



STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

MAYOR SAM TERESI

JANUARY 26, 2009

Mr. President, Members of the City Council, Department Heads, Guests and my Fellow Jamestowners.

In accordance with Article IV, Chapter 31-C of the Jamestown City Charter, it is my pleasure to present to you this evening my ninth (9th) State of the City Address.

While the first portion of 2008 was a time of transition in leadership, new energy, renewal and great uncertainties at the local level, it was also a period of great promise and progress on many fronts. As the year wore on, however, numerous external factors and influences, beyond the control of anyone in the Greater Jamestown Community, began to infiltrate the local picture and take an adverse foothold in our daily lives.

Skyrocketing petroleum and fuel prices, a national culture of corporate greed left unchecked by complicit and alleged government "regulators", the negative influence of volatile foreign markets, the reintroduction of the dreaded "inflation" word back into our national vocabulary, severely shaken consumer confidence, mounting unemployment in all sectors of the economy, the sub prime mortgage debacle that undermined the nation's real estate system, the sudden and historic drop in Wall Street stock values, the record level of bank failures, ballooning business and personal bankruptcy filings, and starting on September 15th, the meltdown and near collapse of the nation's Finance System, collectively created structural and possibly irrevocable stress fractures in both the national and international economies. And, as we now know all too well, these factors, together with a variety of additional events, have combined to push our Federal and State Governments to the brink of insolvency; which has further exacerbated the chronic financial problems that were already challenging us at the local level even during the so called "good times".

And despite all of this, through the joint efforts of this City Council, our Department Heads, the best public workforce one can find anywhere and a community of individuals that truly loves and cares about Jamestown, numerous bright spots and examples of progress may be found throughout our review of a turbulent and challenging 2008.

Please bear with me as I recount but a small selection of our strides and accomplishments over the past year:

- During an era in which governments have been running deep, chronic deficits, it is currently projected that Jamestown will once again end its previous fiscal year in the black...for the eighth consecutive time.
- After working off our previous \$1.4 million accumulated operating deficit, the City's General Fund is now sporting a positive, unrestricted fund balance of more than \$1.8 million.
- This past fall, we together developed and put in place a General Operating Budget that was on time, truly balanced, maintained essential services, preserved the integrity of the fund balance and contained only a slight property tax levy increase of 2.5%; which was well below the rate of inflation.
- During 2008, we worked together with communities from across New York to obtain a 9% increase from the State in AIM (Aid and Incentives for Municipalities) Program Funding and we successfully fought off a mid-year, 10% reduction in AIM assistance that was proposed by the State in response to its own mounting fiscal problems.
- We pursued two Local Government Efficiency Grants from the State; the first, to determine the feasibility of and develop a strategy to merge the City's Police Department with the County Sheriff's Office, and the second, to develop a centralized, shared, road salt storage facility with the Jamestown Public School District.
- We dissolved the Civil Service Commission and merged its administrative office with the County's Department of Human Resources.
- We launched a major upgrade of the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant in the Town of Poland at a projected cost of \$4.5 million. And, as the result of the innovation and hard work of City staff, this project was actually completed a year ahead of schedule and brought in nearly \$1 million under budget.
- 2008 saw our Public Works crews complete a record level of downtown and neighborhood street, sidewalk and storm water drainage improvement projects. In addition to more than three (3) dozen resurfacing, nova chip and storm sewer improvement efforts, comprehensive reconstructions were completed on West 6th Street, Camp Street, Hebner Street, Barrett Avenue, Harding Avenue, 18th Street, Stillers Alley, Factory Alley and Foundry Alley.
- During 2008, we completed the remaining projects under the \$2.5 million energy conservation improvement program for City government buildings. The subject improvements are resulting in significant and noticeable savings on our monthly utility bills and our initial investment is currently on schedule to be fully repaid, through our operational savings, within the next 5 to 6 years.

