

**MAYOR LINDA WITTE'S
STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS
January 3, 2012**

Welcome to Pastor Dan McDowell, our three new aldermen and our four returning aldermen of the Olean Common Council, our distinguished department heads and, most of all, welcome to you in the audience here in the Council Chambers and those of you who are watching at home.

I want to report that things are going well as we end 2011 and I want to continue on that path as we enter 2012. I bring you a positive message from 2011 of accomplishments in what we set out to do a year ago. And I bring bright reports of some growing benefits of the fiscally sound decisions we made this

year and last year. These will continue to carry us on the upswing into 2012.

We are working together and we have drawn on some strong volunteer efforts to move the city forward. We must not forget for a minute that we are here to serve the people and the people of the community deserve the best efforts we can put forward as we continue to work together.

It is my goal in the coming year to hold the line on taxes and stay under the state's two percent property tax cap, while we continue to clean up our neighborhoods and do all we can to make our city attractive to new and expanding businesses.

We are experiencing momentum now. It's a quiet momentum that was noticed by a Business First reporter in November. G. Scott Thomas announced we were the exception and during 2009 we increased

private sector businesses here by 3.8 percent. Ithaca and Elmira also had much smaller increases and all the other metropolitan areas in New York saw declines.

Adding to that momentum is the priority Olean is receiving as one of the beneficiaries of the \$100.3 million Best Plan Award that is going to the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council. Our \$2.6 million share of that funding can be combined with other funds. \$1 million of it is for the East Olean Sewer Reconstruction Project, and additional funds will help with the Manny Hanny Building and the North Union/West State redevelopment. Our airport will receive a hangar upgrade using another \$630,000 of that award. We accepted Governor Cuomo's challenge to join with other players in the WNY Region to chart a fresh course for sustainable economic growth in New York State.

We are on the upswing! And now we are looking forward to a baseball revival at Bradner Stadium. Many were surprised this summer to see a large open view through a clean, chain-link fence, where the green steel wall of Bradner Stadium stood for many years. I believe that this has brought more compliments and notice than any single project we have taken on in many years. The Olean Local Development Corporation has focused on baseball and raising funds to leverage additional money for future renovations. This will help preserve, expand and polish this jewel of a stadium that is such an important cultural and recreational community asset. Now you can look forward in 2013 to the sight of the franchise state Collegiate Baseball League team, the Olean Oilers, at bat on home turf. More on that to come.

I want to share with you these other high spots we have seen in 2011 that are propelling us toward a successful 2012:

* We've set up ACH (Automated Clearing House) bank draft water bill payments and about 300 people have used it. We expect January to see finalization of an online bill paying system for water bills and parking tickets. We've removed parking meters on South Street, Whitney Avenue, West State Street and South Union. And there will be a new right hand turn lane from South Union to East State Street approved by our state DOT and that will be put in place in the spring.

* The 1.35 percent property tax increase adopted for the 2011-2012 fiscal year is the lowest in a decade. Also, our independent auditor reports that we are in very good fiscal shape in all three major funds. We have improved many of our streets, with the

potholes addressed going into winter. Our Strategic Planning Committee made good progress in developing and adopting a five-year Capital Plan.

*** We are continuing to work on 2012 contracts for city unions (CSEA, Fire, Police, Command and Patrol)**

*** A bonding measure taken in 2011 will save the city \$800,000 over 30 years.**

*** The City is part of the County's move for a healthier Cattaraugus County.**

*** We have good things to report on the subject of Economic Development: The Urban Renewal Agency has selected Kinley Corporation/Ross Wilson & Associates as the preferred re-developer of three distressed properties in the city's historically significant downtown area. We have a new Urban Renewal Plan and a \$1 million award from the**

Empire State Development Corporation to begin addressing the challenges of these blighted properties. This will help secure the economic stability of our business area, creating a physical framework and a more dynamic downtown environment.

