

TOWN BOARD

COUNTY OF ALBANY

TOWN OF COLONIE

STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS

THE STENOGRAPHIC MINUTES of the above entitled matter by NANCY L. STRANG, a Shorthand Reporter, on January 19, 2017 7:10 p.m. at Memorial Town Hall 534 Loudon Road, Newtonville, New York 12128

BOARD MEMBERS:

- PAULA A. MAHAN, SUPERVISOR
- DAVID ROWLEY, DEPUTY SUPERVISOR.
- DAVID GREEN
- PAUL ROSANO
- LINDA MURPHY
- CHRISTOPHER CAREY
- JENNIFER WHALEN

ALSO PRESENT:

Michael C. Magguilli, Esq. Town Attorney
Elizabeth DelTorto, Town Clerk

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1 SUPERVISOR MAHAN: Good evening. Before we begin
2 our regular Town Board meeting this evening, I would
3 like to share my 2017 State of the Town message with
4 you. It's very hard for me to believe this is my tenth
5 State of the Town message.

6 For me, ten years marks a milestone. Time has gone
7 by so fast, but I'm confident that we have used our time
8 wisely, and our many accomplishments demonstrate the
9 progress we have made together. I can truly say that
10 being your Supervisor is a positive and rewarding
11 experience.

12 I can clearly remember my first State of the Town
13 back in January, 2008. I was into my third week as
14 Supervisor and some people were wondering, what could
15 she possibly have to say? After all, I was just a
16 teacher and what did I know about running a government?
17 And so that's when the story began. My students, seventh
18 and eighth graders at Shaker Junior High School. We
19 probably have a lot of graduates from Shaker here
20 tonight. They cheered me on and told me to just do my
21 best. They assured me things would be great. One of
22 their big questions was, they wanted to know if I be
23 driven to my office each day in a limousine. That didn't
24 happen. Anyway, you got to love these kids in the world
25 they live in, that's for sure. So, after a wonderful

1 career in teaching, I made the transition to Town Hall,
2 and the work began. Getting back to the question of what
3 a teacher would know about running a government, well,
4 you'd be surprised.

5 I had gained many valuable skills through my many
6 years of teaching. First, when you teach, you manage
7 people every day. You utilize teamwork, collaboration,
8 communication, problem-solving, prioritizing, consensus
9 building, organization, listening skills, compassion,
10 time management, developing goals and plans to meet
11 them, and the list goes on.

12 The work began, and with the help of a great staff
13 and a trusting community. The many challenges began to
14 turn into opportunities to move the Town forward. And,
15 yes, my teaching skills turned out to be quite valuable.

16 And now, as I enter my tenth year, 2017 promises to
17 be a milestone year for Colonie as well as we complete
18 the process of updating the Town's Comprehensive Plan.
19 The Plan was adopted in 2005, and we have worked very
20 hard to implement its vision. I'll get back to the plan
21 in more detail a little later on.

22 I think all of us who live and work in Colonie know
23 what a great Town we live in. But it's always great when
24 others recognize it, too. That's why I was so proud when
25 Colonie was once again named Best Suburban Community

1 in the 2016 Times Union Reader's Poll. That's the third
2 year in a row Colonie has been voted the best in this
3 category.

4 Also, in April of 2016, a Siena College Research
5 Institute survey found that an overwhelming 97 percent
6 of Colonie residents surveyed rated Colonie as a great
7 place to raise a family, with 73 percent indicating that
8 they believe Colonie is on the right track.

9 The survey also underscored the fact that residents
10 have a high degree of satisfaction with life in Colonie
11 - with our low taxes, our recreational facilities and
12 library, our truly excellent schools, and the wide range
13 of goods and services available right here in Colonie.

14 Finally, the Siena survey showed that our residents
15 feel safe and secure in their neighborhoods - with 91
16 percent rating our police and 96 percent rating our
17 firefighters as providing good or excellent service. I'd
18 like to thank all our police officers, EMS staff, any
19 firefighters that are here tonight as well from our 12
20 volunteer fire companies for working so hard to keep us
21 safe. We have with us tonight chief Jon Teale, Police
22 Chief and Chief Barry from EMS. Let's give them a round
23 of applause.

24 As you know, public safety has always been one of
25 my very top priorities. That is why I am very excited

1 that we have brought the Colonie Police Department's
2 regular staffing level to 112 officers, the highest
3 number in 25 years. The CPD has worked very hard to
4 realize this goal. Working together we were able to make
5 it happen.

