

2023 Mayor's State of the City Address

January 31, 2023

Address

It is my honor to stand before you this evening and offer my assessment on the State of the City. Three years ago, I stood before you almost on this very day and reported with great aplomb on various accomplishments and undertakings. It was an optimistic message. One built on momentum.

Barely a month later, with scant warning, the world essentially shut down in response to a rapidly spreading deadly virus that we had little understanding of. And though we are finally again able to meet in person, that virus and the response to it, still profoundly impacts people and communities across the globe. Our city is no exception.

Despite that, the state of our beloved Troy continues to strengthen and grow.

Finances

I'd like to start where I usually do... our finances. After 7 years of listening to me (assuming you were listening to me) you may think I have been overly fixated on our finances. And I have been. Let me explain why.

In my most basic view, there are two types of debt. There's what I call good debt. Good debt is what we all have. We take out a loan to buy a car or a home. We make the payments on the debt as we enjoy the benefits of what we purchased. Assuming our ratios are healthy, that's good debt.

And then there's what I call, "stupid debt". Stupid debt is taking out a 10-year home equity loan to pay for last months' groceries or cable bill or your Draft Kings account. You are committing future income to something that was consumed in the past. This is where we have lived in Troy for the past quarter of a century – under the burden of stupid debt.

When we are spending today's income on yesterday's expenses, we are not spending it on our present needs. Over the past 25 years we have neglected our assets: our parks, our streets, our parking structures, our city hall, our equipment, and our personnel because so much of our annual revenue was going to stupid debt.

I am proud, relieved, and delighted to tell you that in the past 7 years we have retired \$41,398,673 in stupid debt. In 2022 we fully retired the MAC debt. And to date we have also retired 88% of the debt that was incurred with the NYS Pension Program starting in 2010.

Relieved of the burden of this old debt we are given the option and ability to commit today's revenue to today's needs. It gives us financial autonomy unburdened by the unwise decisions of the past. And that is why I have been so fixated on our finances.

The path to this point has not been easy. Our fiscal practices over the past 7 years have not always been popular. We made hard decisions about taxes, fees and staffing. We instituted honest and effective changes to ensure long term viability of important City services. We have said “no” more often than any of us would have liked. The results though, have been noteworthy and have produced real and measurable results.

- Working with the Council we have secured seven consecutive structurally balanced budgets, an accomplishment that we should both be proud of,
- Our reserves, while still slim, continue to grow each year,
- Moody’s Investors Service has increased our bond rating 3 times, the latest being in January of 2022,
- Our Bond Anticipation Notes are rated at a MIG 1 level – the highest grade for municipal notes.
- Despite extreme inflationary pressures adding more than \$3.8M to our 2023 budget, we cut where we had to because it was important to me that we keep the tax increase below the State’s tax cap.

These achievements are the result of our commitment to fiscal discipline and truthful, realistic budgeting. As I have warned before, we are not out of the woods yet. Though we are on the right path and headed in the right direction we still have years of deferred maintenance to catch up on.

My administration will continue to act in the long-term best interest of today’s taxpayers as well as the generations that will follow us.

On the bright side, having taken the steps we did, each year we are in an increasingly better position to reinvest in long neglected assets of the City.

Infrastructure

Our strengthened financial position allowed us to complete and/or commence a number of important projects in 2022 that were built upon our earlier work. In 2023, that investment will continue though inflation and supply chain challenges will be very impactful in the coming year.

And much of that investment has been in infrastructure.

Infrastructure is the life blood of any community. Often taken for granted and just as often not even visible, a reliable network of infrastructure is essential to the long-term health, growth and vitality of our city. We are the beneficiaries of the foresight and investment of those who came before us. Those investments benefit us daily. It has been a priority of this administration to be a responsible steward of that gift ensuring that those that follow us may enjoy the same benefits.

Most noteworthy in 2022 we reached substantial completion of the first phase of the replacement of the water supply lines running between the Tomhannock Reservoir and our water treatment plant. More than 8 miles of pipe was laid replacing lines that date back more than 110 years ensuring

uninterrupted water flow for the next 250 years. As I speak here today, crews are undertaking the very complicated procedure of switching the flow from the old lines to the new ones. If all goes well, you will never know it happened.

In 2023 we will be commencing the second phase which will complete the replacement of the remaining 25%.

