

**Journal of Proceedings**

OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OLEAN, N.Y.

January 3, 2022

**COMMON COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
COUNTY OF CATTARAUGUS  
STATE OF NEW YORK**

*The Annual Meeting of the Olean Common Council of the City of Olean was held on Tuesday, January 3, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.*

PRESENT: *Alderman Witte, Alderman Elect Panus, Alderman Gonzalez, Alderman Elect McCall, Alderman Crawford, Alderman Elect Robinson, and Alderman Elect Anastasia*

ABESENT: *None*

OFFICIALS: *William Aiello, Mayor; Frank Caputo, City Clerk; John Hart, City Attorney; Lens Martial, City Auditor; Keri Kerper, Community Development Program Coordinator; Bob Ring, Director of Public Works; Gregg Piechota, City Auditor; Kris Shewairy, Youth and Recreation Coordinator; Tim Richardson, Fire Chief; Ward Near, Human Resource Specialist; Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary, and Michiko McElfresh, Mayor's Secretary.*

OTHERS: *Hon. Judge Nicholas DiCerbo, Jr.*

*The meeting was called to order by Mayor Aiello. The meeting was opened with prayer by Pastor Tyrone Hall of the Lighthouse Church of God of Prophecy, followed by the pledge to the flag led by Boy Scout Troop 621.*

**OATH OF OFFICE – MAYOR**

*Judge DiCerbo proceeded with the Oath of Office to the reelected Mayor William Aiello.*

**OATH OF OFFICE – ALDERMEN**

*Judge DiCerbo proceeded with the Oath of Office to the new and reelected Aldermen, Jason Panus, Sonya McCall, Vernon Robinson, Jr., and David Anastasia*

**ELECTION OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT**

*Mayor Aiello asked for a nomination for Council President.*

*Alderman Crawford was nominated by Alderman Anastasia, seconded by Alderman Robinson. Absent any additional nominations, roll call vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Alderman Crawford elected as Council President for 2022.*

**STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

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**OLEAN, NY**

**JANUARY 3, 2022**

**WILLIAM J. AIELLO, MAYOR**

*It is my pleasure to welcome Pastor Tyrone Hall, Pastor of the Church Without Walls, the Honorable Nicholas DiCerbo, Jr., Boy Scout Troop 621, my wife Patty, my family and friends, members of the media, members of the Common Council, City of Olean Department Heads and City Employees. Most of all, welcome to you in the audience both here in the Council Chambers and those of you watching at home.*

*We have a few honored guests here tonight that I would like to introduce:*

*Frank Higgins County Legislator District 8*

*Earl McElfresh former Alderman City of Olean*

*Steve Teachman former Alderman and County Legislator*

*Jon Baker former County Legislator*

*Ron DaPolito former Alderman*

*Kathy Young former Senator*

*Thank you for joining us.*

*I am looking forward to my third term as Mayor of this great city. It is an honor and privilege to have the confidence of our voters to carry-on an agenda that includes fiscal responsibility, quality of life and neighborhood safety. And it will be my pleasure to work with the Common Council and our City employees to achieve these goals. I pledge that we will work together as a team to enhance our community, make it safer and keep the tax rate at a minimum.*

*I must add that working with members of the Common Council over the past 8 years has been an honor. We have worked together to successfully meet challenges that we face.*

*The City is lucky to have a dedicated work force. The Department Heads,----- please let me introduce them: City Clerk Frank Caputo, City Attorney John Hart, Community Development Program Coordinator Keri Kerper, City Auditor Lens Martial, Assessor Gregg Piechota, Police Chief Ron Richardson, Fire Chief Tim Richardson, DPW Director Bob Ring and Youth and Recreation Program Coordinator Kris Shewairy and Ward Near who recently joined us. They are committed to our community and have all done an excellent job working with their staffs to make Olean a better place for all of us to live.*

*Let's take a look at some of the enhancements that have been made during my tenure as Mayor:*

*Take a drive through Olean starting at North Union Street and you will see that it has upgraded infrastructure including new water and sewer lines, new electrical lines, new gas lines, a new traffic pattern and walk-ability. You will also see high resolution reflective paint in various places. That paint advances the Complete Street implementation and was paid for through a grant from Health Research, Inc.*

*Move on to Main Street from Union to Front Street and the Front Street Extension to First Avenue also known as Walkable Olean Phase II. The project brought upgrades to electric lines and lighting as well as a new traffic pattern and walkability.*

*On Washington Street, the water line replacement project updated aging infrastructure and road surface, in addition---the new traffic pattern allows an extension of the bicycle trail.*

