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TOWN BOARD

COUNTY OF ALBANY

TOWN OF COLONIE

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STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS

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THE STENOGRAPHIC MINUTES of the above entitled matter by NANCY L. STRANG, a Shorthand Reporter, on January 17, 2019 7:12 p.m. at Memorial Town Hall 534 Loudon Road, Newtonville, New York 12128

BOARD MEMBERS:

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

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, I'd like to share  
3 my 2019 State of the Town message. It's a good way for  
4 me to update everyone on recent happenings here in  
5 Colonie, and perhaps to get your feedback. I think we  
6 get the best outcomes when we work together.

7 First, I can truly say that being your Supervisor  
8 has been a positive and rewarding experience for me, and  
9 I am happy that I have many exciting new developments to  
10 report this year.

11 I'm happy to note that Colonie continues on its  
12 strong upward trajectory. People really want to live  
13 here and businesses want to do business here. This has  
14 generated great positive energy, and puts us in an  
15 excellent position for the future. All of you play a  
16 huge role in what makes our Town so exceptional. Thank  
17 you for bringing so much variety and richness to our  
18 life in Colonie.

19 Financially, we continue to be on firm ground. Our  
20 budget is balanced, and our fund balance keeps growing.

21 I have some good added news here that just came to  
22 us that pertains to our finances. Myself and the town  
23 board and all of us at town hall has some excellent news  
24 that our rating from S&P who are our bond raters - - and  
25 this is very important because this is what keeps the

1 town going financially. We have to have a good rating or  
2 we get in trouble. Our rating has moved up to an A+ with  
3 a positive outlook. I can't say how important that is.  
4 This has been a very long journey since 2008 when I  
5 came. It has been a long hard road regarding the  
6 finances. So, to be in a position to receive this rating  
7 is the best news that we could ever get. The town board  
8 works with me very hard. Every decision that has to be  
9 made - as well as we have a budget committee that works  
10 all year long to ensure that we are managing the money  
11 and the best weather we possibly can for the taxpayers  
12 of the town of Colonie. In 2006 alone there were at  
13 least four downgrades - - we were downgraded four times.  
14 If it happened again, the town would've been bankrupt.  
15 So, this is excellent news to come from where we were.  
16 Everyone has worked so hard. Thank you to the town board  
17 into everybody in town government, all of our employees,  
18 our department heads. We cannot do it alone. Again,  
19 congratulations.

20 We're actively investing in our most critical  
21 infrastructure, as well as in our parks and recreational  
22 facilities. We've strengthened public safety, with  
23 staffing levels in our police and EMS departments at new  
24 highs. In all these areas, you can see your tax dollars  
25 at work. We work very hard to prioritize the needs of

1 the Town to ensure your dollars are being spent wisely.  
2 Plus, we've redoubled our efforts to obtain grant money  
3 to help us achieve new goals, and we're now working to  
4 create a funding stream to help us preserve open space,  
5 such as farmland, environmentally sensitive areas, and  
6 waterfront. We have been working on open space for  
7 quite a while now. We have added some open space through  
8 the years and we have a method with developers who are  
9 in the mitigation areas that we call in the town which  
10 are, which there are three mitigation areas so that we  
11 will be in line with the entire town when it comes to  
12 development and open space. So, it's a really good next  
13 move for us in that area. Interestingly, these areas  
14 that we've been actively working on are in line with the  
15 preliminary recommendations of the 2005 Comprehensive  
16 Plan update. I'm really proud of all we've accomplished  
17 together.

18 Speaking of our accomplishments, I want to thank  
19 all the Town Board members who have worked in  
20 partnership with me to help make these good things  
21 happen. I also want to thank our hard-working department  
22 heads and all our other Town employees, some are here  
23 this evening and somewhere here in the morning as well.  
24 Let's give our town employees a round of applause.

25 This is quite an achievement and I'm really proud

1 of everybody, I hope you don't mind me repeating myself  
2 on this, but Colonie was once again named "Best Suburban  
3 Community" in the Times Union Readers' Poll. That's  
4 five years in a row. We know our hometown feeling plays  
5 a big role in that. Again, as I stated with the Shaker  
6 football team, certainly everyone wants to win but it's  
7 not about the winning. It is about doing the right thing  
8 for the people, doing the job with integrity and working  
9 with people to collaborate and having great people to  
10 work with. It is knowing that we have done the best that  
11 you could as a team and to reach that point of being  
12 Best suburban town five years in a row, that is the  
13 extra icing on the cake. I'm really proud. I know we  
14 have accomplish this with the rest of our employees and  
15 the town. We will see what happens. We can always be  
16 first, that is for sure. When you are, it feels really  
17 good.