This is a significant undertaking. More than 21 million gallons of water flow through these pipes each day providing drinking water not just to Troy but eight other communities across three counties. This is the only source of water for more than 135,000 customers. Most will have no idea this work was undertaken. They just expect water to flow when they turn on the faucet. I want to thank our Department of Public Utilities under the leadership of Superintendent Chris Wheland for bringing this important project to fruition.

Our Public Utilities Department also completed the Polk Street storm water/sewer separation project. As you may be aware, when cities like ours were first laid out and developed the nearest river was often used as the municipal sewer system. Rainwater from the streets and wastewater from homes went down the same pipes and daylighted into the river.

In the 70's the County built a water treatment plant, and an interceptor line ran along the river's edge capturing all those individual pipes that used to empty into the river. However, in times of heavy downpours the treatment plant and interceptor line become overwhelmed, and the system discharges sewage directly into the river. This is a legacy we cannot continue which is why over the years we have invested in projects like the Polk Street separation project to separate storm water from sewage thereby lessening the occurrences of sewer overflows.

It is estimated that the work on Polk Street will eliminate more than one million gallons of sewage from entering the Hudson River each year. Later this year we 'll undertake a similar project on Van Buren Street calculated to remove another one million gallons of sewage from the river on an annual basis.

Over the years, these separation projects have contributed considerably to the improvement of the Hudson River's water quality opening up opportunities for recreational and commercial use of our 7.5 miles of shoreline. Our commercial establishments, parks and walkways along the river are now the envy of the region.

The Campbell Avenue Bridge over the Wynantskill Creek was completely deconstructed and replaced in 2022. 95% of the \$3million cost was covered by grants.

Significant improvements were made at our Department of Public Works facilities on Seventh Ave in North Central. A new Traffic Control and Facilities Building was constructed replacing a long neglected, energy inefficient structure that was ill suited to today's needs.

We also replaced our structurally compromised and aging salt shed increasing our capacity to store and distribute road salt in the winter months and store equipment out of the elements during the other nine months of the year.

With this work completed, in 2023 we intend to replace our aging inground gas tanks with a new fueling island. Other than our DPU vehicles all city vehicles use this facility for fueling. The investments we have made over the past several years in the DPW facility were all long overdue. Like many of our facilities these offices and garages suffered from many years of inadequate investments subjecting our employees to inferior working conditions and our equipment to unnecessary wear and tear.

In 2022 we also milled and paved 10.75 miles of streets bringing our 7 year total to more than 41 miles.

We also installed 278 ADA compliant accessibility ramps in 2022 bringing our 7 year total to 626 ramps. These ramps are essential pathways of accessibility for those who use assistive methods to transport themselves and those who simply push carriages. This aligns with our goal of creating a more welcoming and accessible community for people of all ages and abilities.

Economic Development

Investments in infrastructure are important on so many levels and lay the groundwork for economic development. Our fiscal discipline coupled with our commitment to responsibly maintain our infrastructure gives confidence to those seeking to invest private dollars in our community. Whether it be a homeowner, a small business owner or a large commercial developer, investors are drawn to reliability and dependability.

Evidence that this is working includes the fact that the 2020 census is the first decennial census to show a population increase, reversing a decline that began in 1950.

Additionally, despite the impact of COVID, from 2016 to date we have issued over 5,100 building permits evidencing \$531,744,090 dollars of investment across our City. Over half a billion dollars! People want to be here. People want to invest in Troy.

2022 brought a great deal of uncertainty in the realm of economic development. Supply chain challenges, enormous interest rate increases and skyrocketing costs for raw materials changed the calculus for a number of projects that had been advancing prior to the pandemic.

Across the board the cost of building materials have not only doubled or tripled but the volatility in cost makes contractors reticent to bid certain projects. Just a couple of examples: for two years we were unable to get paint to stripe our roads. It is almost impossible now to get guardrails and granite curbing. The cost of a single fire hydrant has more than doubled to \$7,000 and the lead time is in excess of a year. The lead time for an electrical switch gear on a current project in Lansingburgh is 12 months. The lead time for a new ambulance or fire truck is 18 to 24 months and the cost has increased by more than 50% in two years. The examples are endless.

Despite these challenges a number of projects were able to make headway in 2022.

In Lansingburgh, the Lion Factory Building on 2nd Avenue is being converted into 151 apartments breathing life into a long underutilized building and providing modern apartments in the north end of the City. The contractor is a Troy based firm, UW Marx, and so brings good construction jobs to our local tradespeople. This massive project is well underway and completion is expected in early 2024.