6 In addition, both the CPD and our EMS Department
7 are now online with a new county-wide public safety
8 radio system that increases efficiency and
9 interoperability. As a shared resource, it also saves us
10 money. Now, we are working with our regional partners to
11 develop a shared computer-aided dispatch system that
12 will serve all of our first responders.

13 This year, our EMS Department is in line to receive
14 the American Heart Association's Gold Plus Award for
15 excellence in emergency cardiac care. What a huge honor
16 for Colonie. Many factors contribute to this success,
17 including our outstanding paramedics and EMTs. Another
18 is our ability to transmit data directly to hospitals
19 from our ambulances, a result of equipping all of our
20 ambulances with tablet computers.

21 Also, following years of dedicated leadership by
22 our EMS to provide free CPR training to the community,
23 bystanders last year provided CPR in 84 percent of our
24 cardiac arrest cases. That resulted in a 40 percent
25 return of spontaneous circulation, far outpacing the

1 national average. What a great service EMS has rendered
2 to our community with this training.

3 As you know, proper training is extremely important
4 for all of our emergency responders. Last November, we
5 made a big leap forward at our Municipal Training Center
6 when we opened a streetscape incorporating the physical
7 features encountered by emergency responders in the real
8 world - the only such streetscape in the Capital Region.
9 I want to thank Albany County Sheriff Craig Apple,
10 District Attorney David Soares, our Albany County Fire
11 Coordinator Jerry Paris, as well as all our relevant
12 Town departments for making it a reality.

13 When I assumed office in 2008, we inherited a
14 budget of \$91.8 million. Tenyears later, Colonie's 2017
15 budget is only \$88.9 million. We're spending less today
16 than in 2008. Keeping our budget low has been possible
17 only because everyone in Town government has pulled
18 together to find new ways to hold the line on spending.
19 For that I am very, very grateful to the Town Board, our
20 department heads, and all our dedicated town employees.
21 I am lucky to have a Board that is working so well
22 together. We all share a true commitment to public
23 service. That's true of our department heads and staff
24 members, as well.

25 Our 2017 budget also meets the requirements of the

1 NYS Tax Levy Cap -for the sixth year running. That means
2 our taxpayers will again be able to benefit from the NYS
3 Tax Rebate Program. Incidentally, the cap limits our
4 2017 tax levy growth to about \$570,000.00, so you can
5 see that living within the cap is a big challenge for
6 us, but each year we try our very best to stay within
7 the cap.

8 One of my first priorities in 2008 was to develop a
9 ten-year financial plan aimed at achieving financial
10 stability. I also created a very broadly-based Budget
11 Committee, and each year we review literally every
12 dollar spent by every department. By working together
13 and sharing resources across departments, we were able
14 to realize all the goals of our financial plan well
15 before the ten years were up. This is a tremendous
16 accomplishment.

17 With our finances on firm ground, we began to
18 aggressively address the long-term infrastructure needs
19 of the Town - focusing major efforts on our drinking
20 water, sewer, and storm water systems - and on our
21 roads. We've also been able to begin making much-needed
22 improvements to the Town Park, and are planning for
23 major improvements to our library in the near future.

24 But you should know that even though we are
25 embarking on significant capital projects, we are

1 continuing to follow a very conservative fiscal
2 approach. We want to be very certain that the Town
3 continues to live well within its means.

4 For the last few years, we have been making
5 significant capital investments in our drinking water
6 and sewer systems. In this regard, we are well ahead of
7 the curve when compared to many municipalities. And now
8 is the right time to be doing this, because it costs
9 much less to tackle these projects earlier rather than
10 later.

11 As just one example, in an emergency it costs the
12 Town about \$1,300.00 to replace one foot of sanitary
13 sewer pipe. Just think of that - one foot. Contrast that
14 with an average replacement cost of \$85.00 per foot in
15 our recent Metro Park Road Sewer Replacement project.
16 With more than 2 million feet of sanitary sewer in
17 Colonie, you can see that planning ahead goes a long way
18 toward making sure we're getting the most bang for the
19 buck.

20 And that's just the sewer system. The Latham Water
21 Department has another 2.3 million feet of pipe, and
22 this year it will be replacing large sections of water
23 main on Maxwell Road and Route 9, as well as making
24 continued improvements to its pumping, storage and
25 distribution systems.

1 By the end of this year, we will have invested
2 about \$10 million in long-term infrastructure
3 improvements for our sewers, and \$14 million for our
4 drinking water systems. Significant investment will
5 continue for the foreseeable future.