*On York Street and Prospect Avenue the City upgraded infrastructure and road surfaces.*

*Wayne Street has an upgraded road surface.*

*In the Brownfields off Wayne Street a beautiful Hampton Inn and Suites replaced the industrial wasteland that had decayed for over a generation.*

*On the Brownfields on Homer Street solar farms are busy generating electricity and reducing energy costs for the City.*

*If you drive around Olean, you will notice that the Streets are continuously upgraded. Each year the City takes on numerous paving projects, in the past two years the City has resurfaced a total of 28 streets. And during 2021, 7 brick streets were repaired.*

*Continue your drive through the city to visit our Parks:*

*Lincoln Park has become the town center as envisioned by our founders. The open air pavilion is the home for the farmers and craft markets and just this year, in light of the pandemic, Greater Olean used it for the Home Show and for two very successful Holiday markets. Olean High School also used it for their Homecoming Dance. And through the generosity of Jeff Belt and Solepoxy, Park Place at Lincoln Square came to life.*

*King Street Park was recently equipped with enhanced playground equipment and now has a walking trail through the park.*

*And when you drive through Forness Park you will see two dugouts on field two, and a new roof on the pavilion, in which the Fidurko Brothers donated the labor. Fields 2, 5 and 7 were resurfaced and new fencing was added with support from Cattaraugus County. There is also a young grove of trees by the pond. The grove is the result of a successful grant application to the New York State Urban Forestry Council. The new trees were planted in the wind and rain on Arbor Day, April 30, 2021.*

*Finally head to the lot at East State and Front Street, park your car, and get on your bike if you have one or rent a Bird Scooter.*

*Cross the street to Bradner Stadium to see the numerous improvements that have been accomplished over the past two decades—including new fencing, lighting and scoreboards, as well as a field house and a well-groomed field.*

*Head back to War Vets Park, notice the new lights, walkway and the memorial to Louie Zamborini. And then visit the William O Smith Recreation Center and note the new facilities, especially the ice rink.*

*Now take a spin.*

*Travel across the East State Street Bridge and pick up the Allegheny Valley River Trail, just west and left of the bridge. After a scenic ride along the creek, it'll take you through the JCC Campus and....*

*Ultimately to Trailhead Parklet on Whitney Avenue, a new playground in the heart of the business district, with equipment that even adults would like. Play a game of ping pong and continue your excursion heading west on the trail. It's still a work in progress until you get to Constitution Avenue—but you can get there. While on the Allegheny River Valley Trail notice the safe cross walk with the newly installed flashing beacon on Constitution Avenue.*

*The trail will eventually take you to Gargoyle Park. Our beautiful park on the river that until recently saw very little use. But this past summer it became the home of an 18-hole disc golf course. An immediate success and getting plenty of use.*

*If you continue east on the trail, before you turn on the final leg, you'll see the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant in the distance along the river. It is not a park—but its \$23 million dollar upgrade keeps the water in the Allegheny River clear and fresh—making our river another playground—this one for water sports such as canoeing and kayaking. In fact, a boat launch is scheduled to be installed in South Olean in 2022.*

*Stay on the trail and head North. Before you get to West State Street, stop at the bike repair station, fill up your water bottle and if you need too, add some air to your tires. An Olean Business, Up Cycle, helped to fund this amenity installed by our DPW.*

*Continue on the trail to Washington Street and take the Bike Boulevard to Oak Hill Park. You can see the new entrance to the Park on Laurens Street, a gift to the City from Marianne and Erick Laine. Oak Hill Park will have an upgrade in the near future as part of the \$10 Million Downtown Revitalization Initiative.*

*Speaking of the DRI, following your tour of the City, you can visit some other attractions that benefited from the initiative:*

*The Old Library Restaurant is open. It is beautifully appointed and serving delectable meals.*

*You can't visit yet, but the fencing surrounding the former Manufacturers Hanover Bank building means that something great is happening inside. And we are so thankful that after standing vacant for over 25 years the building and the former Siegel Shoes is being redeveloped into commercial space and apartments by Savarino Companies. Community Development and the Urban Renewal Agency worked long and hard to preserve, protect and ultimately transfer the parcels for development. And they should be commended for their resolve.*

*The City also received \$5.4 million of the DRI for public works projects—they will commence in the summer of 2022. Projects include improving the streetscapes of North*

*Union and State Street through beautification, appropriate lighting, seasonal banners, sidewalk replacement and seating. The projects will include redesigning and improving West and East State Street and the South Union Street Gateway.*

*In addition we have other exciting projects on the table and in discussion that will enhance both Franchot and Marcus Parks in the near future.*