In the Central Business District (and just a block from where we are sitting tonight) Troy Housing Authority and Pennrose Development are making strides on the demolition of the long vacant Taylor Apartment buildings 1 and 2. One tower has been leveled and the second is partially deconstructed. The site will be cleared by the end of February. Approvals and funding are in place for the reconstruction of a new 141 apartment building on the site.

Upon completion of the first building, tenants from buildings 3 and 4 would be relocated to the new apartments and the remaining two buildings will be leveled leaving a significant parcel along the river for mixed use redevelopment.

This is the first phase of a new vision for that area which really is a new vision of the way it used to be before the bridge was built. The idea is to remove the bridge ramps, reconnect River Street between Congress and Division Streets (the way it used to be). The Bridge would connect to River Street at a four-way intersection restoring the neighborhood connectedness that was lost when the bridge was initially built.

Keep in mind that this bridge was built long before the Hoosick Street Bridge was. It used to carry all that traffic load. For today's volume it is considerably overbuilt so the final element of this vision is to decommission two of the four bridge lanes and convert to a walkway park over the River better connecting the Cities of Troy and Watervliet.

Though it may take years to fully execute on this vision, the ball is rolling. A great deal of credit for this initiative goes to our Planning Commissioner Steve Strichman for his innovative vision and grant writing skills.

In North Central Troy we are partnered with Habitat for Humanity to construct four new single family homes. The first two are underway, in the ground and framed. We are looking forward to completion in late summer.

It is uplifting to see that after many decades of disinvestment the north central neighborhood is experiencing new investment in apartments, homeownership opportunities and business development. We are grateful for the partnership with Habitat, the Troy Community Land Bank TRIP, Capital Roots and others.

In South Troy National Grid is well underway with the remediation of certain brownfields that are essential to opening up many acres along the riverfront for redevelopment. Finally.

When complete we'll be in a better position, working with the owner, to move the mammoth salt pile that occupies nearly a city block just south of Adams Street, opening up a stretch of land from Liberty Street south to the Poestenkill for redevelopment. The possibilities are enormous and have the

potential to add considerably to our tax base. In all likelihood this too is a couple of years away, but with the National Grid remediation underway the ball is rolling on this vision as well.

2023 brings a number of projects in various states of readiness to proceed.

Bryce Properties has proposed a five story apartment building with street level parking on the north side of Broadway between 3rd and 4th Streets. The building would house 100 residential units. Conceptual approval has been granted by the Planning Commission and the developer is looking to break ground this spring.

A combination new construction/renovation project has received approval from the city's Planning Commission for a site on the intersection of Federal Street and Fifth Avenue. The project will include 52 residential apartments with off street parking on the ground level while preserving 2 vacant historic structures on 5th Avenue.

Rosenblum Development Company has proposed razing an existing, vacant, single-story bank branch building at 1818 5th Ave in downtown Troy, NY, to construct a new, +/-55,000 sq.ft., four-story, market-rate multifamily building that will use fully electrified systems, air-tight building envelope & smart building controls to eliminate fossil fuels from building operations. 1818 will provide 70 micro, studio & one-bedroom apartments with communal amenities including coworking space, media lounge & indoor bicycle storage in a walkable, transit-oriented location.

1818 5th Ave. will address an unmet need for more affordable market rate single occupancies with a novel micro apartment offering while introducing a new standard for resilient, zero-emission development in a community that has prioritized sustainability.

Prior to the pandemic The Proctors Collaborative was ready to commence the redevelopment of the former American Theater on River Street. However, given the impacts of the virus they were unable to proceed. I am delighted to announce that the project is back on track and look forward to the return of a theater in Troy for the first time in more than 30 years. This will rejuvenate an important historical building in our city, and it is an exciting development that adds a broader dimension to the attractiveness of Troy as a cultural destination.

As you may recall, in late 2021 we were chosen by NYS as a Downtown Revitalization Initiative recipient. The selection made us eligible for a \$10M investment in our downtown. The overall purpose of the DRI is to transform downtown neighborhoods into vibrant centers that offer a high quality of life and are magnets for redevelopment, business, job creation, and economic and housing diversity. In choosing Troy the State affirmed the potential of our City.

