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TOWN BOARD COUNTY OF ALBANY

TOWN OF COLONIE

STATE OF THE TOWN

THE STENOGRAPHIC MINUTES of the above entitled matter by NANCY L. STRANG, a Shorthand Reporter commencing on January 16, 2020 at 7:17 p.m. at Memorial Town Hall, 534 New Loudon Road, Latham, New York

BOARD MEMBERS:

- PAULA MAHAN, SUPERVISOR
- LINDA MURPHY, DEPUTY SUPERVISOR
- DAVID GREEN
- MELISSA JEFFERS-VONDOLLEN
- RICK FIELD
- JILL PENN
- DANIELLE FUTIA

ALSO PRESENT:

- Michael C. Magguilli, Esq, Town Attorney
- Julie Gansle, Town Clerk

1 SUPERVISOR MAHAN: Good evening before we begin
2 our Town Board meeting this evening, as I stated, it
3 would take a few minutes to share the 2020 state of the
4 Town message with you. First let me say that I'm honored
5 to stand before you as I begin my seventh term as your
6 Town Supervisor. It's great to be here. All of you play
7 a big part in the Town's success and I thank you for
8 your support. I can truly say that being your Supervisor
9 has been a very positive and rewarding experience and
10 looking ahead, I see more great things for Colonie.

11 I was so thrilled when I learned that Colonie
12 was once again voted Best Suburb in the 2019 Times
13 Union poll. This is the sixth year in a row we have
14 won the top spot. We all know Colonie is a great
15 community, but it is wonderful to be recognized year
16 after year as the best.

17 We have lots of other big news. First,
18 serious crime in Colonie decreased for the second year
19 running, even though there were more calls for
20 service. Chief Teale has worked with us to bring
21 Colonie Police Department staffing levels up to the
22 highest levels ever, and it is wonderful to see the
23 positive results of this effort. Public safety has
24 always been one of my top priorities and will always
25 be at the top of my list.

1 Of course, our EMS Department and our twelve
2 excellent volunteer fire departments all play a huge
3 role in our outstanding level of public safety, and I
4 thank all of them for their service. Our EMS
5 Department - many members are here tonight - which has
6 been recognized for excellence so many times, had
7 another great year in 2019. For the third year in a
8 row, they received the American Heart Association's
9 prestigious Lifeline Gold Plus Award. They were also
10 named our region's Emergency Medical Organization of
11 the Year.

12 Last year was a red-letter year for the EMS
13 Department in many other ways. First, EMS celebrated
14 its thirtieth anniversary with the highest full-time
15 staffing ever. As a result, they can cover the
16 majority of shifts with full-time personnel and staff
17 an additional ambulance during peak hours, seven days
18 a week. Last year, we also bid farewell to outgoing
19 EMS Chief Peter Berry, who provided excellent
20 leadership for us. We also welcomed our new Chief,
21 Chris Kostyun. Chris is here tonight. I don't know if
22 Peter is here tonight. Peter is here tonight.

23 Speaking of public safety, I am so grateful
24 to Senator Neil Breslin and Assemblyman Phil Steck.
25 Together, they are providing \$500,000 to enable us to

1 replace our 40-year old mobile command post with a
2 much-needed state-of-the art vehicle. In fact,
3 Senator Breslin joked that I twisted his arm to help
4 fund it by taking him to see our old one! This new
5 mobile command post will help all of our first
6 responders manage complex emergencies more
7 efficiently. Assemblyman Steck is also providing
8 \$250,000 for a new ambulance and \$500,000 for upgrades
9 to our Municipal Training Center. All of this support
10 means that Colonie, and indeed all of our neighboring
11 communities, will be safer. We think both assemblyman
12 and Senator for all of their help year after year *We
13 are making great progress on other fronts as well.
14 Last fall, based on our smart, new energy-saving
15 initiatives, NYSERDA certified us as a Clean Energy
16 Community. As a result, we won a Clean Energy
17 Community Grant, which will help us retrofit our
18 Public Safety Center with energy-saving LED lighting.
19 After an amortization period of just over a year,
20 savings to the Town will be more than \$41,000
21 annually. We will tell you a little bit more about
22 that in a few minutes.