***The East Olean Reconstruction will bring new curbs and gutters, sanitary and storm sewer lines from Front to King Streets. This will make travel safer and improve access to jobs at some of our leading industries in this eastern gateway corridor to our city.**

***We expect to have some good news soon about the continued remediation and redevelopment of three parcels in the Brownfields Redevelopment area owned by ExxonMobil. We are currently waiting for the developer's interim agreement to make its way through the ExxonMobile corporate approval process. This agreement will signal the go-ahead for**

additional remedial investigation and the preparation of the remedial action work plan. After DEC approval of the work plan, remediation can begin.

*** The Olean Area Transit System (OATS) in November expanded services to Salamanca in a new partnership with the Seneca Nation of Indians, the Seneca Gaming and Entertainment and the City of Salamanca. This adds to OATS recent route expansion to Portville, while passengers in the city can now enjoy our new bus shelters that came with federal stimulus funding. They look so good, now we'll have shelter waiting for the bus!**

*** A new Kohls store is opening in the Olean Centre Mall March 2012.**

*** On East State Street our liability was reduced with a narrowed, single lane of traffic, while funding is on its way to reconstruct the street.**

*** Genesee Street's undersized culvert was replaced with a new concrete box culvert and storm sewer lines replaced with the help of the Cattaraugus County crew. Potholes were filled throughout the city with 690 tons of blacktop! And nearly nine lane-miles of city streets were resurfaced using CHIPS, contingency funds and monies budgeted in the Highway Department. The Safe Routes To School project was completed as a joint effort between the city and the School District. We also completed a total reconstruction of Brookview Ave.**

*** In our Police Department we hired one police officer, filling a vacancy; improved the Police Training Room; and collaborated with Cattaraugus County's EMS and the city's Fire Department on**

emergency disaster Plans. In addition the Department answered 15,395 service calls, creating 6,553 new cases resulting in 588 Penal Law arrests. One of the most disturbing numbers was 89 DWI's.

*In our Fire Department in an effort to reduce overtime we filled two firefighter slots with two local young men who will continue to live in their community. In addition, the firefighters responded to 1,541 service calls and 2,800 ambulance calls in 2011, for an average response time of just over 2 minutes.

*Our tax assessments have been maintained at 100% market value for a third year in a row since the revaluation. Thanks to new construction and other increases our taxable value is up by \$11.8 million, also due to a shift of one parcel out of the PILOT program to fully taxable status. The city's taxable portion of the roll is roughly 66 percent of the total

assessed value, up from 64 percent the prior year. We settled several tax cases, we are seeing fewer grievances, small claims and tax certioraris filed each year, going back to the pre-revaluation levels.

* Olean continues to be a great place for our youth. The 2011/2012 revenue and attendance at the rec center is on track to be our most productive season ever. We have an all-time record attendance in 2011 for ice skating and swimming and revenue is continuing its increase. Hockey drew record participation as did public ice skating and learn-to-skate program. We welcomed the Women's Roller Derby League, the Greater Olean Home & Garden Show, annual Easter Egg Hunt and Girls High School Summer Basketball League, to say nothing of the 300 kids who registered for the 2011 Summer Recreation Program. 500 children and adults attended the Annual Kids Day/Charity Carnival, raising almost \$1,500 for a youth memorial scholarship and charity

contributions. Thursday evening concerts in Lincoln Park featured 10 musical groups to entertain more than 1,000 residents and 35 teams attended the 36th annual City Cup Softball Tournament.

It's been a pleasure working with our nonprofits, our faith groups, and our volunteers and I will continue the progress that we have made solving different issues within our community.

I'm looking forward to a productive year. I agree with the new Erie County Executive Poloncarz.

Government should not be run like a business, we're not here to make a profit, we're here to provide services and set policy. Let's all work together to get things done that are long overdue and to get things accomplished in a positive way. One of the new things I'll be doing this year is a bi-weekly update – a newsletter on our city website –

www.cityofolean.org and click on the Mayor's press

page. Soon after January 15 this is where you will find the newsletter which we hope will keep our community members up to date on what's going on in the city and what we're trying to accomplish. Please feel free to contact myself or any council member or department head with your comments or concerns.

In closing, thank you for coming, or tuning in, have a great year, and God Bless our great city!