Throughout the first half of 2022 we formed a local planning committee made up of residents and business owners in the DRI target area. The Local Planning Committee, assisted by State agencies and a planning consultant vetted a number of potential projects and made recommendations for funding to the State. In the fall the State made their award announcement.

Three projects noted earlier received funding: The American Theater, the redevelopment of the Taylor apartments site and the reconfiguration of the Congress Street Bridge and River Street intersection. The DRI funds are making important contributions to the progress of those initiatives. In addition, funds were committed to:

- A net zero Greenhouse Job Training Center at Capital Roots,
- Extension of the Riverwalk Park into north central connecting those two important neighborhoods and also adding another segment to what we hope will someday be a riverwalk that spans our 7.5 mile shoreline on the Hudson,
- Installing air conditioning in our historic library so it doesn't need to shut down on oppressively hot days as it has several times in the recent past,
- Restoration of the façade of the historic Cannon Building,
- HVAC upgrades to the Hart Cluett Museum to protect the valuable collections,
- A public art initiative in the central Business District, and
- Playground and other outdoor amenities at the new CEO Community Resource Center.

These are investments in amenities for our existing residents and they also serve to add to the mojo of our downtown as a destination for visitors seeking the unique cultural and recreational opportunities we offer as a historical city on a historical river.

Neighborhoods

Our city boasts a wide variety of neighborhoods. From dense urban streetscapes to single family homes with generous yards Troy offers a housing environment for virtually every taste. Protecting this diversity and helping each neighborhood realize its highest potential is a significant focus of City Hall every day.

To that end considerable effort went into rewriting our zoning ordinance in 2022. The first rewrite in several decades the new code goes a long way in protecting and encouraging the unique attributes of each of our neighborhoods giving owners and investors important guidance in balancing the future with the past. The Code, developed with considerable community input, has been presented to the Council and we look forward to its passage this winter.

Furthering this work, we were also able to achieve Historic District approval for a section of Lansingburgh roughly bounded by 11th Street on the south, 117th Street on the north between the River and 6th Avenue. This designation opens the door to resources for the owners of these properties to restore and preserve these magnificent homes from a bygone era. These buildings are irreplaceable today and are central to the character and personality of that neighborhood.

We were also successful in our advocacy with New York State for a tax abatement program that would abate property tax increases resulting from improvements people make to their properties. The program is available throughout a good portion of the city on 1-to-4-unit properties. This mitigates one of the inherent disincentives to reinvesting in properties – a reassessment that raises taxes.

We successfully applied for funding for a dedicated bike lane across the Green Island Bridge that will link the bike trails we have developed in Troy to the greater Empire State Bike Trail System. Because this is a project across two municipalities, two counties and a State-owned bridge the logistical difficulties relative to contracting and financing were overwhelming. Our Planning Department convinced the state to assume the project which was a great outcome for us. This dedicated trail will greatly enhance the safety of riders in Troy making their way to trails in Albany County and points beyond.

The Capital District Planning Commission has recently awarded us a grant of funding to prepare an ADA transition plan relative to city sidewalks in the CBD. Though we have invested considerable resources in the past several years installing accessibility ramps, more remains to be done. The plan will prioritize locations going forward and provide planning guidance as more redevelopment projects come to the fore in the years ahead.

A particularly vexing issue we encounter across the City is the trash we see in our alleys and on our streets. We have stepped up enforcement, but we can do more. We requested and the council approved an appropriation of ARPA funds and tonight, I am pleased to announce that the city just ordered over 14,000 new garbage barrels. I believe that every resident paying for city trash pickup should be provided with a sturdy city provided garbage barrels with a closing lid. These barrels will just importantly reduce the risk of injury to our sanitation workers because the barrels can be lifted and emptied into a garbage truck automatically. The contractor is beginning to make the barrels, and we anticipate rolling them out this spring into summer.

Parks

While sound investment in infrastructure gives investors and homebuyers the confidence to invest in a community, it is the amenities and quality of life features that give them the desire to do so. Parks, green spaces, and trails all make important contributions to the quality of life in Troy and became increasingly popular during the pandemic.

Troy is fortunate to have 25 parks which in the aggregate exceed the size of Central Park in NYC. Unfortunately, the condition of many is emblematic of the decline in investment over the past 25 years as we struggled with the burdens of debt. Once activity centers throughout the city, many of our parks are shadows of what they once were and have the potential to be again.

