

State of the City Update  
Mayor Michael J. Villa  
January 17, 2018

With an exciting 2 years serving as the Mayor of the City of Amsterdam now in the history books, I am pleased and eager to share a number of our successes and talk about some of the challenges that lie ahead.

First, I want to thank the Common Council for working pro-actively together this past year, a hands-on working relationship that I am confident will continue in 2018.

The same appreciation to the city's department heads, who step up to the plate daily to ensure that the internal business of the city is conducted professionally.

### **Financial Forecast**

Great strides have been made by Controller Agresta and his staff. As we look ahead in 2018 the city will be current on all its financials, and although the numbers are bleak, we finally for the first time in many years have accurate figures allowing for us to plan accordingly. We also will be undertaking another foreclosure, this latest one began in October of 2017 and we look to complete it by early summer. The Controller's office continues to implement a new time keeping system that can save the city on average 2% of payroll each year when fully implemented. We are working with Police and Fire to get their staff online. The codes module is also making strides that will allow us access to valuable data as we continue to improve our city's appearance. Controller Agresta and his staff have worked closely with

the Mayor's office, and continues to work with Freed Maxick so we have the most accurate data as we approach the 2018 budget.

## **City Initiatives**

There are many initiatives that are underway and many that we can look forward to in the near future. I have highlighted some of those for you below and will keep you updated on their progress.

### Brownfields Opportunity Areas

Amsterdam's Downtown and South Side areas were formally designated as a BOA (Brownfields Opportunity Area) under the NYS Dept of State BOA program. This designation will provide large tax incentives to developers who redevelop old industrial sites within the designated BOA, and will serve as a major financial incentive for re-investment in the City.

The City has applied (2017) to the Dept. of State for funding to designate the City's East End and Northern Neighborhoods areas as Brownfield Opportunity areas, providing further incentives for redevelopment in our City.

### Housing Rehabilitation - Grand Street

The City was awarded a \$400,000 Community Development Block Grant to carry out a housing rehabilitation program in the Grand Street area. This program was completed in 2017. Twenty-one units of housing

rehabilitated at a total investment of \$420,000 of which \$400,000 was CDBG grant funding, and the remainder was private owner contribution.

### Housing Rehabilitation - HOME Program

The HOME Rental Housing Rehabilitation on a city-wide basis was completed in 2017. A total of 23 units of housing were rehabilitated at a total cost of \$810,000 including \$400,000 in HUD HOME funds and \$410,000 in matching funds.

### Land Bank

The City, in cooperation with the City of Schenectady and Schenectady County, was successful in obtaining another major (2 million) grant from the State Attorney General's office to address blight in the two cities in 2017. To date, the Land Bank program has demolished 14 units of dilapidated housing on Division Street and Guy Park Avenue and six units on Forbes Street. In the coming months the Land Bank program will complete the demolition of an additional 9 units of dilapidated housing on Forbes Street, John Street and Jackson Street. During the 2017 year the Land Bank in a cooperative effort with the Amsterdam Urban Renewal Agency completed the rehabilitation of 13 units of housing around the City, and generated over \$800,000 in investment in improving residential properties in the City.

### City Hall Restoration

With a \$224,000 grant from NYS Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, a project to rehabilitate the portico on the southeast side of City Hall is taking place. An architectural firm has prepared plans and specifications and construction activities started in late 2017 and are expected to be completed in 2018.

### Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook

With a \$325,000 grant from the New York State Department of State, and another \$325,000 from New York State DOT, the City will be undertaking enhancements to the MVGO. These will include amenities such as bathroom facilities, and art work for the MVGO. At present, the artist has been retained and the artwork is being completed. An engineer has been retained to design the bathroom facilities. Both the artwork and the bathroom facilities will be completed in early 2018.

### West End Storm Drainage Improvements

With funding provided through the Governor's Office for Storm Recovery, almost \$1.4 million in storm drainage improvements in the City's West End are being undertaken. The project is currently in the design stages, with construction and design work somewhat delayed, this project should start during the summer of 2018.

## Water Quality Improvement Project

With a \$183,000 grant from the New York State Dept of Environmental Conservation, improvements are being made at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. An effluent chlorination system is being installed, which will reduce potential contamination of the Mohawk River. This project is currently in the design stages, and is expected to be completed this year.

## WATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS-EFC FUNDING

The city received \$5.5 Million in EFC Funding for water system improvements in 2017. This funding will be used to make various critical improvements at the Water Treatment Plant, refurbish and paint the Locust Avenue and Tecler water towers that have deteriorated over the past 15 years requiring a complete overhaul. These funds will also address problems with the water distribution system. All of this work will commence in 2018.