6 I'd like to take a moment now to thank the
7 architects of our long-term, strategic infrastructure
8 initiatives - John Frazer, our Latham Water
9 Superintendent, and Chretien Voerg, our Pure Waters
10 Superintendent. I'm not sure if they are here tonight.
11 These guys did a tremendous job on his long-term plans
12 for infrastructure.

13 We're also beginning the eighth year of our paving
14 plan to bring our roads back to top working condition.
15 I am glad to report that 95 percent of the Town's major
16 feeder roads are now at very good or excellent condition
17 -- and we are making progress with our residential
18 streets. I hope that within the next few years we will
19 be able to increase our paving plan budget above current
20 levels; that remains a goal for the future.

21 As we all know, our central location is one of our
22 greatest strengths. A huge number of people pass through
23 here every day on their way to someplace else. We are
24 strategically located in the middle of
25 Albany/Schenectady/Troy and Saratoga County. So, we

1 could have a couple hundred people passing through Town
2 to get somewhere else, because of our strategic
3 location. We are studying current traffic patterns and
4 how they can be improved. We are also working with
5 Albany County and the Capital District Transportation
6 Commission on a traffic study for the Maxwell
7 Road/Albany Shaker Road corridor.

8 We are really looking forward to the future
9 revamped Exit 4, which will also help alleviate traffic
10 along Wolf and Albany Shaker Roads. We are lucky to have
11 had the active partnership of the Chamber and the Albany
12 County International Airport CEO John O'Donnell - we
13 stood together and advocated for this much-needed
14 enhancement, spending time with the state DOT and the
15 Governor's office to keep this project alive. The
16 airport is very important to Colonie. I know it is the
17 fastest growing airport in upstate New York, and we are
18 excited about its most recent plans to further upgrade
19 its beautiful terminal.

20 We've also been working to bring some much-needed
21 improvements to the Town Park on Schermerhorn Road.
22 We've installed new liners at the pools and are on track
23 this spring to install new pool filtration systems. And
24 we're now planning for a new splash pad at the pool next
25 year - a really great addition for families with small

1 children. Last year, we also installed a new
2 barrier-free playground at the Town Park. Now, children
3 of every ability regardless of disabilities will now
4 have new options for recreation.

5 As I mentioned earlier, the Town is now in the
6 process of reviewing and updating the Comprehensive
7 Plan. Adopted in 2005, the Comprehensive Plan provided a
8 template for growth in Colonie. Our review involves the
9 community in a collaborative process with our
10 Comprehensive Plan Review Committee and outside
11 consultants. This is a very big undertaking. Thank him
12 and you to all of the Comprehensive Plan Committee
13 members for your commitment.

14 As there are many parts of the 2005 Comprehensive
15 Plan that have worked out well for the Town, this
16 current review provides the opportunity to make the
17 necessary modifications to parts of the plan that may
18 need to be adjusted.

19 Of seventeen goals outlined at the beginning of the
20 Comprehensive Plan, several focus on development within
21 the Town, and I believe that realizing these goals have
22 been among our most important and successful
23 accomplishments.

24 For example, the Plan recommends providing a
25 business-friendly environment that supports a diverse

1 economic base. From day one, we worked to create just
2 such an environment and also to focus our development
3 efforts on the redevelopment of existing properties,
4 another a key Plan goal. Also from day one, we have
5 worked to create a more user-friendly project approval
6 process that is clear, predictable and fair, again as
7 specified in the 2005 Plan.

8 When we think of all the activity we've seen along
9 Wolf Road, Route 9, and Route 7, the lion's share has
10 been in the redevelopment of existing commercial
11 properties. All of these corridors are defined in the
12 day and you and you yes I do this you will and you will
13 is a you a 2005 Plan as suitable for mixed node
14 development including a range of service, employment,
15 and residential options. The result is that each of
16 these major commercial corridors has been reborn,
17 providing an exciting new range of services as a result.

18 In the Comprehensive Plan these areas are defined
19 more - Wolf Road is the down-town of Colonie and these
20 sites were fairly stated in the plan.

21 We have long worked towards redevelopment of the
22 old Tobin site. We were excited by the announcement last
23 December of very exciting plans for a mixed-use
24 redevelopment there incorporating the principles of new
25 urbanism. Another key item that is also in the 2005

1 Comprehensive Plan. This has been our most challenging
2 site, and these plans follow many years of work and
3 effort on our part. Now, we will work cooperatively with
4 the City of Albany to create the partnership necessary
5 to make this dream a reality for all of us. Stay tuned.
6 Updates to follow.

