



Good evening, and welcome to my third State of the City address. It's hard to believe two years have come and gone so fast, but as they say, time fly's when you're having fun. And, seeing the City you love coming back to life, having residents stop you in the middle of street to say how excited they are about their city and to receive phone calls every day from business that want to be part of our success is as fun as it gets.

Let me start by thanking our Council President, Chris Briggs for the introduction and thank the remaining hard-working members of our City Council that are up here with me: 1st Ward Bill Smith- Vice President; 2nd Ward Don Russell; 4th Ward Bill McCarthy; 5th Ward Steve Napier and 6th Ward Randy Koniowka.

But, most importantly, let me thank each and everyone one of you for being here with me tonight.

We have a lot to talk about, but it would be hard pressed not to start by highlighting some last year's successes. During my campaign, and every day thereafter, what you heard me say is the only way to rebuild our community is to break the dreaded tax and spending MENTALITY that has plagued local government for years. We need to build a new tax base and generate new revenues. Anybody can spend your money, or cut your services to balance its books, that's simple. However, the real trick is to give you more and charge you less; to build a dynamic community and at the same time, make it affordable for people to live.

I believe we have created that opportunity and here are just a few highlights from 2017-

- We have budgeted the necessary funds to fill all the positions in our City Workforce and we added two positions to help as we grow. One new Code Enforcement Officer and one Assistant for the Department of Economic Development.
- We received/secured over 2 million dollars in grant funding.
- We have seen an \$800,000 transformation of Remsen Street from Ontario Street to Cayuga Street with new sidewalks, new pavement, new streetscaping, and new parking spots.
- Cohoes Hotel renovation is well on its way with a 3 million dollar project in the heart of the down town. Many thanks to 100N5 developers and partners Bonacquisti Bothers construction and Sean Curtin for helping to revive such a remarkable building.
- The former Harmony Market Place, another major investment by 100N5 developers and partners Bonacquisti Bothers construction and Sean Curtin are now home to three new businesses.
- We have seen the opening of the beautiful Hudson Square Apartments by Prime Companies and Todd Curley. With this new development comes the rebirth of the Van Schaick Island Park and pond with a \$100,000 investment which includes a new amphitheater, new fishing dock, new seating areas and walking paths with beautiful landscaping surrounding the pond and park area. We have also seen the addition of a new pavilion that was donated by the Van Schaick Island Neighborhood Watch.
- We have seen the construction of our new Veterans Memorial Park. A Veteran's Park that is second to none! A \$150,000 Partnership

with the Citizens, State, and Local government. I suggest if you have not seen the park, I suggest you do!

- We finished putting up our new street signs and added our “Welcome to Cohoes” gateway signs.
- We fixed all the broken lights on the 112th Street bridge, added new welcoming banners and flowers on all our bridges to show the true meaning of #CohoesPROUD as you enter into our community.
- We added new equipment to our fire department and new cars for our police department.
- We added new recreation programs for our children.
- We have seen thousands of visitors to our Music Hall.
- And we “Rocked the Block” to the tune of 12,000 people and finished up our summer with the 1st ever Fall Festival with over 1300 visitors.

By the way, did I mention that we achieved all this with another ZERO% tax increase!! For the second year in a row, no tax increase, no water, and sewer fund increases, and yes we came under budget again, for the second year in a row to the tune of over \$475,000!

That’s over a million dollars in savings in our first two years, not a bad start. I would say, that’s giving our community more and charging them less! It’s for these reasons that twelve (12) new businesses joined the Cohoes Proud family with many now occupying space on Remsen Street.

We have a few of them here with us tonight....

Cake Street Sweets – Kayla Renfroe

Peak Music – Crystal Moore

Pioneer Bank – Karen Koster

Thrivee- State of the Art Technology Company (opiates) – Jason Pickett and Chris Viagrande

Go Gonzales Marketing Company - Manny and Tracy Santos

Caskade Kitchen and Bar -Kelly Finn and Joe Proctor

Music Hall Arts Alliance – Cohoes Music Hall – Holly Brown

I would say that's a great year and Cohoes is Alive and well!

Now, we all know, this type of success is not achieved by accident. It is the byproduct of countless hours of hard work and dedication by the City workforce and it is our city employees that make this city great!

I would like first to recognize my staff, Amanda and Kathleen. They have the most challenging job in Cohoes. Keeping me organized, on track, and focused. If not for them, I would be standing here tonight like a deer in headlights.