18 We know our hometown feeling plays a role in  
19 gaining that title.

20 Our neighborhoods are safe and welcoming, our  
21 schools are excellent, our business climate is thriving,  
22 and there is a great spirit of community and citizen  
23 involvement at every level.

24 In addition, we have great services and amenities.  
25 Achieving this recognition five years in a row is

1 remarkable. It's wonderful to have our work recognized,  
2 and it motivates us to continue to raise the bar.

3 We also continue to be identified as one of the  
4 safest towns, with both our police and EMS departments  
5 consistently receiving top honors for excellence.

6 I am very proud to report that in 2018, crime was  
7 once again down in every category. Violent crime was  
8 down 4.7 percent; serious crime was down 1.3 percent;  
9 and less serious crime was down 6.5 percent - all this  
10 as service calls continued to increase. Public safety  
11 has always been one of my most important goals, and  
12 these numbers show us the success of having increased  
13 staffing levels. When I say increased staffing levels,  
14 again, that's not an easy achievement. Chief Teale is  
15 here and Chief Peter Berry of the EMS is here tonight.  
16 There are a lot of financial decisions to make when you  
17 are adding staff and not just retaining but adding. So,  
18 we work very hard together to make sure we are doing it  
19 in the outcome is going to be our benefit. This  
20 certainly has proven that our staffing levels are an  
21 immense help. They are great decisions made for those  
22 departments.

23 Just recently, our EMS department was named  
24 Regional Agency of the Year. And in December, the Town  
25 added eight new full-time EMS positions. Now we can

1 cover the majority of shifts with full-time personnel,  
2 and staff an additional ambulance during peak hours  
3 seven days a week. And, thanks to Assemblyman Phil  
4 Steck, the Town will receive \$250,000 towards the  
5 purchase of a new ambulance. This is all very exciting  
6 news as well! As I said Chief Jon Teale from our police  
7 department our EMS Chief Peter Berry are here tonight  
8 and we thank them and we also thank our firefighters  
9 from our twelve volunteer fire companies.

10 Our Department of Public Works has been busy  
11 working to make the Town's infrastructure the best it  
12 can be. We are continuing major initiatives to improve  
13 our drinking water and sanitary sewer systems and to  
14 bring all our roads back to top condition - which  
15 sometimes seems like a never-ending task. Our DPW and  
16 Parks staff have also been very busy actively upgrading  
17 our many beautiful parks and recreational facilities.  
18 We are now in the tenth year of our paving and  
19 stormwater improvement program. We've invested  
20 carefully, at upwards of \$2.5 million a year for a total  
21 of about \$25 million dollars. Just last summer, we  
22 repaved all or part of 50 roads. But paving is very  
23 expensive, at about \$184,000 per mile. Just as an  
24 example, repaving just one street, Wertman Lane, cost  
25 \$145,000. But we are making good progress. I hope that

1 within the next few years we will be able to increase  
2 our paving plan budget above current levels, but that  
3 remains a goal for the future.

4 Last summer we took a big step forward at the  
5 Mohawk River Town Park when we installed a beautiful  
6 state-of-the-art splash pad. We had been wanting to  
7 provide something special for our smaller children, and  
8 we were able to complete this project and open the  
9 splash pad this past summer. The response was  
10 overwhelming. The splash pad was just the latest  
11 improvement to our swimming facilities. We've already  
12 outfitted the pools with new soft pool liners, new  
13 filtration systems, and ADA-compliant lifts. Next on  
14 the radar will be major improvements to the pool house,  
15 which was built in the 1970s and could really use some  
16 major renovation!

17 We've also been busy improving the Town's 12 pocket  
18 parks, which taken together provide almost 60 acres of  
19 open space conveniently located throughout the Town.  
20 We're installing new fencing and play equipment, and  
21 updating various courts.

22 The first to be completed was Roessleville Park,  
23 which was re-dedicated last fall as the Trooper Michael  
24 J. Anson Memorial Park. A Colonie native and former  
25 Roessleville camp counselor, Trooper Anson sadly passed

1 away last year from an illness he contracted at Ground  
2 Zero. We're honored that his family supported our wish  
3 to name the park after him.

4 On behalf of all of us in the Town of Colonie, I  
5 would like to take this opportunity to thank Assemblyman  
6 Phil Steck for his outstanding support. So far he's  
7 arranged for almost \$2.7 million dollars for new  
8 projects benefiting the Town. Plus, he's provided  
9 additional grants for the villages located in our Town -  
10 the Village of Colonie and the Village of Menands.  
11 Among several grants to the Town are \$500,000 for  
12 improvements to the Town's Municipal Training Center and  
13 another \$500,000 to repave the bike path, to install a  
14 new playground at the south end of the Crossings, and to  
15 build a new pavilion at the Town Park.

