

Dear Councilmembers,

As you know, the City Charter requires me to make an annual report on the State of the City to the Council on or before the 15th of February each year. In the past, I have made a public presentation in the Common Council Chambers, while I presented you with my report. This year however, I will be holding my public presentation at a later date and new location.

I will be sending out the date and location in short order. However, to comply with the Charter, please accept this as my State of the City report.

As you know, the most exciting news in the past three years is NO NEW TAXES, and NO NEW WATER OR SEWER FEES. What this means to our residents is they keep more of their hard earned money in their pocket and/or spend it as they see fit rather than being forced to pay more property taxes. And, equally exciting, all three of our budgets have come with a surplus. This proves we are living within our means, and using creative ways to save and/or create new opportunities to increase our revenues. The savings for our residents over the past three years is 1.6 million dollars.

I would say, together, we have indeed made a difference!

I have outlined for you a list of achievements as well as concerns for the coming year. As you will see, it has been a great three years and the future is bright for our community.

Economic & Community Development

1. Remsen Street Sidewalk Improvement Phase I – the first section of the sidewalk replacement has been completed. Contracts for Phase II have been executed with state agencies, and Callanan was selected as the contractor to complete the work. Work is slated to begin this spring and wrap up by winter of 2019.

2. Community Gardens – with the help of our department, the Albany County Landbank, and Capital Roots, the new community garden at 47 Cayuga Street opened in August of 2018 and can support 20 plots for families and individuals in the City.

3. Waterfront Park - the City received an \$80,000 grant in 2018 through the NYSDOS to create a design and construction documents for a new waterfront park located adjacent to a future development at 70 Delaware Avenue.

4. Park Playhouse - the Music Hall Arts Alliance, and the City formed a partnership to bring Park Playhouse to Cohoes for their year-round home and to host performances at the Music Hall. Park Playhouse, in collaboration with Peak Music and the Cohoes School District, launched a summer education program culminating in a music video of Cohoes Proud and a short performance guided by Park Playhouse.

5. Canal Square Park Improvements – the City, has purchased 84 Remsen Street, and it has been combined with the lot for Canal Square Park. Improvements, including site work for green infrastructure and a new pavilion, will begin this spring.

6. Visitor Center – we have been working with Idea Partners for the relocation and redesign of the Visitor Center.

7. Music Hall Renovations – A blade sign has been installed, lighting and sound are currently being updated, uplighting of the building will be installed this spring, and window replacements are in the pipeline.

8. Mosaic Village – the project has broken ground, construction is underway and is slated to be completed by October 2019.

9. Cohoes Hotel – improvements have been completed to the hotel, and the units are almost entirely rented. Phase II of the project has not yet begun, and plans are expected to be submitted in the Spring of 2019.

10. Remsen Place – the property has been closed on and the developer has broken ground. The project is slated to be completed by the end of 2019.

11. CDTA Blue Line – the City has been working with CDTA to assess new stops and complete work to implement the Bus Rapid Transit Line that will connect the City to neighboring cities of Troy and Albany.

12. NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities Grant – The City installed efficient lighting in 7 buildings resulting in annual projected savings of \$17,687. The City also purchased a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle and donated the vehicle to the Senior Center for its Meals on Wheels Program.

13. Restore NY Grant – The City has been working with Gladue Properties, LLC to renovate a building at 95 Remsen Street to host two commercial spaces on the first floor (one of which is currently a dance studio, the other is being renovated to host a small-scale restaurant) and five micro-apartments in the second floor.

14. New Businesses on Remsen Street:

Peak Music

Future of Talent

Donnie Magoo's – 1 year in business

Caskade Kitchen and Bar – 1 year in business

Downtown Cohoes Marketplace

Planning

1. The Planning Board received applications for two (2) subdivisions, six (6) site plans, and twelve (12) special use permits.

2. Notable projects that are under review or have been reviewed and approved include:

- a) 70 Delaware Avenue (in review) – Mixed-use site with a drive-thru facility, and two multi-family residential buildings with a combined 92 units. This project includes the waterfront park feature (as described above) which will grant public access to the waterfront.
- b) 150 Remsen – Reconstruction of a former pizza shop on a prominent corner into a nail salon
- c) 385 Saratoga Street – Construction of new affordable multi-family housing (40 Units) by The Community Builders as an anchor building to the larger Erie Point project which will see multiple buildings in neighborhoods around the City renovated and reconstructed into affordable housing condos and apartments with adjacent parking and green spaces.
- d) JUNCTA Subdivision – The Juncta parcel, which was owned by the Cohoes IDA was subdivided into four distinct parcels with frontage partially on Saratoga Street, but also on the new Cohoes Boulevard. A site plan for one parcel (385 Saratoga) was already approved, and a concept site plan for another lot has been submitted. This subdivision will allow for a key entryway into the City to be developed, as was outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.
- e) 113 Remsen – Renovation of a mixed-use building to maintain the commercial space in the first floor and convert the residential space in the second and third floors into four apartments.

f) 218 Columbia – Reconstruction of the former Gerard’s Auto shop (now vacant) into a neighborhood-scale gasoline station.