A limited review of just 10 of the more popular parks calls for an investment in excess of \$11M. Clearly this is an undertaking that will take years to resolve. Fortunately, both the administration and the council are committed to the restoration of these community assets.

Significant investments have already been made in the South Troy Pool and the Geneva Pompey Park. In 2022, in partnership with MVP Health Care fitness pads were installed in Beman, 112th Street, Knickerbacker and Prospect Parks.

The Council authorized the use of \$1M in ARPA funding coupled with a previous \$2M bonding resolution to fund improvements and upgrades including playgrounds, drainage, and new sidewalks. Bid documents are under development and will be ready to go out later this winter and spring for summer construction. \$3 million is a good down payment in our parks, but we know this will only scratch the surface of what is needed in our parks. Our residents deserve parks that serve as meeting places and locations we can bring our youth and adults alike.

Congressman Paul Tonko and Assemblymember John McDonald have recently secured funding totaling \$875,000 for the transformation of the Little Italy Marketplace. While the Marketplace is City owned, we cannot take the credit for the many years of work that brought us to today. This ambitious project is the result of years of planning and engagement by the Little Italy Quality of Life Committee comprised of neighborhood residents under the leadership of Sam Chiappone and Heather Hamlin Martin. This is an outstanding example of a neighborhood led initiative that will remake a section of our city. The City is proud to partner with TAP and the Little Italy Quality of Life Committee to move this project forward.

Building on our investment in parks and meeting space such as the Marketplace, I am proud to announce, this evening, that we have just secured a \$500,000 grant from Assemblymember McDonald for improvements to the 112th Street Park including a splash pad installation. This is a great shot in the arm for this park and we are extremely grateful to the Assemblyman for assisting us in this effort. We have started conversations with the Lansingburgh Boys and Girls Club, and sketches of the splash pad will be shown at a future neighborhood meeting with the goal to release a BID for the work by May.

Sustainability

As important as what we leave the next generation is what we don't leave them. A considerable effort has been made over the past seven years to reduce what we put in our landfills. Landfill space continues to shrink across the northeast. Key to our effort is educating the community about methods to reduce, reuse and recycle to shrink the stream that heads to the landfill.

Results continue to show improvement.

- In 2022 we diverted 21.3 tons of textiles from the waste stream. That's up from 5 tons in 2020. We partnered with PS2 with an after-school program and RPI to place textile bins at both locations. This has increased engagement, accessibility and awareness of the program.
- Last year, in a pilot program we were able to divert 22 tons of food scraps out of the waste stream. Up from a third of a ton the year before (*when the program first started*). This program has potential for huge impact as it is estimated that food scraps make up 30% of today's waste streams. We are hopeful to be able to expand this pilot in the years ahead.
- This year we were able to repurpose over 97,000 tons of our millings from our annual street paving program.
- We collaborated with the County of Rensselaer and Town of Bethlehem for a series of six hazardous waste collection events in 2022. We plan to partner with both again in 2023 and will co-host four events, to make them as accessible and efficient as possible.
- With the rebate funds received from NYS, Troy designed and dispersed four rounds of reusable bags (close to 10,000 bags) to pantries, non-profits, and residents throughout the City. They were shared at numerous events (including trunk-or-treat) and at City Hall. Residents are telling us they're looking forward to collecting new ones!
- Our Commissioner of General Services, Sanitation Supervisor, Recycling Coordinator and Recycling Specialist have made it a point to attend as many neighborhood meetings as possible, so that residents know our teams are interested and invested in input from residents.
- In December of 2022, we hosted the State's 1st Deconstruction Summit, at which a broad range of municipalities and industries were represented in a deep dive into the subject of deconstruction. This process "un-builds" structures instead of demolishing them, so that the materials can be recovered for reuse. This is a financially lucrative and environmentally responsible practice, so we are thrilled to be a leader in this statewide effort.

While there is still room for improvement the upward trajectory of our diversion numbers indicate that residents are accepting the idea and are making increasing efforts to do their part.

We have continued our aggressive efforts at reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. Over the past 7 years we have installed over 4.7 megawatts of solar panels covering roughly half of our municipal electric consumption.