It is no secret and I have said it a thousand times, Economic Development is the key to our success. We will never be that old booming manufacturing mill town that people often reminisce about, but we are quickly becoming that new thriving mill town that has been re-energized, revitalized, and well on its way to that All America City designation once again!

That transformation is led by Mike Jacobson and his team of Debbie Jacques and Melissa Cherubino. I often say that Mike has a gift that many people don't have which is his ability to see things that others cannot see. When most see an empty overgrown lot, Mike sees a 5 million dollar project. When most see an old block that has been decaying for years, Mike sees a 24 million dollar project. Better yet, when Mike has these visions he is relentless in his pursuit of making it become a reality. Yes, we all run when he gets that look, but it is that look that has helps us rebuild this community.

What most people don't see about economic development is the long hours, the weeks, the months and the years of hard work that goes into developing just one project. The bedrock of economic growth is not the swinging of the hammers and the cutting of the ribbins. It is the painstaking

negotiations and re-negotiations, the financing, the portfolios, land acquisitions, planning boards, Code and Zoning issues, and all the government red tape that often keeps community from prospering. The swinging of the hammers and the cutting of the ribbins is the prize. That's when you see all the politicians smiling and taking the photo opts. But it's truly the long grind that makes Economic Development happen. And, its that long grind, that will produce some amazing projects this spring, such as:

787- Boulevard: Perhaps our most meaningful achievement of my political career will be the transformation of 787, one of the most dangerous highways in the Capital Region. Sadly, as a community we have seen too many tragedies and felt too much pain. So today, after 20 years of advocating the need for change we will finally see a 15 million dollar commitment for a total transformation from a highway to a boulevard, with new medians, trees, flowers, walking paths, decorative lighting, and most importantly it will be designed with the safety of our community at its core.

Phases Two (2) of the Remsen Street sidewalk project. Ontario Street to Howard Street will see new sidewalks, a bike lane, angled on-street parking on the east side of the street, a new CDTA Bus Rapid Transit station and repaved streets, all of which will accommodate safe, welcoming downtown visits.

Canal Square Park Project. The expansion of Canal Square Park is a 1.5 million dollar project. The acquisition of the adjacent parking area (84 Remsen Street) facilitates this expanded park/site programming. Canal Square Park will serve as a state of the art modern gathering and event space and broaden programming on the site to spur additional visitation, recreation, and investment in downtown.

Mozaic Village Ground Breaking. A 24 million dollar project for People living with autism and developmental disabilities are soon to have a new option when it comes to actual living space. Mosaic Village will be the first development in New York created to improve quality of life for those on the

autism spectrum. With 68 affordable housing units, onsite supportive services, a medical clinic, and daycare, Mosaic Village aims to make life easier for all residents.

Remsen Street Development - a 3.5 million newly constructed building that will sit on the former movie theater lot on the corner of White Street and Remsen Street. A beautiful four story mixed use building with 20 rental units and 9,000 square feet of commercial space. A welcome addition to our community and a staple to our plan to repopulate our downtown as we continue to reinvest Cohoes.

Admirals Walk – Addition of 10 new condos along the beautiful Hudson River with countless amenities.

Community Builders – Who are under contract for seven (7) buildings that have been decaying for years and will invest millions in renovations in parts of City that have not seen any in 50+ years. Community Builders is also working on a new 20 million dollar housing project along 787.

Phase Two (2) of Residences at Lexington Hills – will see 20 million investment with 140 new units of luxury living (131 units in phase 1) with a total of 408 units in total.

That's over 80 Million Dollars of development in our community.... Who would have believed in two years this would be happen. I did, the Coucil did, and all those who voted for us did! Now people all over the capital region know why we are the fastest growing City in New York!

With all that being said, we have many other exciting projects on the horizon. As our community grows, so does the needs for our services. What sets one city apart from another cities when investors are looking to invest their money, and families are looking for a place to establish their

roots and raise their childrenis the quality of our amenities and the services a community provides.

1. Is it the community safe?
2. Is it clean?
3. Do they have beautiful parks and recreation for families?
4. Is it easy to get from point A to point B?
5. Are they business-friendly?

The answer to all those are YES; we have it all here in Cohoes ...

That's why we are the fastest growing city in New York State for the 2nd year in a row. We are the place people want to live!!!

