

## STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

MAYOR SAM TERESI

JANUARY 28, 2008

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

It is once again my pleasure, in accordance with Article IV, Chapter 31-C of the Jamestown City Charter, to present to you this evening, the State of the City Address. I am also happy to report to you that at the conclusion of 2007, the state of New York's Pearl City was sound and continuing to improve on many fronts.

During the past year, through the collaborative efforts of prior City Council members, the Department Heads and managers within this Administration, the best public sector work force in the nation and a community of residents and businesses that truly cares about the future of this City, significant progress was again made to improve our operations, build our business base, enhance our neighborhoods and continue moving our community forward.

Please bear with me for a few moments as I recount a sampling of the strides and accomplishments that took place during 2007.

- During an era in which most city governments continue to run annual deficits, and after several red ink years of our own, I am confident that Jamestown will once again end the previous fiscal year in the black...for the seventh consecutive time.
- After working off the previous \$1.4 million accumulated deficit, the City's General Fund is now sporting a positive fund balance of more than \$2.1 million.
- During the fall of 2007, we developed and adopted a General Operating Budget for 2008 that contained a reduction in both the overall property tax rate and levy.
- During 2007, we completed an examination of numerous contracted services, undertook requests for proposals (RFP) on an open market basis, and established replacement agreements with new providers for telephone, Health Insurance Stop Loss Coverage, Pharmacy Benefit Management (PBM) and General Liability

Insurance services. The result of these efforts...a savings to the taxpayers of this City of nearly \$300,000 per year.

- We continued a comprehensive investment program to replace outdated, inefficient and unsafe equipment in our Public Works, Parks, Fire and Police Departments, highlighted by the purchase of a new \$810,000 fully equipped ladder truck for the Fire Department, which will replace a 40-year old antiquated unit.
- Working in conjunction with communities and advocates from across New York, we lobbied for and secured a 9% increase from the State in AIM (Aid and Incentives for Municipalities) Program Funding.
- We delivered upon a record level of street, sidewalk and storm water drainage improvement projects. In addition to more than three (3) dozen resurfacing, nova chip and storm sewer improvement efforts, we also completed the comprehensive reconstruction of East 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Camp Street, Hebner Street, Pine Street, Dearing Avenue and Prospect Street.
- We greatly accelerated the level of curb and intersection improvements to bring the City one step closer to full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- We implemented \$2.5 million worth of energy conservation improvements to City government facilities. The subject improvements will be fully amortized with savings from reduced utility bills.
- We completed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and filed air permit applications with both the Federal and State Governments, in conjunction with the development of new electric generating facilities at the Steele Street campus of the Board of Public Utilities.

And on a related front, we forged a partnership with Prax Air Inc., Dresser Rand Corp., Ecology and Environment Inc., and SUNY Buffalo to pursue the development of Oxy Coal, Carbon Capture and Sequestration technology and began the process of pursuing State support and Federal DOE funding for this groundbreaking environmental initiative.

- We worked with State DOT officials on design concepts for the scheduled replacement of the 46-year old Washington Street Bridge and arterial highway approaches.
- Utilizing a \$99,000 Shared Municipal Services Initiative (SMSI) Grant from New York State, we launched a study with the Village of Lakewood, Town of Busti and Town of Ellicott on the feasibility of creating a new municipal electric system to be operated and managed by the City's Board of Public Utilities.

- We expanded our regional assessing operation to now include the Towns of North Harmony and Ellery and enacted a Consolidated Assessment Program (CAP) with the Town of Busti. The CAP status qualified the City for a \$75,000 per year stipend to help cover the costs of the recently completed comprehensive revaluation program and to retain 100% full value assessments.
- We significantly expanded the Housing Mini-Sweep Inspection Program into more than a dozen additional neighborhoods and initiated more than 1,500 new Housing Code Enforcement cases, most of which were resolved without City Court intervention.
- We saw the completion of the \$6 million Appleyard Terrace Town House Project at East Second and Cross Streets, launched construction of 200 units of new student housing at Jamestown Community College and demolished blighted structures, undertook home inspection and rehabilitation activities and completed sidewalk, street lighting, landscaping and road improvements within the Northside PRIDE Rehabilitation Program area.
- Our recently completed Downtown Urban Design Plan was recognized by the American Planning Association as the Best Community Plan for 2006/2007.
- We utilized \$1.8 million in RESTORE NY funding for the redevelopment of the former SKF office complex on Chandler Street and launched construction of the new \$7.5 million BWB Center in Downtown Jamestown.
- We applied for and secured an additional \$2 million in RESTORE NY assistance for the redevelopment of the Wellman Building, the former Period Brass complex on Foote Avenue and various Shults Auto Group properties along Washington Street and Fluvanna Avenue.