3. The Zoning Board of Appeals received applications for 24 area variances and 4 use variances. The majority of area variances were for placement of accessory structures in residential districts.

4. The Historic Preservation and Architectural Review Board received 10 certificate of appropriateness applications.

5. The City adopted a new zoning code which incorporates a form-based code district, making the City one of the few communities in the Capital Region to have a forward-thinking zoning code that promotes urban design appropriate infill development and new urbanist ideals. This zoning code is in alignment with the City’s recently adopted Comprehensive Plan which focuses on smart growth principles.

6 .The City has been receiving applications for parcels surrounding 787, suggesting that the vision of Cohoes Boulevard is attracting new development even before the full roadway redesign is implemented

7. The City has been working with NYSDOT and NYSOPRHP to ensure that the on-road connection for the Empire State Trail that goes through the City of Cohoes from Green Island is safe for pedestrians and cyclists.

8. The City has been working with Capital Roots to place 15 bike racks around the City as well as a bike fix it station.

9. The City collaborated with Parks and Trails New York to host an event and create a short plan demonstrating the benefits of bike and boat tourism in the Cohoes-Waterford area.

10. A historic kiosk on the Mohawk Towpath Byway was installed adjacent to the parking lot for Falls View Park with the assistance of the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway Coalition, Inc. to point out significant landmarks within the City to visitors and residents.

Fire Department

1. During 2018 members of the department attended training in various subjects around the capital district and participated in county-wide drills. The department also utilizes Target Solutions to accomplish the required state and health department training requirements. Members attended various courses sponsored by the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs in multiple locations around the state.

2. Public Education and Fire Safety programs were conducted in all City elementary schools. The department hosted numerous daycare providers and preschools in the stations during fire prevention week and throughout the year. The department renewed its commitment with National Fire Safety Council to continue to provide a structured fire prevention program in 2019.

3. In the coming year, the department will review and revise SOPs to further standardize the way we do business. During the year 2018, we recertified 4 firefighters as Emergency Medical Technicians. BLS CPAP devices for respiratory distress are in use on all apparatus as well as the Check & Inject Epi program. Development of EMS response guides for incidents involving a large number of patients - specifically those seniors housed in our larger facilities, and a rehab plan for the members of the department for not only cold weather but also the extreme heat of summer, are ongoing.

4. During 2018 the Mayor authorized the department to enter into a lease agreement with Sutphen Fire Apparatus, and we took delivery of a new 70ft tower in October, we could then place Ladder 771 in reserve.

5. Dr. Bruce Uskhow continues to monitor our EMS program and conducts monthly quality assurance meetings. He has responded to numerous calls to observe our members in action.

6. The department had 3 successful cardiac arrest reversals where the patients were discharged from the hospital and able to go home!

7. Narcan continued to be used numerous times to reverse overdose in heroin users - an increasing issue.

8. EMS charts went online in January of 2012 and is being continually updated in conjunction with our communication center.

9. During the year members of the department conduct familiarization inspections of the businesses in the city. I believe the department should take a more aggressive role in code enforcement; however, this would require additional training and expense. I think the extra cost would pay for itself in more inspections being completed in a timely fashion.

10. The department provides a variety of service to the community as residents call the fire department when they cannot gain assistance from other sources.

11. In July the department battled a large fire at Kelman's requiring our normal mutual aid as well as a unit from the Albany International Airport for a foam truck.

12. In May of 2018, Chief Fahd became the first vice president of the Eastern Division of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, and will become President in May of 2019.

13. In 2018 the department responded to 3,756 alarms of various natures, I have attached a break down to this report.

14. In 2017 the department was awarded an Assistance to Firefighter grant allowing us to purchase a new air compressor, turnout gear dryers and 1 washer/extractor. This grant was completed in early 2018 with all equipment being installed in the Island and Central stations.

15. In 2019 the department hopes to be able to continue to replace some of our aging apparatus and continue to offer training both in and outside of the department. We will continue to renew our outdated SCBA bottles by purchasing ten more this year

16. In 2018 at the request of Mayor Morse, Chief Fahd assumed the supervision of the Building & Codes Department, the Chief is currently enrolled in the New York State Department of State code course to become a certified code enforcement official. There are two classes left to accomplish this.

Police Department

Crime is at a historical low in Cohoes and has continued to decrease each year starting in 2016 with the addition of our Safe Streets initiative. This included adding walking beats, zone car coverage changes, Remsen Street golf car patrols, and other policing strategies.

1. Major Crime (18+ yo) are down by 19.4% for 2018 (rape, robbery, aggravated assaults)

2. Major Crime (18- yo) are down 35% for 2019

3. Total Arrest are down 8.5% from 2018

4. We added new proactive patrolling policies, such as property checks at our senior centers and schools ensuring that our seniors, students, and teachers feel the safe and the community know their loved ones are safe.

5. Traffic tickets have seen a decline on 787, which suggest people are hearing the message. We still have a ways to go, but a decline is a great start.