## Dove Creek Flood Walls

With funding from FEMA, reconstruction of the flood walls along Dove Creek will be undertaken. This project, estimated at \$1.4 million is currently in the final design stages and is expected to commence construction during the summer of 2018.

## Sewer System Improvements - EFC Funding

The City was awarded \$5 million in funding in 2016 to undertake improvements to the City's aging sewer system. To date several projects have been completed including sewer reconstruction on Sloane and Sanford Avenues, Forest Avenue, Route 30 and Pershing Road. In addition to addressing the crises that the City has faced during a very challenging 2016 and 2017, this funding will focus on major upgrades to the City's sewer pump stations. Failures at these pump stations have been a major factor in discharges of untreated waste, and major capital investment in these is required to bring these stations up to current standards, and provide a high degree of reliability. Design work for these improvements is currently underway, and construction activities are underway.

## Zombie Property Funding

The City has been awarded a \$150,000 grant through the Local Initiatives Support Corporation for the purpose of enhanced code enforcement, and tracking of vacant and abandoned properties. A coordinator has been hired (funded through the grant) to undertake a wide range of activities, including building condition surveys, coordination with building inspectors, outreach to property owners who are in danger of foreclosure, and dealing with lenders. This grant will also pay for outside counsel to bring code violators to court and ultimately help the City more effectively deal with blight.

CED (Community Economic Development)

Our partnership with the Montgomery County's IDA and Amsterdam's IDA has proven to be successful in 2017. Montgomery County Executive Matt Ossenfort and his staff, especially Ken Rose and Amanda Bearcroft, along with AIDA director Jody Zakrevsky have made great strides in furthering the mission of our two IDA's in 2017. Unfortunately, Jody left employment with the City earlier this year to further his career closer to where he and his family reside. While his duties are currently being dispersed until a replacement is found I can assure you the AIDA board and the Montgomery County IDA along with URA (Urban Renewal Agency) director Nick Zabawsky and interim AIDA director Joe Emanuele are all working together to keep Amsterdam moving forward. Let me share with you some of the projects that are underway;

- Memory Lane Daycare grant
  - Relocation and expansion from home based business in Perth to City of Amsterdam. 14 jobs will be created with this project
- Train Station Relocation feasibility study
  - A study to assess the best options for relocation of the train station to the downtown Amsterdam area is underway. Studies have been completed as well as outreach to the public. Further analysis and recommendations will be made in the upcoming year.
- RESTORE NY
  - \$500,000 RESTORE NY grant awarded to the City combined with private sector investment for the former Wrestling Hall of Fame building. This building will undergo major restoration and serve as an incentive to reinvest in downtown Amsterdam. This is why it is so critical that the use fits the vision for our downtown.
- Sanford Clock Tower Incubator

- New York Main Street grant for \$500,000 to renovate the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the clock tower to create a small business incubator and accelerator program. The program will provide affordable rental space, shared resources, and mentorship with various organizations including: SBA, FMCC, the building owners, the City and the County.
- Amsterdam Microenterprise Program
  - Will work in conjunction with the incubator to provide financial assistance in the form of grants to small businesses and startup businesses in the City of Amsterdam. These grants will range from \$5,000-\$25,000. Thirteen businesses applied to participate in this program and eleven have been deemed eligible and will be receiving financial assistance to start up or expand their businesses. A total of 16 jobs are expected to be created through this effort.
- Chalmers redevelopment
  - PSA (purchase sale agreement) signed with KCG Development to for mixed use redevelopment of the Chalmer's Knitting Mill site on Amsterdam's South Side. A 1 Million Dollar grant was recently received through the 2017 CFA process.
- MICROTEL HOTEL
 

AIDA applied and secured a \$1.2 Million dollar grant in the 2017 CFA round for the construction of a new 3 story – 64 room Microtel by Wyndham Hotel. The Hotel will be located on the southside easily accessible to the NYS Thruway offering upscale business friendly rooms.
- Mohawk Fabrics

A \$70,000 grant was awarded in the 2017 CFA round for Mohawk Fabric Company. They plan to purchase equipment to increase their manufacturing capacity at the 96 Guy Park Avenue facility and create additional jobs.

## **RECREATION**

### **Grants**

- Received \$5,000 grant for Summer Camp through the Montgomery County Youth Bureau
- Received \$500 for the Erie Canal Bicentennial event through the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

### **Chuctanunda Creek Trail Project and Grants**

- Received \$7,000 for signage for the Chuctanunda Creek Trail through the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor
  - Established a steering committee
  - Developed the Chuctanunda Creek trail logo and slogan
  - Established 15 points of interest for the trail
  - Developing wayfinding signage for the trail and wayside exhibits and signage for various points of interest
  - Trail to open Summer of 2018 (estimated)
- Montgomery County Soil and Water allocated over \$17,000 in equipment and staff hours to create the greenway portion of the Chuctanunda Creek Trail. They cleared and graded over a mile of the trail from Second Ave to the Powerhouse building and put down stone to formalize the walking trail.
- Received \$9,000 from the Preservation League of NYS for a structural assessment of the Powerhouse building to be included as a Point of Interest on the Chuctanunda Creek Trail

- We received a Study that we can utilize for additional funding opportunities. The study is phased out in order of importance to the project.