Collectively, these initiatives will stimulate private sector investment of more than \$12 million in the City's economy.

- And, we realized another significant increase in taxable real property assessment for the fourth consecutive year.

All in all, not a bad year !!

For your review, I have prepared a more comprehensive listing of our 2007 initiatives and accomplishments and would encourage you to take some time and carefully consider this impressive list.

It clearly represents thousands of hours of effort and the investment of time and resources not only by members of our outstanding City work force, but also by hundreds of our

friends, residents and business associates that deeply care about the future of this community.

While the past year was obviously a period of tremendous effort and significant accomplishment, much remains to be done, particularly on the front of nurturing new private investment and job development opportunities.

And tonight, with your indulgence, I would like to spend the rest of our time focusing on a general approach and specific initiatives to move forward on this all encompassing and important front.

As we have learned over the years, economic development is no longer, and maybe has never really been about, merely throwing money at and handing out lucrative tax breaks to existing and prospective employers. Rather, increasingly, business locational decisions are being made on the basis of where the individuals who are making these decisions want to live themselves and raise their own families. And, in many other cases, locational decisions are being driven by where companies believe that they can attract and retain the one resource that every successful business needs...talented, well-trained, and highly productive people.

For some time now it has been apparent to me that if we are going to succeed in attracting increased investment and “export” businesses that will draw “new money” into the local economy and provide challenging and family sustaining jobs, not only for our kids but for young people coming from other regions, we need to be focusing on and attending to what I refer to as the “Three E’s” of Private Investment and Economic Development.

These are the factors and attributes that are firmly in place and working within successful and growing local economies in other parts of the nation and, in fact, were in place in abundant supply during Jamestown’s previous eras of robust growth and development.

And what are the three factors of this equation? Education, Energy, and Environment.

In other words, E + E + E has always equaled and yielded investment, jobs and income.

Tonight, I call upon my colleagues in City government and our development partners throughout the Greater Jamestown area, to join forces during the coming year and beyond, and pursue the following program designed to make our City and region an even better and more attractive place in which to invest, operate a business, visit and raise a family.

## **EDUCATION**

Growingly, residential choices are being made by families with children on the basis of the quality or the perceived quality, of local schools. And, as it should be, responsible parents want the best for their kids, and fortunately, here in the City of Jamestown, we already have one of the best public school systems that can be found...anywhere.

As local government representatives and concerned residents, we need to remain vested in and supportive of the efforts of our colleagues on Martin Road to protect and build the quality of our outstanding public school system. Quite possibly, from a long-term standpoint this represents the single most important thing that we can be doing to keep and attract both residents and new businesses to our City.

And whether it is working collaboratively with the school district on a recreation program, public works initiative, public safety efforts, internship opportunities, pushing for higher academic achievements, attending sporting and music events, or making ourselves available to participate in a Career Day or read to students in the classroom, we as City government and community leaders have an indispensable supportive role to play. A supportive role that is not only essential in building this major economic development tool, but is consistent with what I like to refer to as the “Kid Test”...if it is good for our kids, it must be the right thing to do.

On the front of higher education, we must support the development and expansion of two of our most potentially significant economic engines; Jamestown Business College (JBC) and Jamestown Community College (JCC). As one of the three regional sponsors of JCC, we, as a city government, must help advance ongoing efforts to once again blaze a new trail and expand the first and best Community College in the State, to provide on-site, higher educational degree opportunities. Not only for residents of our immediate area, but also for hundreds or even thousands of bright minds that are willing to journey here and become new, contributing members of our great community. And, when this does happen, it will clearly drive future private business investment, growth and new jobs throughout the Greater Jamestown Region.

Today, 21<sup>st</sup> century businesses trade in and often rise and fall on access to so-called “intellectual capital”. And, higher-level colleges and universities are not only fertile training grounds for and suppliers of “intellectual capital”, but through what they also add 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 the global market place.

Make no mistake about it. Higher education is to today’s knowledge and information based economy, what railroads, electrification and interstate highways were...and then some...to the economy of the last century.

Again, if we are going to succeed and grow as a community, we must do whatever is possible and necessary to support the transformation and continued growth of our colleges.

## **ENERGY**

When speaking of the importance of energy in the economic development process, one must remain cognizant of three factors:

- Cost. Is the service unaffordable, merely affordable, or truly an inexpensive inducement for new investment and jobs?
- Supply. Is the supply inadequate, merely adequate to serve existing users or is there enough excess capacity to accommodate new development and employers?
- Reliability. Does the transmission and distribution capacity allow the system to operate with or without frequent interruptions of service? This is obviously an important factor to the business community, as power outages translate into downtime, compromised productivity, dissatisfied customers, lost sales and profits, and ultimately, the need for less employees.