23 Without our dedicated and hard-working
24 employees, department heads, and Town Board members,
25 these accomplishments would not be possible. Also

1 several of our department heads are here tonight in
2 Town Board members along with former Town Board
3 members thank them all for their assistance. Working
4 together as a team we have consistently achieved - and
5 even exceeded - our goals.

6 Colonie is also lucky to have many great
7 friends throughout the community and at the state of
8 the town for the chamber Assemblyman Steck was there
9 along with Neil Breslin. We had our leaders from the
10 village of Colonie and many others that were there.
11 For those of us who don't know, the chamber four years
12 has always done the state of the Town first.

13 As we look ahead to a new decade, I think you
14 would all agree that Colonie is primed for even
15 greater success. Our neighborhoods are safe, our
16 businesses are thriving, and our community is active
17 and involved. People genuinely care about Colonie.
18 They want to live here, work here, and do business
19 here. All of this puts us in a great position for the
20 future. Our financial house is in order, and we are
21 moving steadily ahead on creative new ways to make
22 life in the Town of Colonie even better. Through the
23 years, it has been critical to follow each step of our
24 Ten-Year Strategic Financial Plan. We achieved every
25 goal, which greatly improved the efficiency and

1 effectiveness of our operations. In addition, we
2 greatly improved our bond rating - from Baal with a
3 negative outlook when I took office in 2008, to
4 today's rating of A+ with a positive outlook. Once we
5 stabilized our finances, the next step was to begin
6 investing in the Town's most essential infrastructure
7 - our roads, and our drinking water and sewer systems.

8 We began our paving and stormwater
9 improvement program in 2010, funding it at \$2.5
10 million per year. The Town has 320 miles of road, and
11 it has been a huge - and expensive - job getting them
12 back to good repair. We have invested carefully,
13 repaving 101 miles of road, repairing many more miles,
14 and bringing all of our major feeder roads back to top
15 condition.

16 You may remember that last year, I said we
17 talked about the possibility of being able to increase
18 the budget for paving and storm water improvements. In
19 this past year, 2019, we were able to add an
20 additional \$250,000. And this year, we are happy to
21 report that we are able to add \$500,000 to our paving
22 and stormwater budget.

23 In 2014, we began ambitious programs to
24 renovate our drinking water and sanitary sewer
25 systems. Both our Latham Water Treatment Plant and

1 our Mohawk View Water Pollution Control Treatment
2 Plant needed major upgrades. Now, we have
3 significantly renovated both plants. In addition, we
4 have modernized and upgraded many of the pump stations
5 essential to these systems. By the end of 2020, we
6 will have invested just under \$40 million dollars.

7 Last year, we also established a brand new
8 back-up emergency water connection with the City of
9 Albany. A second connection is coming online this
10 spring. These inter-connections will provide both
11 municipalities with much more efficient and
12 cost-effective emergency water supplies. In fact, the
13 city needed to use the system last December, and
14 everything worked smoothly. A \$960,000 dollar NYS
15 Water Infrastructure grant offset the Town's \$1.6
16 million share of the project. For those of you who
17 don't know, our backup system for all these years has
18 been Clifton Park and it's called the Stony Creek
19 Reservoir.

20 Since 2016, we have invested three million
21 dollars in the Town Park on Schermerhorn Road. We
22 made major improvements to the pool complex, and in
23 2018 we installed a beautiful new splash pad for kids.
24 Last year, we renovated the Latham Lassies concession
25 stand. We also improved all the Town's twelve pocket

1 parks with new fencing, playground equipment, and
2 other upgrades. This year - by popular demand - we
3 expect to install pickle ball courts at the Kiwanis
4 pocket park.

5 Also upcoming this year are significant bike
6 path renovations, a new pavilion at the Town Park, a
7 new playground and parking lot at the south end of The
8 Crossings, and major improvements at the West Albany
9 Pocket Park, including new bathrooms and seating at
10 the football complex - all with \$1.2 million of
11 support arranged by Assemblyman Steck.

12 As you may know, in 2018 we began an
13 ambitious renovation of the Town Library. It turned
14 out great. Today, the library has a spacious new
15 entrance, new bathrooms, new teen and children's
16 rooms, and many new meeting spaces. If you've been
17 there recently, you may also have seen the new adult
18 reading area and a dedicated quiet study area. Still
19 coming are a new roof and HVAC system.