Police Department : Led by Chief Bill Heslin and Assistant Chief Tom Ross. Its not easy to run a police department. It takes a lot of hard work and great leadership. Chief Heslin has demonstrated that leadership for almost 50 years. We could not have a better Chief leading our department along with his Assistant Chief Tom Ross, with over 48 years of dedicated service to our community and the outstanding leader of our detectives. Its easy to see why our police department is second to none.

A police department does not measure its success by how many arrests they make, or what occurs in our community on any given day. Their success is measured by how they react to crime when it happens, how they are perceived by the people they swore to protect, and how safe a neighborhood feels because of their presence. That's how success is measured. And, once again, I am proud to say we are one of the safest cities in the State of New York!

Cohoes is not immune to crime, sadly, its a part of life. But for those who wish to break the law, quickly find out that in Cohoes, we will find you and arrest you, and have you in jail before you can count to ten! That's why we are one of the safest communities in the State and that is why our police officers are perceived as heroes in this city and why people feel safe in their neighborhoods.

The PD responded to 21,800 calls for assistance in 2017, made over 900 arrest and issues over 3000 tickets. However, its not these statistics that

make the difference. It's the hundreds of kids they interact with every year. It's the neighborhood watch meetings they attend every month and their presence as they walk the beat in our neighborhoods that make the difference. Thank you to our officers and detectives for a job well done.

Fire Department : Led by Chief Fahd. Chief Fahd has been the leader of our Fire Department for 15 years. Under his leadership, we have seen an incredible transformation of our department. Our department doesn't just fight fires. We are a well trained life saving agency that can handle every kind of emergency. From restarting a lifeless heart, delivering beautiful babies, to high angle rescues....our department can do it all.

That is why I will ask the City Council to support changing the name from the Cohoes Fire Department to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. Our Firefighters work extremely hard to master their skills and our department name should to be reflective of that hard work.

There is nothing I can say about the fire department and firefighters that this community does not already know. They are the best of the best. This year, we saw one of the most significant fires in our city's history and one of the best displays of firefighting by our department. I am always a little bit bias, as I was a proud member of Local 2562 for 26 years. But, indeed our FD is fantastic as is all of our public safety departments. We are truly blessed as a community.

As I said earlier, when our City grows, so does the need for assistance. That's reflected in the 3480 calls for help (record-breaking year). In 2017, because of our firefighter's quick action not only did they extinguish 66 structure fires, they saved the life of 4 citizens who were found in full cardiac arrest who were able to walk out of the hospital, and last but not least they delivered a beautiful baby. Job well done!!

Recreation/ Human Service Department : Dan Hytko – I don't have enough time to give you a bio on Danny Hytko since we don't have four hours. What I will say, is Danny is one of the most dedicated individuals I have ever had the privilege to know. His drive to provide children with opportunities in life is second to none and that drive is what elevated our

recreation department to new heights. We are no longer just a swimming pool in the middle of the park with a few swings; under Danny's leadership, we are the heart and soul of family activity here in Cohoes.

In 2017 we saw many new and exciting programs

- Education through Recreation- A Free Lunch program, delivering lunch to Heartt and Craner Park. (partnership with CSD)
- The Cohoes Proud Car Show– 2000+ visitors
- Cross Country Ski trails in Lansing Park
- Basketball, Soccer, and Flag Football
- Move night in the Park
- Park to park golf tournament
- Life Guard training program – with job opportunities at our pool.

And the list goes on and on. In 2018, you can expect to see these programs and many new additions. Yet, one addition I am incredibly excited about is the “Home Town Hero Project” as part of our new beautiful veterans park; we installed 22 flag poles in the middle of the park surrounding the WWII monument. These poles will fly up to 44 flags honoring our Cohoes heroes who have served or are serving our country. Its one of the great signs of respect we can do as a community ...honor our vets and service members and never stop. We will soon have all the details on this great program. With that said, please allow me to introduce my daughter who just finished boot camp as part of the US Air Force Airman 1st Class Adrianna Goman.

Code Enforcement -Code Enforcement without question, is one of the most important offices in the City, and it is led by the Cohoes Fire Chief, Joe Fahd and his staff. Their role is simple: ensure the health, welfare and beauty of our community is preserved through the numerous codes adopted by the City Council, in accordance with the State and Federal laws. The hard part is keeping up with the demand.

If we are going to be a great community, we have to safeguard all of our residents regardless of social and economic status, and we must demand all residents enjoy a clean and safe living environment.

The only way to do that is through an active code enforcement program.