During the coming year, we will remain ever committed to maintaining the outstanding performance record of all of our municipally owned and operated utility systems. Significant capital investments in and operating improvements to the Water, Wastewater, District Heating and Sanitation operations will continue to be a top priority for this City Government. And, it remains our hope and objective to bring forth new, cutting edge technology at our Steele Street Electric Generating facilities that will allow for the continued provision of the low cost, plentiful and reliable energy, necessary to fuel our local economy, while making Jamestown, New York State and a team of world class companies the bold leaders in the global effort to improve the environment and ultimately save our planet.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

The notion of an attractive “Environment” for economic development certainly includes but goes well beyond local climate issues and the natural or “green” environment in which we live.

While over the years we have certainly witnessed how these factors can have a significant and often frustrating impact on location and investment decisions, one soon comes to realize that it is far less infuriating, and much more useful and productive, to focus on the host of other “Environmental” factors over which we can actually demonstrate some level of positive impact at local, state and regional levels. And I am of course referring to such items as government cost structure; public safety; health care; housing and neighborhoods; infrastructure and transportation; parks and recreation; and retail, service and cultural offerings.

As it relates to government cost structure, ours remains simply too high. In fact, when considering the multiple layers of services and built in costs from the State to the County

to our own City operations, in many respects, we could serve as the poster child for what Governor Spitzer has coined “the Perfect Storm of Unaffordability”.

Despite our past efforts and encouraging examples of progress on this very front during recent years, we still have a long way to go. During 2008, we must recommit ourselves to making the Greater Jamestown Region in general and the City in particular, a more affordable and viable place in which to invest, run a business and own a home. Included will be the following initiatives:

- With the goal of holding the line on and further cutting both the property tax rate and levy, we must redouble our efforts to find new ways to reduce expenses in our day-to-day operations. This, however, must be achieved in tandem with crafting and putting in place budgets that are honest and truly balanced. And also, budgets that are in compliance with State laws that dictate not only what we have to do, but in many instances, how we must do it.
- We must stay the course and remain truly committed to building the City’s all important accumulated fund balance, which serves not only as our reserve fund for unforeseen major emergencies, but is one of the most important indicators of our commitment to fiscal discipline and good government.
- During the coming months we will move toward and hopefully realize negotiated labor contract settlements with our various bargaining units that are fair not only to the members of our talented workforce, but affordable to our already overburdened taxpayers. Our “bargain hard and bargain fair” approach to labor negotiations will proceed, as in the past, with a blind eye to the political calendar and continue to seek settlements on items such as health care benefits, that are more in line with what is happening in the world outside of city government.
- And, we must also find new approaches to delivering essential public safety services by working smarter and not harder, while maintaining the “line in the sand” declaration of the previous City Council, to slam the door shut on filling new, unfunded positions within City departments.
- While recent efforts tending to the command structure, staffing levels, personnel matters, operational procedures and equipment needs, have produced some positive results within the public safety arena, we must address during the coming year the multiple, deficient locations from which our multi-million dollar Fire Department is forced to operate. It is neither right to have “Jamestown’s Bravest” working and living in less than desirable quarters nor is it cost effective for the taxpayers of this City to shoulder the ongoing financial burden of operating and maintaining a century old alignment of small and less than efficient buildings.
- During 2008, we will continue to seek ways in which to build upon our rich history of shared services, with our colleagues at both the County and municipal levels. And, as I have said every year since I have been in this position, 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, cooperating and even consolidating.

- And, as it relates to consolidating services, 2008 will hopefully bring clarity and encouraging progress to the ongoing process of evaluating the consolidation of City and County public safety functions.
- Another matter that will require our cooperative action during the coming year, will be putting an end to the era of “benign neglect” as it relates to our operating equipment needs within the Public Works and Parks Departments. For too long our inability or reluctance to invest in ourselves and our “head in the sand”, approach has deprived our workforce of the safe, operable and efficient equipment that they need to get the job done. This shortsighted approach has also penalized City taxpayers through higher operating and maintenance costs, lost productivity and diminished service levels.

During the coming months, I will be bringing forth a comprehensive plan designed to deal with this problem and together, with the input and approval of the City Council, I look forward to putting the City squarely ahead of the sharp and expensive equipment curve, once and for all.