20 Finally, in 2019 we began a major exterior
21 renovation of the Pruyne House, a \$900,000 project.

22 We were able to achieve these capital
23 improvements only through sound financial management
24 and good planning. Currently we bond to only about
25 11% of our constitutional debt limit. We plan to keep

1 the debt limit low. It is essential that the Town
2 continue to live within its means. Keep in mind that
3 with our low property tax rate, which is \$3.99 per
4 thousand, a one percent tax increase yields our
5 General Fund only about \$240,000 dollars in new
6 revenue. You know, that is really not a lot.

7 Grants are playing an increasing part in
8 helping us do that. In the case of the library, the
9 Town was able to commit between \$3 and \$4 million for
10 improvements. We were fortunate that Assemblyman
11 Steck provided an additional \$1 million to expand the
12 entrance area, and Senator Breslin provided another
13 \$100,000. Their grants, plus other grants and gifts
14 obtained by the library totaling \$365,000, allowed us
15 to expand the project well beyond what would have been
16 possible with only Town funds.

17 I am proud that beginning last year we were
18 able to enhance the Town's ability to apply for new
19 grants in both our DPW and Planning Departments. In
20 the past couple of years we have obtained about \$6
21 million dollars in grants. In addition, applications
22 are in progress for more than \$1.2 million in new
23 grants, including one to fund a tree inventory and
24 community forest management plan, and another to
25 develop new bicycle connections throughout the Town.

1 Another way to live within limited means is
2 to find new and innovative ways to cut costs. That is
3 why I was especially proud last year to move forward
4 with two new energy-related projects. Both reduce the
5 Town's energy costs, while at the same time increasing
6 our profile as a good environmental citizen. One
7 involves the purchase of eco-friendly hydropower. The
8 second involves converting our streetlights to
9 energy-saving LED lighting.

10 In the first project, the Town last year
11 signed a 20-year agreement to purchase hydropower from
12 the Schuylerville Hydroelectric Facility located 37
13 miles from Colonie. No, there's not an extension cord
14 from there to here. However, we receive credit for
15 the power generated there, which in turn offsets our
16 electric bill. This is one of the most far-sighted and
17 far-reaching initiatives we have been able to
18 undertake - and the savings to the Town is huge. We
19 expect savings of approximately upwards of \$400,000 in
20 the first year alone. We also expect a significant
21 savings by purchasing the more than 4,000 streetlights
22 we now lease from National Grid, then converting them
23 to energy-saving LED lighting. When the project is
24 complete, we expect to save more than \$570,000
25 annually in combined energy costs and facilities

1 charges. The New York Power Authority estimates our
2 twenty-five year savings at \$12.2 million. Plus, we
3 reduce our CO2 emissions by about 1,107 tons a year
4 every year going forward. We will amortize project
5 costs over a period of time that will maximize the
6 Town's positive cash flow during the payback period.
7 Installation should be complete by late spring or
8 early summer. When I first came to office in 2008, we
9 focused our attention on the redevelopment of four
10 major sites that had been either idle or underutilized
11 for many years. I am proud that we have made great
12 progress on all four. First, Fresh Market Commons and
13 the Latham Circle Mall became productive, new
14 properties.

15 This year, we have the redevelopment of the
16 third, the old Starlite Theatre site, took shape with
17 the construction of the new Ayco headquarters there.
18 It's a gorgeous building that will provide a template
19 for upgrades all along the Route 9R corridor. In
20 addition, the construction of solar tee canopies over
21 the parking area will get the project to net zero
22 energy consumption.

23 And, we are finally making progress on the
24 old Tobin site, easily the most difficult of these
25 four properties to redevelop. As you know, a

1 developer has put forth ambitious plans for a
2 beautiful new mixed-use development there. As the
3 site is located partly in Town and partly in the City
4 of Albany, the Town has created a special overlay
5 district that will include a joint Town and City
6 Planning Board to oversee the project. Additionally,
7 the Town has secured a \$1 million grant for demolition
8 of the old Tobin Packing Plant - the essential first
9 step in realizing the site's potential.

10 This year, we realized another long-term goal
11 with construction of the new Northway Exit 3. It
12 provides direct connections to the Albany
13 International Airport and helps to alleviate traffic
14 congestion along Wolf and Albany Shaker Roads. We
15 think of it or Cuomo and our friends at the Department
16 of Transportation for making this project happen.