- During 2008, our Board of Public Utilities made great strides toward the development of new electric generating facilities at the Steele Street BPU campus. This initiative will replace the current, functionally obsolescent and environmentally damaging operation with a more efficient, environmentally responsible Circulating Fluidized Bed (CFB) technology. The project is being designed to ensure that our community will be able to remain in the electric generating business and maintain both its energy independence and advantageous cost position for years to come.
- On a related front, the BPU, in conjunction with Prax Air Inc., Dresser Rand Corp., Ecology and Environment Inc., SUNY Buffalo, the State of New York and a variety of other partners, continued to pursue the development of Oxy Coal, Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CCS) technology in conjunction with the proposed Clean Coal Electric Generating Project. With the direct support of Governor Patterson, and assistance from various State agencies, \$240 million in funding for this groundbreaking environmental initiative, is currently being sought through the Federal Department of Energy's Clean Coal Power Initiative (CCPI) Program.
- During 2008, we worked with State DOT officials to finalize design concepts for the replacement of the 47-year old Washington Street Bridge and arterial highway approaches. Currently, the project is scheduled to go to bid later this year and construction is projected to commence during 2010.
- During 2008, we launched a comprehensive program to replace outdated, inefficient and unsafe Public Works and Parks Department equipment. With the issuance of \$2 million in capital improvement bonds, efforts were undertaken to purchase nearly \$1 million in new DPW and Parks equipment. The balance of the bond proceeds will be utilized for a variety of capital construction projects, including comprehensive repairs to the 35-year-old Spring Street parking garage.
- We expanded the Housing Mini-Sweep Inspection Program into seven (7) additional neighborhoods and initiated more than 1,000 new Housing Code Enforcement cases, most of which, were resolved without City Court intervention.
- 2008 saw the completion of 200 units of new student housing at Jamestown Community College and the start of construction activities on Phase II of the Appleyard Terrace Town House Project.
- Numerous unsafe, vacant structures were removed from the landscape during 2008, including the long abandoned and fire ravaged "MRC" building at Winsor and Chandler Streets.
- 2008 saw major construction activity at the new \$7.5 million BWB office/commercial center in Downtown Jamestown, which was made possible

with a \$1.5 million RESTORE NY Grant secured by the Department of Development.

- During the past year, we assisted with the relocation and expansion of the SKF Aero Engine Inc. Corporate offices into the Windstream Complex on East Fourth Street and completed more than \$1 million worth of façade and handicapped accessibility improvement projects in privately owned Downtown buildings.
- We saw the completion of development activities and realized the full occupancy of the 80,000 s.f., \$9 million Riverwalk Medical Center in Brooklyn Square.
- And, we secured \$2 million in RESTORE NY funding for the redevelopment of the Wellman Building, Period Brass Building and Shults Auto Group properties on Washington Street and Fluvanna Avenue. Collectively, these projects will stimulate \$12 million worth of private sector investment in the City's economy.

All in all, 2008 was a pretty positive and encouraging time of investment and accomplishments, especially when considering the gravity of challenges before us and the significant decline in economic activity all around us.

For your review, I have prepared a more comprehensive accounting of our 2008 initiatives and would encourage you to take some time to carefully review and consider this impressive list.

It clearly represents thousands of hours of effort and the investment of tremendous resources, not only by members of our outstanding City work force, but also by hundreds of concerned and dedicated individuals from throughout the Greater Jamestown Region.

While 2008 was certainly a productive and encouraging period of progress on many fronts, our work is far from over. And, given the historic problems and challenges before our State, Region and Nation on so many fronts, in so many ways, our work has only just begun.

During the coming year, we must concentrate our limited attention and resources on the types of matters that are within our local ability to have a meaningful impact. Specifically, our priority and focus must be on efforts that will effectively nurture an inviting environment in which private investment and job development can and will occur. And, as I have said on many occasions over the past decade, this all starts with putting and keeping our financial house in order.

- To that end, we must remain true to our principles of crafting and placing into effect budgets that are honest, truly balanced and in compliance with State laws and mandates that dictate not only what we must do, but also, how we must do it.
- We must stay committed to protecting and when possible, building the City's all important undesignated fund balance, which, as we all so fully understand, not

only functions as our critical reserve fund for unforeseen expenses and emergencies, but is also one of the most important indicators of our dedication to fiscal discipline and good government.

- We must continue to find ways to hold the line on and reduce the onerous and regressive local property tax. In order to do this, we must remain committed to reigning in and curtailing day-to-day expenditures, smartly investing in operational improvements that over time will reduce our costs, slamming the door shut on the unfunded expansion of our employment ranks and seeking other available sources of revenue that are not driven by or linked to the dreaded and destructive local property tax.
- As it relates to our tremendous public workforce, surely the best to be found anywhere in the nation, we must continue to seek reasonable common ground in our labor agreement deliberations. Common ground that certainly provides fair compensation for their outstanding work contributions, but also, reasonable labor agreements that recognize the mounting economic challenges all around us and the diminishing “capacity to pay” and pain being experienced by our already overburdened taxpaying residents and businesses.