6. As part of our efforts to keep our streets clean of junk cars, we had our department implement a no-tolerance policy in 2017 red tagging all vehicles that have been abandoned. Once red tagged, they have 72 hours to move, or they are towed. In 2018 we seen a 70% decrease over the last 5 years. I would say, its working.

7. The Police Department has seen four new officers hired in 2018.

8. The Department received a total of \$36,867 towards the purchase of new Bullet Proof vests, DWI enforcement, and Pedestrian Safety.

DETECTIVE BUREAU YEARLY REPORT

1. Adult criminal cases investigated by the detective bureau decreased by 2.7% in 2018.
2. Felony charges decreased by 41.6% in 2018.
3. Misdemeanor charges decreased 36.8% in 2018.
4. Violation charges increased 50% in 2018.
5. Drug investigations decreased 8.5% in 2018.
6. Drug-related arrests increased 16.7% in 2018.
7. Drug tips received decreased by 17% in 2018.
8. The registered sex offender population grew by 20.6% in 2018.
9. Arrests for sex offender violations were up 33% in 2018.
10. Juvenile criminal investigations decreased by 20.5% in 2018.
11. Juvenile arrests decreased by 20% in 2018.
12. Family Court Summons served decreased by 28.9% in 2018.
13. Family Court warrants served increased by 25% in 2018.
14. Fire investigations increased by 50% in 2018.
15. The number of stolen bicycles increased by 12.5% in 2018.
16. The number of recovered stolen bicycles increased by 12.5% in 2018.
17. The number of stolen vehicles decreased by 22.2% in 2018.
18. The number of recovered stolen vehicles increased by 11.8% in 2018.
19. The number of pistol permits processed in decreased 6.1% in 2018.
20. The number of Underage drinking details and arrests remained consistent in 2018.

21. The amount of property recovered remained consistent in 2018.

Cohoes Public Library:

1. The Library circulated over 33,100 books.
2. We had thousands of people walk through our doors. This number a product of our electronic counter installed last June and doubling the total from the last six months.
3. The Library issued over 400 new cards to new patrons.
4. The Library had 63 children register for our Summer Read Program. We provided 7 free entertaining and educational programs to the kids and their parents with well over 100 kids attending.
5. The Library received a construction grant to recondition some of its windows.
6. The Library continues to play a critical role in the community, supporting literacy, and a love of books and reading, offering a space for needed programming, helping with reading advisory, reference and technology questions, assisting with local history and genealogy research, and being one of the last few places where you may stay for a while and not be expected to purchase anything.

Recreation:

1. The City recreation department continues to provide a plethora of programs for kids through our education through recreation programs and robust partnership with Albany County.
 - a) SPRING MENTORS PROGRAM CAREERS PROGRAM
 - b) ADULT GOLF CLINIC
 - c) PARK X-COUNTRY TRAIL
 - d) KARATE PROGRAM
 - e) LAX PROGRAM
 - f) School SWIM DAY
 - g) LIFEGUARD TRAINING PROGRAM AT LANSING POOL

- h) MENTORS IN MOTION RACE DAY EVENT
- i) ROCK THE BLOCK
- j) ADULT TENNIS CLINIC
- k) EASTER EGG HUNT
- l) BEAUTIFICATION DAY
- m) VOLENTEERS DAY ** TREE PLANTING DAY** GLOBAL EARTH DAY
- n) COHOES ON THE MOVE (BIKE RODEO)
- o) ADULT/KIDS SOCCER CLINIC EDUCATION THROUGH RECREATION
- p) DRONE SCHOOL**
- q) CAR SHOW
- r) EDUCATION THROUGH RECREATION
- s) FLAG FOOTBALL
- t) SPORTS ACADEMY, POOL OPEN, PARKS OPEN
- u) TRACK AND FIELD CLINIC
- v) NATIONAL NIGHT OUT
- w) SOCCER CLINIC
- x) DJ AT THE POOL DAYS
- y) CROSS WALK-BIKE SAFETY PROGRAM
- z) CHRISTMAS IN JULY
- aa) FISHING CONTEST AT VSI PARK/ROD AND GUN CLUB
- bb) SWIM LESSONS
- cc) FALL FESTIVAL
- dd) COHOES PROUD BASKETBALL CLINIC
- ee) MENTORS IN MOTION RACE PROGRAM
- ff) HOWL-O-WEE N EVENT
- gg) HALLOWEEN PARADE
- hh) FLAG FOOTBALL
- ii) TURKEY TROT
- jj) TREE LIGHTING

As you can see, the City of Cohoes is alive and well, and we expect to see more exciting opportunities present themselves in 2019.

However, like all Cities, we have a long way to go. We have old infrastructure that has plagued us year after year, aging fire stations, city hall, water plant, library, and other city owned buildings that need our attention. We are currently developing a plan to address these problems.

We have also, seen an increase in operational cost in both the Fire Department and Police Department and we will be working with the unions to address our concerns in a collective manner.

I am confident that 2019 will be our best year yet.

Mayor Shawn Morse