17 There's also the construction of the
18 connector road linking Route 9R and Route 9 as part of
19 the Ayco project, traffic is flowing much more
20 smoothly along that corridor as well. The new
21 connector road, named Coliseum Drive, is beautiful.
22 The Town has wanted this connector road for many, many
23 years, and with the help of the Galesi Group, they
24 were able to make it a reality for the Town. *In
25 addition, following a recent traffic study, we are

1 planning for changes that will help move traffic more
2 smoothly along the Albany Shaker Road corridor.
3 Already, we have a new traffic light at the Shaker
4 Road Elementary School intersection. It is
5 operational during school hours, when it provides
6 greater safety and convenience for those coming and
7 going from the school.

8 We also did that with the help of County
9 Executive Dan McCoy working very closely with us along
10 with Assemblyman Steck who arranged the funding for
11 the traffic light. We thank them as well.

12 You may remember that we were awarded a
13 Brownfield Opportunity grant to study redevelopment of
14 the former Adirondack Steel site. We have completed
15 the study and sent it to the Department of State for
16 review and approval. We developed the recommendations
17 with community input. Among the recommendations are
18 using the site for green energy initiatives and
19 creating an access road to take truck traffic off
20 Lincoln Avenue. It would be wonderful for everyone if
21 this site can be returned to productive uses that also
22 enhance the neighboring community.

23 Last year we completed an update of the
24 Town's 2005 Comprehensive Plan. Many of the
25 recommendations reflect goals we have been actively

1 working on throughout my tenure. Some lay out new
2 directions for the future, such as increasing open
3 space and better protecting neighborhoods that border
4 commercial zones. I will keep you updated on that as
5 well. Comprehensive plan allows us to take the next
6 step which is to take a look at the land-use laws that
7 were put into place in 2007 to see if there are
8 amendments that need to be done. The review process
9 was very thorough, and I want to thank Joe LaCivita,
10 our Director of Planning and Economic Development, led
11 that along with our consultants. Many of you may have
12 heard that Joe is moving on to a new position and we
13 wish him well. He's done a tremendous amount here over
14 the last 12 years.

15 In addition, some special events in 2019
16 provided us with lots of fun and excitement. One of
17 these was the 50th anniversary of the Town Golf
18 Course. In honor of the occasion, the golf course
19 rolled back greens fees to 1969 rates for four days
20 over the Columbus Day weekend. It was a great success.
21 We would like to roll back our health insurance
22 premiums to 1969 rates. They won't go along with that.
23 *Another exciting event added a totally new dimension
24 to life in Town Hall last year. This was the Hometown
25 Hero Celebration for Shaker High School's Madison

1 Vandenburg, who had made it into the final rounds of
2 the American Idol competition. One day I got a call
3 from Hollywood and the American Idol producers, all
4 very secret, that we might need to create this big
5 event in about a week's time. It was a real sprint,
6 but with the help of North Colonie Superintendent Joe
7 Corr, Deputy Superintendent Kathy Skeals, and everyone
8 at Shaker High, we were able to pull everything
9 together for a great celebration. There were hundreds
10 of well wishers at The Crossings cheering Madison on.
11 It was a proud moment for all of us to have one of our
12 Shaker High students achieve such success, and as a
13 former Shaker Junior High School teacher, this felt
14 very special to me. I know we all wish Madison
15 continued success.

16 Speaking of success, I would like to close
17 simply by saying that the Town has had a successful
18 year in every way. In 2020, we will continue to move
19 forward with the goal of keeping Colonie the best
20 place ever. I truly believe it is by all of us
21 working together that we will continue to keep Colonie
22 the best suburban community. I thank you for your
23 support of our great Town and wish all of you the very
24 best in the new decade.

25 (Whereas the above entitled proceeding was

concluded at 7:32 p.m.)

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I, NANCY L. STRANG, Shorthand Reporter and
Notary Public in and for the State of New York, hereby
CERTIFY that the record taken by me at the time and
place noted in the heading hereof is a true and
accurate transcript of same, to the best of my ability
and belief.

Dated: _____

NANCY L. STRANG
LEGAL TRANSCRIPTION
2420 TROY SCHENECTADY RD.
NISKAYUNA, NY 12309