised. We will continue to reach out to our elected officials and encourage the State to honor their commitment.

When my term began last January, I knew it was my responsibility to motivate and encourage Watervliet residents to participate in the Census. Technology was in my favor when it was announced you could respond from a smartphone. What could go wrong? Well – a pandemic can happen - that's what could go wrong. Suddenly door to door visits and community events were out of the question. We had to think "outside

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the box” and utilize the resources we did have to encourage participation. This included mailing postcards, pop-up tents at Stewarts and Price Chopper, word of mouth and plenty of emails and phone calls. I would like to thank those residents who participated, and I am hopeful our efforts were successful.

So, what does the future hold for 2021? We are now in the second month of 2021, and we continue to work on strategies to improve the quality of life here in Watervliet. We will continue to search and apply for grants to help reduce the fiscal impact and still provide needed improvements.

We plan on working on improvements to the Filtration Plant this year. Many of these needed attention for the past several years. The reservoir is our largest asset, and we plan on working on ways to improve the water quality for both Watervliet and Guilderland.

The purchase of LED streetlights has been on the agenda for the past three years, and this year we intend to move forward on the purchase with the intent that it will be a fiscal savings to the City in future years.

The NYS Dept of Health awarded the City money to replace lead laterals throughout the City. We started this when we replaced the water main on 9th Avenue; and now we are

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offering grants to the entire City. Anyone who is interested should contact the General Manager's office.

Garbage pickup is a necessity, and we will continue to investigate ways of reducing our landfill tonnage and our overall costs. We will also investigate privatizing the service as was the case in previous years.

Services to our residents are important and are more vital during this pandemic – namely for our senior citizens. We need to look for ways to improve these services to all seniors residing here and provide the services they need - not only in program activities but also in health care and other areas.

The Watervliet Historical Museum is rich in history. The memorabilia and interesting displays show the City's heritage and what brought us to where we are today. We will continue to support the program and look for ways to attract residents to visit and use the facility.

The swimming pool will be ready if State and County officials lift the stringent requirements for usage. The building has been cleaned and upgraded. We are actively recruiting lifeguards for the season – please call my office if you are interested. In

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addition, we hope to include more picnic tables and umbrellas at the pool to provide a more family-like atmosphere and comfort for our guests.

As they say, “the first impression is the best impression” and that is what we intend to keep in mind here in Watervliet. It may take years to accomplish but it is important that we begin. Our entrances and main streets need to be attractive and clean. We will work with our Code Enforcement Department to revive the Nuisance Abatement Program. We intend to help residents, landlords and businesses as much as possible, but they must also be responsible on their end. This is a partnership, but when a stakeholder is not in compliance, there needs to be consequences. The last thing we want to do is drive out good residents and homeowners. We cannot, as a city administration, be responsible for every problem; but we can have a path to help reduce the nuisance.

We will continue to encourage citizen participation. We intend to offer more opportunities for residents to talk with our elected and administrative officials. I truly believe when residents hear the “whole” story they can better understand the reason behind decisions.

As I said earlier, we will continue to promote the city-wide functions at Hudson Shores Park including car shows, winter programs, craft fairs, etc. We will increase our holiday

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lights in the park and are currently looking to bring back access to the river by hosting the kayak docks. We currently have a grant available to improve the shoreline and will be working on designs this summer. We are also considering having a restaurant on the shore again. A small but inexpensive idea has been suggested to have a water fountain at each of the parks with a basketball court. Steps are being taken now to see what funding we can obtain and the best course of action to make this a reality.

This presentation is an example of how we continuously work on sharing information. I would like to take advantage of this time to encourage you to sign up for our emergency notification system. This allows residents to provide a phone number and/or email to receive notifications regarding snow emergencies, service interruptions, food distributions, and activities that will affect traffic flow. I encourage all residents to sign up for this powerful tool. Go to www.watervliet.com and click on *Emergency Information Center* and click **SIGN UP** or text your zip code to 88877. If you have difficulty signing up, do not hesitate to call my office for assistance.

As difficult as 2020 was, we accomplished a great deal and we are very proud of that. We look forward to the rest of this year and future years with optimism and excitement. We are a community with a lot of heart and a lot grit, and if we all work together, we can make Watervliet a “shining star” along the Hudson.

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And as we begin to rebound from the effects of COVID-19, we ask that you stay safe and stay healthy! Thank you for taking the time to join me.

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Sincerely,

Charles V. Patricelli

Charles Patricelli, Mayor