During the coming months, we will continue our “bargain hard and bargain fair” approach to labor negotiations and will seek to bring back to this City Council and to those who must ultimately pay the bills, our constituents, contract settlements that are more in line with what is happening in the “real world”, outside of government.

- Clearly, there is a proud and rich history in the Greater Jamestown Region of sharing and consolidating redundant municipal services. And, let me say once again, as I have said continuously throughout my tenure as Mayor, the City of Jamestown remains open and committed to evaluating and pursuing alternatives to the delivery of ANY service in which there may be potential partners interested in sharing, collaborating or even consolidating.

During 2009, I look forward to building upon our previous efforts to establish the feasibility and develop the framework for a consolidation of the Jamestown Police Department with the Chautauqua County Sheriff’s Office.

And, while on the subject of local government efficiency and competitiveness, I firmly believe that our efforts should not be limited to merely the sharing of services between our State’s 6,000 plus taxing jurisdictions and public authorities.

The time has come for everyone, and that includes those who work for us in Albany, to stand up and honestly admit that small examples here and there of municipalities and school districts working together on individual projects or occasionally sharing/merging isolated functions, will not, in and of itself, produce the transformative change and results that this State so desperately needs.

With the dire condition of both our State and National economies, and the well-documented, structural, fiscal problems in Albany, we have clearly reached a day of governmental reckoning. The time has come to publicly acknowledge what the rest of the world can so clearly see; that our voluminous and now archaic, 19th century municipal and school system boundaries, which may have once had their rationale and purpose, no longer serve well the needs of a 21st century economy.

To those amongst us who stubbornly cling to the belief that we can climb our way out of this deep fiscal abyss and restore the once great Empire State to its days of glory, while we maintain a redundant and inefficient system of governmental fiefdoms, I say that you are contributing mightily to and ensuring a future of continuing economic decay. I call upon our leaders in State government, to provide us not only with encouragement and scraps of resources to better communicate, collaborate and share, but to give us the firm directive, the constitutional mechanisms, the necessary legislative changes...including relief from the myriad of insane unfunded mandates...the significant incentives and the meaningful resources to actually do what you always claim you want us to do... consolidate, reorganize, eliminate outright entire units of unnecessary government and become more efficient, effective and thereby competitive.

True enough, bigger is not always better, but an intuitively intelligent approach almost always is. Again, the time has clearly come to put the self-serving, petty and partisan differences aside, and stop talking about and scratching around the edges of local governmental efficiency. The time is now to start doing something about it in a dramatic and meaningful way.

- During the coming year, we will be launching an all out community effort to provide the most complete and accurate count of residents possible during the 2010 Decennial Census.

As many realize, the City's population has been on a slow and steady downward descent... with the exception of a slight up tick during the 1950 Census... since our 1930 peak of 45,155 residents.

While the reasons for this trend have been varied and anything but unique (post WWII sunbelt and western migration, de-industrialization, suburbanization, etc.), it is firmly believed that a systematic undercount of hard to enumerate individuals contributed significantly to the City's most recent decline in 2000 (to its current "documented" population of 31,984).

As every member of this City Council realizes, the Decennial Census results are used to drive a host of decisions and outcomes, including community representation in local, state and federal governments, State AIM payments, sales tax allocations, funding through a variety of state and federal grant programs and marketing and investment decisions made by private companies.

Quite simply, the inability to find and enumerate just a few hundred people could translate into the annual loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars and inappropriately misallocate political representation for the next 10 years. And, as one can imagine, the stakes intensify as the level of the undercount magnifies.

Thus, again, 2009 will need to bring a community wide strategy and preparation effort to minimize the level of undercount and promote the most complete and accurate census process possible during 2010.

- Despite a reduction in available resources, 2009 will still be a very active year for our Public Works Department, our Parks Department and our Board of Public Utilities. Projects that will take priority will include:
 - ✓ Continued improvements to the West Fifth and West Sixth Route 394 corridor.
 - ✓ Final preparations for the closure and replacement of the Washington Street Bridge.
 - ✓ Commencement of major improvements to the 35-year old Spring Street Parking Garage.
 - ✓ Continuation of the Downtown Alleyway Improvement Program.
 - ✓ Continued development activities on the proposed Clean Coal CFB/CCS initiative at the Steele Street Campus of the BPU.
 - ✓ A variety of capital improvements to the City's Water, Wastewater Treatment, and District Heating Systems.
 - ✓ Redevelopment and expansion of the McCrea Point Park area as part of the Phase III development of the Chadakoin Riverwalk System along Jones and Gifford Avenue.
 - ✓ Continued ADA improvements throughout the parks system and construction of additional accessible curb ramps at intersections throughout residential neighborhoods.
 - ✓ Additional improvements at Roseland Park.
- Housing and neighborhood improvement efforts will again hold a prominent place on the City's 2009 agenda. During the coming year we will:
 - ✓ Intensify our code enforcement, emergency demolition and targeted rehabilitation incentive efforts.