We are Cohoes Proud, and that means protecting our community, and our residents from property owners who merely collect their rents while ignoring the dangers that lurk in dilapidated houses or allowing their tenants to litter our streets and forcing people to live in horrible conditions. Well, in Cohoes, we have something to say about that...

In 2016 the City Council passed new stricter laws aimed at cleaning up our neighborhoods. We no longer allow garbage to sit in our alleyways, or roadways for weeks at a time. Instead, if we see it or its reported to us we pick it up within 24 hours, and we the City bill the landlords.

In 2017, for the first time, we saw a decline in the number of fines for garbage. Why? Because the message is loud and clear- pick up your trash and be Cohoes Proud or you will have to pay a steep penalty. It proves the laws are working and we have seen the excellent results in our City Streets.

The Council also passed new reforms requiring a landlord who lives 30 miles outside of our community and those who have two or more violations in a 3 year period to have a property manager. This will allow us to have access to those in charge with maintaining the property. We should all have an opportunity to live in a place we can call home. A place we can raise our children that is safe, clean, and trouble-free; and here in Cohoes, we are making that happen.

We will soon be looking at new software that will allow us better tracking of inspections, violations, and permits. As well as, having each code officer assigned a new tablet to make it easier and more efficient to do their work on the road, as well as hiring one new additional code officer to join our ranks.

To all the employees in the code enforcement department- you have a lot to be proud of and you honestly make a difference. Great job !

Department of Public Works- Led by Ken Radliff – I could spend hours telling you how great our DPW is. They have proved to be the cog that turns the wheel for this community. We see it every day; whether they are

knee deep in freezing water fixing broken pipes or picking up trash in the sweltering heat, they get the job done and they do it well. They are truly amazing. I want to personally thank them again for the incredible job they did at the new Veterans Memorial Park. Their dedication to that project was everything Cohoes Proud stands for. They worked tirelessly and under enormous pressure to meet some unrealistic deadline that was done with great pride and professionalism. If not for the DPW, we would not have such a beautiful park to honor our veterans. Great Job !!

Ralph Signoracci- Director of Operations. From special projects such as 787, the Vets park, Canal Square, new sidewalks at City Hall to countless other projects and everything in between- Ralph has been there through it all.

We have many other departments that play a vital role in our community and are directly responsible for our success:

- The Treasurer's Office – Led by Jim Bouchard and Ann Porter
- The Assessor's Office – Led by Tom Jaques
- The Clerk's Office – Led by Lori Yando
- Engineering Office – Led by Gary Nathan
- Information Technology- Led by John DiCocco

Our Community- I have to take a few moments to reflect on the November 30, 2017 fire and the days that followed. As a community we seen one of the biggest fires in our city's history. (Share reviews and remarks of that day).

Before I start to wrap up, I want to take a moment to **recognize Comptroller Mike Durocher.** Mike is without question, a man who likes to live behind the scenes. But his work is front and center every day. Anybody who knows Mike, knows he will not put on a shirt and tie, he will not be seen in the headlines, and he will not open his wallet! In my days, he would be called CHEAP! But, it is for those reasons, I can read from a report by Moody's Investment Services that says;

- Cohoes' credit position is solid – because we have a strong financial position, an affordable debt burden with a moderate pension liability, this is a direct reflection of the changes we made over the past two years. I was criticized when I ask Chief Heslin, Assistant Chief Ross, Commissioner Radliff to retire, and then come back to work for a reduced salary. It was a benefit that helped all parties. Today, we have three great leaders still leading their departments and the City saved over \$150,000 in wages and \$75,000 in pension costs. Today, that deal looks pretty good, and Moody's agrees!

Thank you, Mike, for being a great partner with me and an excellent advocate for your City.

Tonight, I have shared with you the many great things taking place in our community and I am very proud of our achievements, but we must never be content with the success of yesterday! We must look at each day as an opportunity to be better than we are the day before. I know in my heart we are a better City today than we were just last year, and yet, I know in my head we have a long way to go.

I close by saying- Cohoes is alive, and well. We are standing on solid ground and our outlook is bright and our future brighter. It is because of each and every one of you in this room who took a chance and believed in us and our vision. We are not just a city; we are a family! We are #CohoesPROUD!

It has been my honor to be your Mayor, your biggest cheerleader, and your steadfast advocate. And my promise to you is simple: I will give you everything I have 24/7 to make us an All America City, a City we can all be proud of and a city we can all afford to live in, a city we will never want to leave.

Thank you!