## **Marketing**

- Developed and launched a new logo for the City
- Created the City of Amsterdam tourism map with points of interest
- Created the new City of Amsterdam brochures
- Installed tourism/ visitor kiosks in Shuttleworth Park, Muni, MVGO, and Riverlink Park for our maps and brochures
- Increased our social media presence
- New website design and content almost finished
- New community event calendar added to our Rec website and updated throughout the year
- Working with iHeart Media to develop radio spots

## **Parks**

- Shuttleworth Park Renovations and upgrades include: New roofing on pavilions, new countertop installed at concession, new bleachers built, locker rooms are being built and finished this year. Funding provided by the Shuttleworth Foundation and Dr. Rao.
- Veteran's Park memorial got a facelift – supplies and volunteer time donated by Home Depot.
- The Amsterdam Skatepark was finished with the final playground and skateboard equipment installed in 2017.
- Sassafras Park was renovated up and received a facelift and new paintjob.
- Bacon School Gym was renovated and repainted.

- Bathrooms are being built on the southside for the MVGO. Land was cleared in 2017, facilities will be built in 2018 (projected for Spring 2018).
- Wheel of Life was installed on MVGO
- New MVGO artwork selected. First sculpture was installed this past week
- We are soliciting proposals for the a sound system that will run the entire length of the MVGO
- Flagpoles are being installed on the MVGO overlook
- Signage installed at the 911 Memorial

## **Events**

- Spring Fling – over 120 vendors, rides, live music, car show, more than 5,000 attendees
- Erie Canal Bicentennial – waterski show, live music, food vendors, kids activities – more than 5,000 attendees
- July 4<sup>th</sup> Water Music Celebration – Albany Symphony, live music, food vendors, fireworks – more people at Riverlink Park than ever before – more than 8,000 in attendance
- Movies in the Park – 5 outdoor movie nights in different parks throughout the City
- Sunset Celebrations (our first year doing these)
  - Kids Bounce House Party – bounce houses, music, outdoor movie – thousands in attendance
  - Kite Night – Music, sand sculptures, kites – thousands in attendance
  - Craft Beer Festival (1<sup>st</sup> annual) – Beer and cider sampling, live music, food vendors – thousands in attendance
- RiverFest – Kids activities, pony rides and petting zoo, vendors, live music, fireworks – more than 5,000 attendees

- National Night Out – Police/ fire demos, outdoor movie, waterslides, bounce house, music, crafts, vendors, pool – more than 4,000 in attendance
- ItaliaFest – Live music, rides, vendors, activities, fireworks – more than 10,000 attendees
- Homecoming Bonfire – Music, games, school teams, bonfire – more than 3,000 in attendance
- OktoberFest (1<sup>st</sup> annual)- contests, games, vendors, biergarten, live music – almost 10,000 in attendance
- Trick or Treat- Over 35 businesses/ organizations passed out candy to more than 2,000 kids
- Tree Lighting – Live music, train rides, horse drawn carriage, food, crafts – almost 5,000 in attendance

### **Youth Programs**

- Summer Camp – More than 200 kids last year
- Learn to Swim – More than 300 kids came for the two week free program
- Rec Basketball League – Almost 400 kids in the league this year

### **Activities on the MVGO**

- Sip and Paints
- Cancer Peer Education Walking Program
- Alpin Haus Yoga Program
- Bird Watching Program

### **Other**

- Secured a 5-year contract with Union College for Shuttleworth Park to be the college baseball team's home field. This will bring

an increase of tourism from spectators, other colleges, and the possibility of hosting Union's Liberty League Tournament this year.

- Vegetation crew cleaned over 230 properties
- Over 6,000 people visited the City Pool in 2017
- Sponsorships and Vendors for events both increased in 2017 from 2016.

### **City of Amsterdam Project List**

Due to financial constraints we were unable to initiate our road program in 2017. However we will have approximately 1.6 million in 2018 for road repair. I have directed the engineer to begin the bid process as early as possible and to have the program start in early spring.

Brookside Solar- Operating all of 2017 estimated cost savings to the city is 40,000+/-

Route 67 Solar-----Recently connected to National Grid (December) estimated cost savings of \$120,000+

Public Safety Bldg Doors--- New doors installed at Police and Fire Department.

Water Street reconstruction- Construction completed.

Carpetland site cleanup and greenspace completed.