In 2022 we substantially completed the installation of more than 4,100 LED streetlights. These lights use about a quarter of the electricity used by the replaced incandescent bulbs. The installation has revealed, however, numerous instances of degraded wiring throughout the city. LED bulbs are a good bit more particular about the constancy of their power. We developed a process for the public to report problems and are working our way through these issues. Although the rollout may not have been as

smooth as we had hoped this was a responsible move. This has substantially reduced our electric consumption and in the long run will save our taxpayers considerable money.

District Geothermal:

Legislation was passed in July 2022 requiring all major utility companies in NY to submit district geothermal pilot projects to establish a rate case. National Grid just submitted their final proposal to the Public Service Commission, promoting the 1st Phase of a planned Downtown Troy District Geothermal Heating and Cooling Utility as their project. Among all the projects submitted by the 9 companies Statewide, the Troy/National Grid partnership is by far the furthest along and the only one that provides an opportunity for public control/ownership of assets – all the others hand both distribution and energy production over to the utility companies entirely.

Because Troy identified and acted on the opportunity before it was even a discussion at the State level, we are positioned as a National Leader in the transition away from a dependency on fossil fuels and towards innovative public/private solutions. The Geothermal energy, will be “produced” on City Property in partnership with the Troy Local Development Corporation, using nearly 200 wells below Riverfront Park. The wells will be in the area of the current Front Street parking, then converted to green space paid for by the Geothermal development. National Grid will then distribute that energy to off takers in the downtown business district.

Some noteworthy facts:

- Troy project is the only proposal to the Public Service Commission that provides public ownership and broader revenue opportunities for a municipality.
- Troy's planned 1st phase will be the first publicly owned/non-campus district geothermal network in the Country.
- Partnerships with local higher education/workforce training organizations will deliver career development opportunities for Trojans within a variety of skills and education levels.
- NYSERDA, National Grid, CHA, Siemens, Assemblyman McDonald have supported this project from the beginning and Troy's position at the forefront of a green economy is because of their help.
- A Planned Phase 2 design is also being supported by NYSERDA and will cover southern stretches of downtown including Russel Sage Colleges, future developments at the Taylor Apartments site and other locations.
- Construction could commence as early as summer or fall of this year.

This innovative initiative is the result of the vision and perseverance of our Director of Economic Development, Dylan Turek and our Planning Commissioner, Steve Strichman.

Public Safety

Few would argue with the statement that public safety is the most important service that government provides its citizen. The Troy Police and Fire Departments stand as equals among the best departments in the State. Their training, their dedication and their professionalism is recognized and well regarded. Evidence of this is the degree to which other municipalities rely on our departments. And I am speaking here beyond mutual aid. I am referring to specialized areas of expertise whether it be a mental health call, an active shooter or a hazardous waste spill, our Departments are called for their expertise. This level of cooperation is a long-standing tradition that benefits the entire Capital Region.

Police Department

It is not possible at this moment in time to speak about Public Safety without reflecting on what happened in Memphis on January 7th to Mr. Tyre Nichols. Like many of you I struggled to watch the video. I did so not out of a sense of morbid curiosity but to remind myself what we are still capable of.

The actions of those that administered the beating, as well as those that failed to intervene and those that failed to render aid are despicable and shock the collective conscience of humanity. They bring shame on their departments. They bring shame on fellow public safety professionals, they bring shame on their community, their parents, and families. They bring shame on humanity. No other living being acts with that kind of callous viciousness.

I still struggle to find the depth of my revulsion, while at the same time I am trying in vain to understand how it could have happened.

The famous Russian author Alexandra Solsynetsin said the line between good and evil goes through every human heart. Every one of us is capable of good and evil. I believe that. And I also believe that that line can move. It moves by our effort...as well as by our neglect.

Understanding that, we strive in our trainings and supervision to continually reinforce the values of moral character, compassion, and empathy. Those values are front and center...always.

We invest heavily in recruitment, vetting and training. In 2022, members of the Troy Police Department engaged in more than 6,200 hours of training in a myriad of disciplines. Our most important trainings are those focused on direct interactions with the public.

We train in Implicit Bias, Procedural Justice, we teach how to recognize and respond to those in emotional and mental distress. We teach and practice the art of de-escalation. We teach that time and space are our allies.

We also teach and practice Defensive Tactics so that if force becomes necessary, we do not use more than is necessary to bring a person into custody or quell a physical confrontation.

We pay attention to the health and well-being of our officers, and they pay attention to each other.