7 We have also made significant progress in meeting
8 the Plan's goal of protecting our natural environment,
9 both through preservation of open space and development
10 of potential recreational trail corridors.

11 I am really proud that we have increased open space
12 significantly in recent years. In 2013 we created the
13 Mohawk Riverside Landing Park at the site of the former
14 Latham Water Treatment Plant on River Road. For those of
15 you who might remember, that was the building that was
16 falling apart. It was actually not a safe site anymore.
17 Our tanks are still there because they are still used.
18 The old building that was falling apart came down and we
19 now have a park there that provides another connection
20 to the bike path. That is one of four new bike path
21 connections under my administration. Again, establishing
22 such inter-connectivity with the bike path is a
23 high-value objective in the Comprehensive Plan.

24 Last fall, the Town took ownership of an additional
25 23-acres of open parkland at the Schuyler Flatts

1 Cultural Park after it was deeded to us by the Open
2 Space Institute, and in 2013 we took ownership of 127
3 acres of open space along Sand Creek Road. We received
4 another 23 acres north of Route 9 as a result of the
5 Northern Pass development.

6 Taken all together, we now have 1,155 acres of
7 Town-owned land dedicated to recreational and open
8 space. Plus, we are now in the process of dedicating 144
9 acres to the Pine Bush, to assure continued protection
10 of this ecosystem so unique to our Town.

11 In addition, the Town requires conservation
12 easements for development projects. They are simply
13 parcels deeded to the Town that exist as undisturbed
14 open space. We are now approaching 100 acres in such
15 conservation easements.

16 The Comprehensive Plan directs the Town to
17 encourage a mix of housing types for seniors in
18 appropriate areas of the community, and we have made
19 the availability of new senior housing options at every
20 income level a priority. We are especially excited about
21 the affordable senior apartments being constructed
22 through the Elks Lane project. The former Little Sisters
23 of the Poor is being redeveloped into low-income senior
24 housing meeting federal guidelines, and its Chapel is
25 being converted into the new home of the Curtain Call

1 Theater, increasing both the theater's seating capacity
2 and walkable cultural options for residents. In
3 addition, the 2005 Comprehensive Plan recommended
4 developing building mixed-node communities that create a
5 pedestrian-friendly village center. An example is the
6 Village at New Loudon, at a location recommended in the
7 2005 Comprehensive Plan as a preferred site for such
8 development. Similarly, the new Crisafulli apartments on
9 Aviation Drive are congruent with Plan goals of making
10 Wolf Road into a more walkable mixed use node or town
11 center.

12 The Comprehensive Plan also called for nodes
13 allowing for greater density, and approval for a number
14 of the larger Planned Development District projects we
15 see being developed today actually pre-date my
16 administration. At the time the plan was enacted, these
17 increased densities met Comprehensive Plan goals.
18 However, I think it might be time to take a new look at
19 the issue of density as we work through our review
20 process.

21 Finally, one of the Comprehensive Plan's goals
22 directs the Town to Maintain the Town's high level of
23 public safety services; community services for youth,
24 seniors, and the public at large; and public utility
25 infrastructure and services. To all of these I will

1 simply say: done, done and done. And I want to say once
2 again for the record that I remain totally committed to
3 funding supportive programs for both our youth and
4 seniors going forward.

5 In closing, I would like to thank all of you for
6 being here tonight and for your commitment to Colonie.
7 It's all of us working together that helps make Colonie
8 the vibrant, successful community it is today. I think
9 we've exceeded all expectations - certainly more than
10 what I thought when I first walked into Town Hall in
11 January 2008 after leaving my teaching position. I
12 assure you that one thing has not changed, and that is
13 my commitment to the people of the great Town of
14 Colonie. Thank you so much for being here tonight and
15 you're welcome to stay for the rest of the evening.

16
17 (Whereas the above entitled proceeding was
18 concluded at 7:25 PM)

CERTIFICATION

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2
3 I, NANCY L. STRANG, Shorthand Reporter and Notary
4 Public in and for the State of New York, hereby CERTIFY
5 that the record taken by me at the time and place noted
6 in the heading hereof is a true and accurate transcript
7 of same, to the best of my ability and belief.

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9 _____
10 NANCY L. STRANG

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13 Dated _____
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