Dam evaluations complete-Submitted to NYS DEC

Flood Wall certification Submitted to FEMA

Installation of 3 Generators (City Hall, DPW, and Barkley School) project complete and access road installed.

Codes and Housing Dept.—Revising fees and upgrading permit forms

Creek Trail- Powerhouse evaluation complete. Trail cut in by Montgomery County.

### **Amsterdam Police Department**

Ongoing goal to keep the public notified of major events through electronic media and local media; NIXLE and Facebook;

“Tell us Tuesday” regarding wanted subjects continues to assist police in successful arrests;

Police/community relations through citywide recreation events; K9 fundraising program and T Shirt sales; Angel Tree Program; successful fundraising campaign with public for Princess the injured dog from early 2017.

Continuing expansion of surveillance cameras in public areas of City;

Extension of walking beats in problem areas of the City;

Ongoing drug investigations and arrests to keep the drug trade from gaining a firm foothold in our community;

Random in school walking patrol program for the grade schools throughout the City;

Continued grant writing work and reception of \$13,000 Police Protective Equipment and \$25,000 Legislative Initiatives Grant for Policing equipment needs;

Physical improvements continue at the Public Safety Building with the installation of new, OSHA compliant and energy efficient garage doors, and firing range rehab to begin in 2018 utilizing grant funds.

Ongoing success of Civilian Dispatching program which frees up police resources to better enhance public safety.

## **AMSTERDAM FIRE DEPARTMENT**

During 2017 Amsterdam Fire Department (AFD) responded to 2,707 alarms. Included are 73 fires (structure, vehicle, etc.) 1949 emergency medical responses, 95 hazardous conditions, 264 service calls, 131 good intent calls and 189 false alarms.

AFD began Ambulance Transport on August 28, 2017.

AFD conducted one hundred and sixty-two building inspections including multiple dwellings, Public assembly and non-residential occupancies.

AFD will be applying for AFG Grant funding (Assistance to Firefighters Grant) through FEMA in hopes to replace the turnout gear for all members.

## **GOLF COURSE**

The council and the Mayor continue to take a long look at the future of one of Amsterdam's treasures. The concessionaire contract will expire at the end of the 2018 season and we, as elected officials, have to look

at not only what is best for the course but what is best for the taxpayers of Amsterdam. I believe it is in everyone's interest to make this course successful, but we must do it with all the facts. We must put aside our personal feelings and seek guidance from outside on what changes will effectively make us better. We will meet with the commission during 2018 and map out a road to success for this course's future.

## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation director Fabrizia Rodriguez has done yeoman's work in trying to make transportation more affordable to taxpayers and budget friendly. In spite of her efforts we are still not where we need to be. The Council and the Mayor and the Controller will reassess and weigh all options.

## HEALTH INSURANCE

### Health Insurance Information:

- Budget – projected Medical and RX, Medicare advantage, Cana RX and all medical related costs are projected at \$4,836,773 for 2017-18. If claims continue to trend as they have YTD the City is on track to come in **\$163,227 lower than the \$5,000,000 budget.**

### **SAVINGS:**

- **Stop loss**-Marshall & Sterling lowered the stop loss premium from the renewal at \$194,039 with Guardian to \$151,178k. Shopping over 10 stop loss carriers M&S secured a firm quote with HCC at \$151,178 **saving \$42,861.04 vs renewal.**

· **Medicare Advantage** – If we renewed with EMPIRE the cost would have been \$404,626. HUMANA was the best at approx. 40% lower saving **\$178,483 vs renewal.**

**Disability savings-** successfully negotiated the NYS DBL renewal from a 100% increase, to a 16% increase, **saving the City \$5,892.**

## **CITY CLERK'S OFFICE**

The Clerk's office has been working with Kelly Yacobucci Farquhar from Montgomery County in obtaining grants through Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund (LGRMIF). In the first grant project the following records were digitized:

- Common Council Minutes - bound books 1890-1989 and letter size books for minutes 2005-2011
- Payroll registers 1960-2014
- Building Permits and Plans 1958-2015

The first project has not been completely finalized as we are just waiting to see when we can access these projects. The second grant project, which will begin in February, will include Property Assessment Record Cards – Residential & Commercial, 1980-2016.

During our 6 months in office, we have been working on reorganizing the office to make our workflow efficient.

## **Corrective Action**

We are facing a very serious budget deficit that has been growing unnoticed and unverified until recently. This administration promised fiscal responsibility and accountability and now we at least know what are financial situation is. We continue to work with our outside

consultants, Freed Maxick to reconcile all capital project accounts. It should be noted that due to these circumstances some capital projects may not be completed and some may not begin until we determine what funding is available. We already have begun (2017-2018 budget) putting monies aside to pay back the General Fund once these project lines are reconciled.