I am particularly proud of the work the Department has done in EDPRT (Emotionally Distressed Person Response Training). A couple of years ago I asked the Chief to make that training mandatory. I didn't

have to. He was already moving in that direction. We know of no other Departments with a similar requirement. Today 120 of our officers have completed this weeklong training. The results have been outstanding. Our officers regularly receive accolades from our partners in the mental health community: Rensselaer County Mental Health Department, Samaritan Hospital, Northern Rivers, Joseph's House, and Unity House. The skills our officers learn provide for better and safer outcomes both for our officers and those we serve.

Our focus in this area led Chief DeWolf this year to establish a detail that focuses on the intersection of mental health and criminal justice in our community. The two officers who volunteered for this detail network and share information with the community's mental health professionals. They answer calls where there is a known or suspected mental health issue. They visit people they know are struggling, they guide them to services. They treat them with the dignity and respect we would treat an individual with a physical injury. When they need transport, they do so in unmarked vehicles to reduce stigmatization. Mental illness is not a crime, and our department understands and respects that distinction.

Last year our police department received over 54, 000 calls. That's an increase of 7.3% over 2021. The advent of COVID reversed a downward trend we had been experiencing in crime across the country. And Troy is no different. Crime statistics show an increase in both property and violent crime and while it remains lower than in 2016 the trend reversal is concerning.

Perhaps what is most concerning is the dramatic increase we have seen in gun involved violence. Our Police Department has responded. While confirmed shots fired rose by 13% over last year, Gun Crime Arrests rose by 100% and Recovered Firearms rose 97%. That's 89 illegal guns removed from our streets in 2022. That translates into lives saved!

Across New York State we are seeing increasing numbers of illegal guns from states that have recently relaxed their control of handgun sales. We are grateful that NYS is also seeing this trend and responding. From the Governor's Interstate Task Force on Illegal Guns to the state sponsored Capital Region Crime Analysis Center we are getting assistance from New York State. The Crime Analysis Center has been an important partner in sharing information regionally regarding illegal gun trafficking. This is a critical part of our success in recovering these firearms.

We are also grateful to the Governor, who recently indicated that she has doubled funding for the Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) program in her upcoming budget. We have long availed ourselves of this funding and are grateful to see these resources increase at the critical time.

I am proud of and grateful for the leadership of Chief DeWolf, as well as the commitment of the women and men that make up the Troy Police Department.

Fire Department

Call volume to our Fire Department also increased in 2022. From 12,568 calls in 2021 to 13,713 calls last year: an increase of 11%.

What made this particularly challenging is the number of vacancies we have been carrying the department. We started the year with 13 vacancies filling six of those during the course of the year but losing five to retirements and transfers.

Departments across the country are having difficulty filling their ranks and the problem is particularly acute for those that offer emergency medical services. Recruiting individuals with the necessary paramedic credentials has become exceedingly difficult. To address this, we have modified our minimum qualifications for applicants. Instead of now requiring paramedic certification prior to hiring, we will provide for that training once a candidate is hired. This removes a significant barrier to entry for those who wish to join our department. We are heartened by the fact that more than 140 individuals have signed up to take the next NYS firefighter exam in Troy scheduled for later this month. That is a sizeable increase over past exams and leaves us optimistic that we will be able to fill these vacancies.

We have continued our investment in equipment for our department taking possession of a new ambulance this past August and the expected arrival of a new Aerial Tower later this year. Over the past seven years we have purchased 3 engines, 1 Aerial Tower and 3 ambulances. In addition, in 2023, in recognition of the lead time to acquire new apparatus, we will be ordering another engine and ambulance for a later date delivery.

Significant renovations were completed on Station 6 in 2022. Our oldest fire house was in need of a complete replacement of the apparatus bay floor. That necessitated the removal of the old floor and supporting superstructure. The foundation walls were supported with a new 6 inch concrete overlay, and a new steel support structure was built to support the new floor. While we were at it the plumbing and electrical in the basement was replaced as well. While the cost was significant the scope of work ensures the station's continued viability into the next century.

2022 also heralded the creation of a new tactical unit within the Fire Department assigned to the Police Department's Emergency Response Team. This unit trains with the ERT and is dispatched on every ERT deployment to be available for treatment and transport as the need arises. This adds an important element of safety both for the public and our police officers.

In addition to emergency calls, calls for service and fire prevention activities, the members of our department are each required to complete a minimum of 124 hours of training each year to remain proficient. In 2022 our members completed in aggregate 16,000 hours of training.