- We must also continue to work with the Spitzer Administration and our own State representatives on a broad spectrum of issues that will provide much needed refuge from that “Perfect Storm of Unaffordability”. Once again, our State Government reform and assistance list will include but not necessarily be limited to an increase in AIM (Aid and Incentives to Municipalities) assistance, long promised and overdue mandate relief initiatives, much needed reforms to the Taylor, Civil Service and Real Property Tax Laws, continued relief on State Retirement System obligations, along with legislative and constitutional actions that will facilitate not only the sharing of services, but enable the outright consolidation and elimination of some of New York’s 4,200 redundant public service providers.
- Despite the availability of very limited resources, 2008 will be another active year in the Public Works and Parks Departments. Projects that will take priority will include:
  - Further development of the handicapped accessible trail systems at Allen, Bergman and Chadakoin Parks.
  - Continued planning, design, and construction activities within the Chadakoin Riverwalk System, including the Downtown Connector Project and Phase III activities at McCrea Point Park and along Jones and Gifford Avenue.

- Additional improvements at Roseland Park.
  - Improvement efforts at Diethrick Park as required by the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues.
  - Coming to an agreement with the State on a final plan for the complete replacement of the Washington Street Bridge, that is both appropriate and consistent with our award winning Downtown Urban Design Plan.
  - Working with the State to come to an acceptable and timely solution for much needed improvements to New York State Route 394 in Downtown Jamestown (West Fifth and West Sixth Streets)...of course with the persuasive leadership skills and muscle of Councilmen Taylor and Spitale...that is legislative muscle of course!
- Housing and neighborhood improvement efforts will again occupy a special place on our agenda for 2008. During the coming year we will be:
    - Intensifying our code enforcement, demolition and targeted rehabilitation incentive efforts.
    - Completing the implementation of the new computerized code enforcement and housing records system.
    - Launching construction on Phase II of the Appleyard Terrace Development.
    - Accepting the outstretched hand of and working with our County Legislators to revive the practice of conducting code compliance inspections on all in-rem, foreclosed properties within the City of Jamestown, **prior to** their sale and transfer by the County.
    - Identifying and securing a source of grant funding to retain the services of a housing professional to oversee the code enforcement and rehabilitation efforts of JURA and to coordinate and enhance the impressive neighborhood rehabilitation efforts currently being spearheaded by a coalition comprised of the City and a host of other community-based organizations.
  - And last but certainly not least, a variety of initiatives to develop the Downtown of the future...postured on a three-legged stool of more employment activity, more residential offerings and diverse and unlimited entertainment venues...will be advanced during 2008. Included will be:

- Working with the members of the Jamestown Renaissance Corporation (JRC) on the implementation of major projects contained within the Downtown Urban Design Plan.
- Pursuing strategies to encourage the development of more market rate housing.
- Marketing, improving and pursuing the appropriate re-development of a variety of key Downtown properties including the Wellman Building, the former Grants Building, Erie Railroad Station, Furniture Mart Building, and various spaces within the Civic Center Entertainment District.

The general approach and specific agenda presented this evening is certainly ambitious, and to some, may be unrealistic and even a bit daunting. Well, my friends, let me be as clear as I can. The vision and specific work plan outlined in this message tonight will be daunting and unreachable, **ONLY**, if together, we allow it to be.

We need to stop and realize that we are all products of good stock and a rich history of people achieving the unachievable.

Whether it was that initial young man in search of his lost team of horses, who stopped for a much needed rest and had a vision about building a community along the banks of a narrow and torrential river ripping its way through what was then just a thick patch of trees.

OR

The English and Scandanavian immigrants who worked their fingers to the bone and persevered against all odds to transform a backwoods railroad lacking settlement, into the premier city of the Great Empire State's Western Gateway.

OR

The Italian immigrants, who successfully assimilated with other groups arriving before them to physically create the infrastructure of this city and who rode out a Great Depression with both their dignity and families intact.

OR

The returning World War II veterans and other members of the "Greatest Generation" who not only came home to establish beautiful families and build new homes, but delivered one of the industrial powerhouse economies of Upstate New York.

OR

Whether, it has been those in more recent times, who have been forced to deal with and pick up the pieces of short-sighted and mindless politically driven policies, that have developed suburbs at the expense of cities, sunbelt areas lacking natural resources or infrastructure at the expense of established and deteriorating northern and midwestern communities, and third world Pacific Rim economies to the detriment of our own nation.

So, what has history, our history, taught us? It clearly has demonstrated that when we have vision, desire, a positive, can-do attitude and work in the interest of others and not ourselves, we can achieve anything and are literally, unstoppable.

Do I think that the vision and the program before us is daunting and unachievable? **ABSOLUTELY NOT!** And like those who walked and worked before us, I truly believe that we can accomplish all of this and more. And together, in time, I **know** that we will.

Thank you.