*If you want to see more of Olean, hop on an OATS Bus. We are very proud of our transit system. During the pandemic the service continued with uninterrupted transportation services and suspended fare collection to the community. During 2021 OATS provided transportation services to approximately 48,000 passengers and it appears to be returning to pre-pandemic levels.*

*The upgrades to our community benefit all of us in the City and the region for that matter. But the good news for our residents is how the revitalization has been financed. Over the last 8 years, the City has been awarded grants amounting to well over \$25 million, most of which helped to fund Olean's renaissance. Compare that to Olean's tax rate which only increased a mere 96 cents per \$1,000 valuation during that same 8 year period of time*

*We must thank the City's department heads for working diligently to keep the City operating, within the tax cap, and without reducing services. .*

*We have had some significant personnel changes over the past year. In February, Ron Richardson was appointed Police Chief upon the retirement of Jeff Rowley.*

*In December City Auditor Fred Saradin retired and former City Clerk Lens Martial was appointed to the City Auditor position. Simultaneously, Frank Caputo was appointed as City Clerk.*

*And the City was fortunate enough to hire Ward Near to fill a newly created Human Resources Specialist position. He comes to us with plenty of experience and his expertise has helped us solve the issues that are inherent with a large workforce.*

*The City Auditor reports that during 2021 City taxes rose 1 percent. In addition the City received a clean report from the independent auditors and has maintained a healthy fund balance, keeping us well above the balances suggested by the New York State controller. Our sales tax revenue is at the highest that is has been in some time, in fact 15.75% higher than last year through December.*

*Our health care insurance will increase by 2.79%, a very favorable rate comparatively and is due to the good experience and utilization use of our employees.*

*Finally the City recently refinanced a 2012 public improvement serial bond, this transaction will save the City \$423,000.*

*The City Assessor's Office reports that we had 185 "arms length" residential sales in 2021, this is by far the most sales since 2007. Average home sale price remained the same as last year's record average of \$87,500.*

*The City is often criticized because there is a perception that our development efforts concentrate on the business district. But that's not the case.*

*In 2017, through the grant writing expertise of Keri Kerper in Community Development, the city received \$100,000 from the Zombie and Vacant Properties Remediation and Prevention Initiative through LISC (the Local Initiative Support Corporation). Since that time the City has received an additional \$150,000 from LISC to support the efforts against blight.*

*The City received the additional funds because Community Development, the Fire Department, Code Enforcement, the Department of Public Works and the IT department worked together as a team. Together they isolated the root causes of blight and coordinated an effective and balanced plan to eliminate it.*

*A partial list of items completed in the fight against blight:*

*Well over 5,000 windshield (drive-by) inspections*

*101 on-site visits*

*884 property inspections which identified, assessed and catalogued the condition of properties for code compliance*

*Identification of 145 vacant/zombie properties.*

*Acquisition of 5 of the vacant/zombie properties. Four properties were scheduled to be demolished and 1 is scheduled to be sold*

*Work orders were performed on 13 properties to secure and eliminate immediate danger.*

*A Revolving Revival Fund was established to make repairs mandated by the Zombie laws and all funds have been replenished.*

*The city partnered with the Cattaraugus County Land Bank to build a system for future acquisition, holding or demolition of vacant properties.*

*Our team effort has been effective in elimination of blight and they have developed best practices to prevent vacant/zombie housing as a preemptive action in this fight.*

*One of the biggest assets in our neighborhoods is our urban forest and we are pleased that Community Development secured funding from NYS DEC Urban and Community Forest to complete a tree inventory and a community forest management plan. The completed inventory catalogued 5,357 sites and the plan will be adopted by the Common Council in the near future.*

*DPW*

*Our neighborhoods also benefit from the resourcefulness of the Department of Public Works. All of their completed projects in 2021 were under budget. A noteworthy accomplishment for this year in particular.*

*The City received the Institute of Transportation Engineers (Western NY Chapter) Transportation Project of the Year Award for Walkable Olean II, an excellent achievement and honor.*

*Underneath Washington Street is 4,500 feet of new 8 inch waterline and the street was resurfaced as well. In fact, city-wide, 4.7 centerline miles of mill and pave resurfacing was completed, utilizing \$1.6 million in CHIPS funding and included 95 percent of in house labor and management.*

*The department improved 5 crosswalks and installed two Rectangular Flashing Beacon lights. They restriped 4 streets and added the green and shared-use markings.*

*At the water filtration plant the electricians are working on the well house fluoridation improvement project and have installed the chemical feed and process instrumentation station which will be completed and on-line by the end of the fiscal year.*