- ✓ Complete the implementation of the new housing code enforcement computer system.
 - ✓ Finish construction on Phase II of the Appleyard Terrace Project and pursue additional housing development efforts in the Winsor and Second Street neighborhood.
 - ✓ Commence the development of a new multi-year Consolidation Housing and Neighborhood Improvement Plan.
 - ✓ Work with Jamestown Community College officials to further expand and enhance student housing and development opportunities.
 - ✓ Continue to press County officials to revive the practice of conducting code compliance inspections on all in-rem, foreclosed properties within the City of Jamestown, **prior to** their sale by the County to new owners..
- And, finally, economic development activities will once again demand a significant level of our attention and energy during the coming year. Our priorities will include:
 - ✓ Supporting ongoing efforts to further develop and expand educational and higher degree opportunities at Jamestown Community College and Jamestown Business College. As I have noted many times in recent years, 21st century businesses rise and fall on access to so-called “intellectual capital”. And, higher-level colleges and universities are not only major suppliers of “intellectual capital”, but through what they contribute to a community from a cultural, social, recreational and goods/services standpoint, serve as powerful magnets for the type of people that companies today must have to succeed in an increasingly competitive global market place. And, if we stand any opportunity as a community to survive the turbulent and dire economic period that has been thrust upon us, our top priority from an economic development standpoint must be to demand and support the expansion of the higher educational infrastructure within the Greater Jamestown area.
 - ✓ Supporting the development of new employment opportunities in both the health care service sector and in manufacturing businesses that will be supplying and supporting the emerging “green” technology component of the national economy.
 - ✓ Advancing a variety of ongoing major Downtown development efforts at the Wellman Building, Grants Building and the former Field and Wright Building on North Main Street.

- ✓ Nurturing commercial development opportunities along the Foote Avenue, East Second Street and Washington/Fluvanna entrance corridors, which, have already started to feel the pain of a slowing national economy and a sluggish and overbuilt local commercial real estate market.

The goals outlined this evening are once again, to say the least, ambitious; especially when taking into consideration the depth and complexity of the current national economic crisis. Some may even suggest that given the challenges of the day, our agenda for the coming year is downright unrealistic, destined for failure and shouldn't even be pursued.

While I simply cannot appear before you this evening and deliver guaranteed outcomes for anything, I can offer the following certainties that weave and travel throughout this game plan for the coming year:

1. Nothing is certain as it pertains to the national and international economic situation during the coming months and years.
2. As President Obama has made so eloquently clear, we, together as a nation, will again conquer the problems before us and as a people, we will reclaim our promise and deliver to future generations an even better world than what was entrusted to us. But, it is going to take some time before our economic ship of state can be righted and things will likely get worse, maybe a lot worse, before they get better.

The problems before us as a nation and a world are so deep and structural in nature that there can not and will not be any quick fixes and the adverse effects will continue to linger and be felt at the local level for quite some time.

3. Success in any of the areas discussed this evening will only be attained if we work together in a spirit of cooperation.

As we have demonstrated in this community time and again, when we work together...government with the private sector, the business community with civic organizations and most importantly, all of us as individuals, volunteering and giving something back in recognition of the rich blessings that have been bestowed upon us all...when we do these things and work together in the interests of others and not ourselves, there is literally nothing that we cannot accomplish.

4. Our spirit as Americans, and as members of this community of overachievers, cannot be broken!

Always remember, this City, like our Nation, was built by ordinary people doing extraordinary things, against the odds and going over, around and through any and every obstacle.

And while I have no idea and can certainly offer no guarantees as to how much of our list will be achieved by the time we gather in this chamber again next January, I am extremely confident of one thing; that like those who walked, served, sacrificed and built before us, the adversity of our day, will not deter or stop us from trying...and eventually succeeding.

Thank you and I look forward to continuing to work with you during the coming year, as we build an even Greater Jamestown.