This department continues to make improvements in station conditions, apparatus condition and overall preparedness. I am grateful for the professionalism and leadership of Chief McMahon in his pursuit of high quality services to our residents and the many visitors to Troy. I am also grateful for the commitment and dedication of all our firefighter paramedics.

Final Thoughts

In my time as mayor, I have had the occasion to work closely with a good number of our employees. I have been impressed and I would like to share that with you and thank them.

We have struggled through some difficult years. We've endured staffing reductions. We have endured COVID. Yet the workforce continues to be there for us.

On hot humid days when a sewer line breaks there's always someone in the hole fixing it. On subzero days when a water line breaks there's always someone in the hole fixing it. When the snow falls and the rest of us are sleeping, they are out there keeping the roads open so we can get to work or school.

They pick up our trash and recycling – even on weekends and holidays.

When it snows, when a home is on fire, when water or sewer lines break, when there is a robbery or a car accident or when someone has a heart attack, there are always City employees there to help us. They are there for you. They are there for the City. We are fortunate to have them and I am proud to work with them. And I am grateful for their commitment to us.

While it is about 335 days too early to write a postmortem on this administration, I would like to point out that in every decision I have made these past seven years I have tried to look down the road, to understand the ramifications of that decision 5, 10, 25 years from now. I have also done my best to peak around the corner and anticipate what was coming toward us but not yet visible.

I have done that because I believe leaders lead for tomorrow as much as they lead for today. I want those who follow us to look back on our smart decisions with gratitude for the community we have left them. We gather here this evening in a beautiful building built for us 187 years ago. What are we leaving for those that follow us two centuries from now.

We have focused our time, energy, and resources in shoring up long neglected assets and changing long standing practices in view of changing climate and energy dynamics. Some have hit the mark, some have missed and some have just started a ball rolling. But all were done with an eye to building a better, stronger, and more resilient city.

I have been painfully honest with respect to our finances. I have not told you what you wanted to hear. I have told you what you need to hear. There have been plenty of opportunities to use gimmicks and one offs to reduce taxes and curry your favor. But those sorts of decisions led us to the yoke of the MAC debt for the past quarter of a century. Be wary of those that make promises that seem too good to be true.

We have an aggressive agenda for 2023 and much more yet to accomplish.

I would like to close with some themes I have spoken of before because they continue to have power in this moment.

When you reflect on our history you see that we were at the epicenter of much of this country's growth. Because of our location on the Hudson River and the abundance of streams that powered our mills and factories we attracted entrepreneurs and inventors.

We invented things. We manufactured things. Things that found their way to all corners of the globe – from horseshoes and parlor stoves that were shipped all over the country to spirit levels that found their way to the moon in the Apollo Program we have made an enormous imprint on this country. Our buildings and institutions tell a story of entrepreneurship...of vision. And it is precisely these characteristics that are reinventing Troy in the 21st century.

We have remarkable stories to tell today about people inventing and reinventing themselves and investing in their families and their businesses in downtown and across our historic neighborhoods. Dozens of partners – in the city, at the County, throughout the region and at the State took chances that jumpstarted real revitalization in recent years

The story of Troy 200 years ago and the story of Troy today are the same. It is a story about people creating community. It is not about elected officials. It is about you and the efforts you repeatedly make day after day to shape your community.

The credit belongs to all of you. It belongs to those who participate in our many neighborhood organizations and civic groups. It belongs to the investors and small business owners who have invested their dollars and sweat here in Troy. It belongs to the rich fabric of non-profits that serve our spiritual, intellectual, and physical needs. It belongs to the homeowners who show pride in their homes and their neighborhoods.

In short it belongs to all those who recognize that problems and opportunities are two sides of the same coin and who take it upon themselves to create solutions instead of waiting for someone else to do it.

Tonight, I would characterize the State of the City as stronger, more resilient, and more optimistic.

Stronger by way of the residents and businesses whose passion fuels our desire to improve and grow.

More resilient in our commitment to invest in our future.

And boldly optimistic that our present challenges pale in comparison to our possibilities.

Optimistic that we can create a future that measures favorably with the greatness of our past.

I remain boldly confident in our future.

I am proud and humbled to be your mayor. I hope that I have been able to make you proud to proclaim that Troy is your home.

We are Troy, New York and we are in this together.

Thank you for your kind attention.