*The Stardust-Arland pump station will be completed and online by the end of the fiscal year as well. All of the electric work was self-performed.*

*And work on the 4<sup>th</sup> street pump station has been completed.*

*The City, unfortunately had a record 23 water main breaks that were repaired by the in-house crew. The water main under the East State Street Bridge was repaired by a company from Michigan with assistance from our crew. It is expected to last 50 years.*

*The City's staff continually assesses and improves our sanitary, storm and water infrastructure to provide safe and reliable service without interruption and they are currently is completing a hydraulic water map of the City infrastructure to help efforts in replacement, expansion and troubleshooting.*

*According to a recent inspection, the Wastewater treatment plant is in compliance with all discharge parameters and its ability to handle a variety of headworks loading.*

*In addition several improvements to storm water infrastructure were performed by the City's sewer maintenance crew including drainage of infrastructure and removal of root intrusion.*

*In 2021, the Airport benefited from a fully funded FAA project that included snow removal equipment and building pavement replacement. And in 2022 the runway will be replaced – the \$2million project is fully funded.*

## *Police Department*

*Olean's Police Department is also in our neighborhoods. For the fourth year in a row, the Department partnered with CARES for the Healthy Cattaraugus County Program. This program sends officers out all over the City to interact with kids. Not only do they spend time playing and joking around with each other, but the officers use the opportunity to talk to kids and their families about the dangers of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. This program has helped to provide much needed information to families on what to watch for and preventative measures, and it has created a better relationship with the community in a normal, every-day setting. Not only does the community benefit from the interaction, but the officers do, as well. In total, the officers spent 203 hours over a four month span educating families and spending time with local children.*

*The School Resource Officer McGraw, has spent over 200 hours this year to not only ensure the safety of school-aged children at events, but to continue enhancing the police department's relationship with the community starting at a young age.*

*Officers in the department participated in the drive through Easter and Halloween events; and held numerous Car Seat Safety Check events. In addition Captain Marsfelder coordinated and presented training in Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events to a variety of different organizations. The training gives vital information and options in the event of the unfortunate occurrence of an active shooter or other imminently dangerous situation.*

*During the year the police department met with numerous challenges with personnel. In fact in the first 2 months, 11 or one-third of the staff were quarantined. Luckily there have only been three quarantined since then and the department is ending the year on a healthy note. During the year Patrolmen Cross, Pettit and Corcoran retired and two new officers were hired.*

*In 2021, the department finalized the federal grant that provided funding for the Body Worn Cameras, which have been in use since June of 2020 and obtained a grant to fund new tactical vests for the department. The fleet committee authorized the replacement of four vehicles during the year.*

*The Olean Police Department received 15,000 calls for service and successfully made 542 arrests. Police officers stepped up in a huge way, this year, spending countless hours aiding in, and coordinating, the search for a missing vulnerable young adult. Both Patrol and Investigations played a huge part in ensuring the safe return of the individual to his family; many taking the initiative of their own time to help in the search on their own accord.*

*The Investigations team, led by Captain Blovsky, also worked tirelessly for months in an effort to solve a homicide case that shocked the City in March of this year. Coordinating multiple law enforcement agencies, a warrant for arrest was issued in October after being presented to a Grand Jury, and the suspect was arrested on November 17th in Jamestown, NY.*

## *Fire Department*

*Over the past two years the Olean Fire Department has been on the front line in the fight against COVID. The Department has had to be flexible and resourceful to meet the challenges they have faced throughout the pandemic. One third of the staff was out sick with the virus in beginning of the year and the department had to get a staffing status waiver to allow quarantined staff members to work with a negative test. They were one of the first departments in NYS to successfully apply for this waiver and approval was based on the department's Infection Control and Mitigation Plans. By February the department was fully staffed.*

*Covid-19 made a comeback this fall and once again the department's professionalism was evident as members reacted quickly to the crisis and worked with Cattaraugus County Health Department and our medical community. The firefighters have contended with delays at hospitals and have been diverted to out of area hospitals. They have sanitized vehicles and buildings for both the City and the County to minimize the risk of cross-contamination.*

*They have set up tents, provided EMS standbys for vaccine clinics, they have provided supply procurement and storage, and have assisted the hospital and other health care*

agencies with planning and support missions. As Fire Chief Richardson said, "it has really been an all hands on deck type of year as we fight the pandemic as a team."

The department responded to 804 fire calls and 853 medical assists and motor vehicle accidents. The department is on track to respond to close to 3,800 ambulance calls in 2021.

