

TROY COUNCIL PRESIDENT CARMELLA R. MANTELLO  
LEGISLATIVE RESPONSE – STATE OF THE CITY  
THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 2016

Good evening Mayor, fellow council members, my family, and Troy residents. In accordance with the city charter, I am honored to be here tonight to deliver the legislative response to the Mayor's State of the City.

First, I would like to emphasize that the council majority is committed to working in a bipartisan manner with the Mayor and all members of the council. At the same time, though, we will exercise our duty and responsibility to serve as a check and balance on all aspects of city government, including through the appropriate legislative initiatives.

Let me state at the outset, I am opposed to any mid-year property tax increase. The people of Troy are already taxed enough through county, school district, library, Business Improvement District, and sales tax. We must look to streamline and consolidate city government, and through this method reduce our expenditures and non-essential and discretionary areas. This would include such expenditures as overtime, not filling vacancies, and other discretionary types of spending. Additionally, I will strongly encourage the Mayor to begin discussions to seek sharing services and partnerships with the county.

Working with the city council and the mayor, the council will end fantasy budgeting and restore reasonable and realistic budgeting through a corrective action plan. Additionally, we will review the operations of the Troy IDA and LDC, enforcement of the city's ethics law, our procurement policies, and work towards ensuring a smooth transition for implementation of a new city charter scheduled for July. Our fiscal compass must be set for both short and long range financial planning to most effectively address Troy's financial problems.

It is absolutely critical we protect our water fund from being used to cover up any general fund deficits. The New York State Comptroller's office documented in a recent report that over the last several years in excess of \$6 million was taken from the water fund to cover up general fund deficits at the expense of necessary capital and infrastructure improvements to the water system. As recent events around the country in Flint Michigan and here at home in Hoosick and Petersburg have

demonstrated – our water is a precious resource and we cannot take risks with its' quality.

That's why as Council President, I will be introducing a local law that will require a two-thirds council vote and a prior public hearing before any money can be transferred out of the water fund to the general fund. This will ensure transparency and end a process that has been done in the past with very little public input and apparently council awareness.

Continuing on the path to improve our aging infrastructure, I along with the council majority's support, are sponsoring a resolution which is before the council this evening requesting the New York State Legislature develop SWAP (Safe Water Action Program), a state program which would allocate annual infrastructure funding to each municipality "through a fair and equitable formula" similar to the CHIPs program for highways and bridges.

To augment city revenues, I will also be proposing legislation to aggressively collect over \$1 million in outstanding unpaid parking tickets through an "Amnesty Program". I am pleased that Mayor Madden is supporting the effort to collect unpaid parking tickets, which I am proud to have announced last year.

One of the most important economic development projects that will affect our city for many years to come is One Monument Square. This is part of Troy's downtown Renaissance, and the catalyst of a more publicly accessible waterfront. We have an American treasure right here with our 8 mile waterfront, and it's time to take advantage of using the waterfront for land trails, water trails, and economic development!

We must get the development of One Monument Square right and it must be done in a timely manner.

That is why I am requesting that before a second 6 month extension is given to the current preferred developer for this site by Mayor Madden this matter be discussed openly and candidly with the public and the city council. The developer apparently has notified the city seeking a second extension and the Mayor must make a decision in early May.

It is also incumbent upon the city to develop and support our waterfront Marina which will provide both economic and recreational benefits to our community.

This needs to be done in conjunction with the long awaited repairs to Troy's Hudson River seawall.

As part of the majority city council's "Neighborhood First Initiative", I believe it is imperative working with the Land Bank and dedicated Neighborhood Associations that we implement a comprehensive plan with Code, Fire, and Police Departments to take down many deteriorating buildings beyond repair that are found throughout our neighborhoods. These buildings pose a public safety and health hazard along with depreciating the value of homes in any given neighborhood. This type of plan is eligible for federal funding as has been successfully done the last few years in our neighboring city of Schenectady.

Additionally, as part of this initiative, I am recommending that the city strongly consider a Park, Walk, and Talk Program in our neighborhoods along with reinstating a form of the Street Crimes Unit.

Also, we must make our neighborhood parks more accessible and user-friendly for the developmentally disabled community. Over the years, through my own family experiences I have come to know the challenges the disabled community faces in accessing our parks and public venues. Our city should be accessible to all and I will be working with the Parks Department toward this effort.

The Council Majority and I will also be initiating a "Cleaner and Greener Program" for each neighborhood in the city after discussion and dialogue with our neighborhood groups. As part of our "Cleaner and Greener" strategy, I will be advocating for a Gateway Enhancement Program for each of the entrances into our city. We must remember a first impression is a lasting impression for people, tourists and businesses visiting our community.

As Council President, I will be calling upon various individuals in our community to participate in developing Troy as a "Smart City". This will help our city become more innovative in a variety of ways by bringing together those with expertise in technological areas. This will put us on a path that will benefit in today and generations to come. Our neighboring communities have already begun this and we must make our city technologically friendly.

It is also time the city of Troy adopt a Text Messaging and Automated Calls Program so that we can immediately notify our residents and businesses of emergencies and other issues. I look forward to working with the Mayor on this program.

I love our city and I could never live anywhere else – and I know all of you do too. That’s why I believe it is time we require our public officers to live in the city. This would include department heads and members of all boards and commissions. In 1973, the city had the state legislature pass a bill allowing Troy public officers to live outside city limits. I will be sponsoring legislation to request the state have this exemption rescinded. Keep in mind police and fire are covered under state law and excluded from this provision. It only makes sense that those individuals serving on planning or zoning boards or running our departments live in the community which will be affected by the decisions they make.

City Hall is more than just a government building – it is the centerpiece of our civic life. Today, city governments are required to tackle new and ever complex problems and city hall is as a lead actor in helping to transform our neighborhoods by making them more livable and equitable. It is a place where elected leaders and members of the community come together to address the big urban problems of the day.

Therefore, I will be asking citizens and council members to serve on a special committee to relocate city hall to the downtown area. I believe that the cost of renting city hall space is very expensive and leaves us with nothing in return. Rather, the people of Troy should own their own city hall and be proud of this facility.

In conclusion, I am committed to ensuring that Troy has an open and transparent government and makes decisions in a bipartisan manner that will reflect the needs of our community. We, as government and as a city, need to start “thinking differently”. Over the years, I’ve seen firsthand the power of partnerships, and believe that the “whole is greater than the sum of its’ parts”! Working together we will move Troy forward, and we will make our city the greatest city in this state and country.

Thank you and God Bless!