But the pandemic and busy schedule did not stop the department from staging public events during the year. The firefighters conducted station tours, bolstered the fire prevention program through social media, and provided onsite birthday visits during station lockdowns. At StrOlean the department had an onsite training of Stop the Bleed and Compression only CPR, additionally they are involved in the Red Cross's smoke detector installation program and have a firefighter certified to do car seat installations for members of the public.

A number of firefighters retired during the year including Captain Ed Jennings and Firefighters Ed Pleakis and Lee Witruke. And the year ended with the unfortunate passing of Firefighter Tracy Veno who dedicated 39 years to the City of Olean. Both the Department and employees in the Municipal Building miss Firefighter Veno's lightheartedness and smile.

The City's Youth and Recreation Department had a very successful 2021 and the program coordinator did an excellent job managing the department through the various Covid restrictions.

Highlights include:

- 19 summer concerts were held in Lincoln Park with over 4,000 residents attending.
- 350 children, ages 6-12, participated in the six week summer youth recreation programs.
- Youth Court resumed and the new members trained and heard 7 court cases.
- Public Ice Skating resumed at the William O Smith Recreation Center in February as COVID restrictions eased.
- The Franchot pool was able to open on a limited schedule, but still saw an average daily attendance of 100 swimmers.
- In late Spring both the Bartlett House and the John J. Ash Community Center re-opened and resumed full operating activities.
- And as I mentioned earlier, Gargolye Park is now the home of a Disc Golf Course and hosted their first tournament in October.

The volunteers that step up to help Olean are a very dedicated group of citizens. Our volunteer garden and litter control committees worked hard to keep our flowers blooming and the streets clean. The Junior/Senior League Coasters donated \$4,500 to the City for various building improvements to the John J. Ash Community Center and volunteers helped out with many of the different programs offered at the center. And the volunteers at the Bartlett House tended the gardens through the seasons and they beautifully decorated the house for Christmas. In October we had a volunteer event to honor all volunteers and gave Lilla Ervay the key to the City. Lilla has been working to keep our streets clean for over two decades. She also organized a group of volunteers to tackle given streets. Her dedication and commitment to Olean has been outstanding.

In 2005 the Common Council Adopted a 20 year Comprehensive Development Plan, and as we approach 2025, I am pleased to say the City has attained the vision set forth by the plan.

We should take pride in what we have accomplished in the last two decades. As a city we have been stymied by outside influences, by large corporations moving out, by multinational banks foreclosing on properties and leaving them to waste, by the internet changing the way we purchase our goods, and by a pandemic.

But through it all we remained on track with our 2005 comprehensive plan. We became a brave, ambitious city that borrowed from role models to the point where Olean is now

*a role model for rural revitalization as we transition to a dynamic and sustainable economy.*

*Thanks to grants recently received from Empire State Development and the Department of State, the City of Olean will be able to create and adopt a new 20 year master plan.*

*These plans are an essential tool in community development. They provide a blue print for the development, preservation and enhancement of our community. The new plan will serve as a catalyst as we continue to improve the overall quality of life for Olean residents.*

*We have had a tough two years. Covid-19 has taken its toll on our residents and businesses. Our local hospital system has been stretched to its limits, as have our public safety departments. Our students and their families have coped with the disappointments inherent to the pandemic.*

*In addition we are saying good-bye to an industry that has been in our community since the early 1900's – an international company that at one time was Olean's biggest employer.*

*But oddly enough despair is not in the air. Olean residents have taken on a can-do, will-do attitude. This City and our residents are resilient and will continue to move forward. We know that Olean will be fine no matter what obstacles are placed in our way. It has been our nature since our founding and we will move on to something new and something better---we always do. We have a great workforce and are surrounded by institutions committed to expanding and preparing that workforce for the future.*

*Our city consists of good, kind, charitable people who consistently step-up to help those in need. We can witness that on a daily basis.*

*We are all in this city together—and I have to say—there can't be a finer group of people ---than the residents of Olean.*

*I am honored and proud to be Mayor of this community –because we continually work together----as a team----to meet the challenges and move our City forward.*

*Thank you very much for joining us to night and Happy New Year.*

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion was made by Alderman Witte, Seconded by Alderman Crawford to adjourn the meeting. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:45 p.m.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*City Clerk Frank Caputo*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Mayor William Aiello*

*I hereby approve the foregoing minutes*

*Dated:*

**STATE OF NEW YORK  
COUNTY OF CATTARAUGUS  
CITY OF OLEAN**

*I, Lens Martial, City Clerk of the City of Olean, do hereby certify that the foregoing minutes of the Common Council of the City of Olean is the true and correct copy of the whole thereof.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*City Clerk Frank Caputo*