16 Also, if any of you entered the Town Library  
17 recently through a maze of plastic-lined passageways,  
18 you will see another way in which he has helped move the  
19 Town forward. While the Town is dedicating between \$3  
20 and \$4 million dollars for major library improvements,  
21 Assemblyman Steck secured an additional \$1 million to  
22 assist with the current reconfiguration of the library's  
23 lobby and entryway, which will provide a much more  
24 spacious and welcoming environment for our library  
25 patrons.

1           We could never do all these projects at once  
2           without extra funding. Keep in mind that with Colonie's  
3           low property tax rate, which is \$3.90 per thousand, a  
4           one percent tax increase yields the General Fund only  
5           about \$225,000 dollars in new revenue. So, you can see  
6           how important this additional funding is to the Town.  
7           And, when those funds are added to other grants secured  
8           by the Town, recent grant funding comes to more than \$5  
9           million dollars.

10           One of the Town-generated grants is a \$1 million  
11           Restore New York grant for demolition of the old Tobin  
12           Packing plant. The Tobin site has been one of our most  
13           challenging sites, and this grant provides funding for  
14           the essential first step in its redevelopment, through  
15           which a private developer is planning an exciting mix of  
16           retail and residential uses. Another grant of \$960,000  
17           is helping us partner with the City of Albany to  
18           strengthen back-up water supplies. I'll give you a  
19           little more detail about that in a minute.

20           I'm also proud that in the past year we've enhanced  
21           the Town's ability to apply for new grants. While  
22           grants can provide the Town with much-needed new funds,  
23           getting grants and administering them is extremely  
24           labor-intensive. Now, we have new capacity in both our  
25           Planning and DPW departments, and we're already seeing

1 excellent results. Also, as you heard earlier our  
2 Albany County Executive Dan McCoy is here tonight. Dan  
3 has done a great deal to work with us and shared  
4 services with the Town of Colonie which saves everybody  
5 money and get really good results. He has taken on that  
6 initiative with the entire county and that means every  
7 municipality in the county and that's not an easy job.  
8 Partnering with Dan in applying for \$9.5 million dollars  
9 in federal Transportation Improvement Program grants, or  
10 TIPS grants, to address congestion and pedestrian safety  
11 on three major roadways. These applications include  
12 \$5.1 million dollars for improvements to 4.1 miles of  
13 New Karner Road between Western Avenue and Watervliet  
14 Shaker Road, and \$3.6 million dollars for Watervliet  
15 Shaker Road, from New Karner to Sand Creek.

16 We've also jointly applied for \$826,000 dollars to  
17 improve Albany Shaker Road between Wolf and Everett  
18 Roads in line with the recommendations of the recently  
19 released Albany Shaker Road Corridor Study which the  
20 town has worked on with County executive Dan McCoy in  
21 the capital District transportation committee. New York  
22 State DOT was also involved in helping us working some  
23 things out. Through a collaborative effort, we have been  
24 able to get a lot of these things in order. These are  
25 really critical important things for the town of

1 Colonie.

2 Also on Albany Shaker Road, County executive McCoy  
3 and myself met over at Shaker El with the principles and  
4 the neighbors there. He is helping us to get a traffic  
5 light to be installed later this year at the Shaker El  
6 intersection to increase safety and improve traffic flow  
7 during school drop-off and pick-up times. We are also  
8 very appreciative that the traffic light is being  
9 supported with County executive and myself by a \$125,000  
10 grant from Assemblyman Steck. I also want to thank Dan  
11 for your partnership and all of your support for these  
12 Colonie projects throughout the entire Town.

13 For those of you who don't know, the roads in  
14 Colonie - one of the things that we are working on with  
15 the County executive, our Police Department and the  
16 transportation committee all the way down to the  
17 governor's office - are all working very hard to address  
18 traffic. We have town roads but we also have County  
19 roads and state highways that run through our town.  
20 Anybody who has to get from point a to point B goes  
21 through the Town of Colonie. So, probably together we  
22 will get a lot more done. So, we are working on all of  
23 these initiatives.

24 One of our main goals is improving mobility  
25 throughout the Town and that is also in the 2005

1 Comprehensive Plan Update recommendations.

2 I think you can see that we are working creatively  
3 to find new ways to fund improvements that will enhance  
4 our quality of life, both through the Town's own efforts  
5 and by partnering with our fellow elected officials, and  
6 I am confident that these collaborative efforts will  
7 continue to yield great success.

8 Speaking of collaboration, I know we are all  
9 excited that the revamped Northway Exit 4 project is  
10 finally going forward. It will help traffic flow along  
11 Wolf Road and Albany Shaker Road, and will provide much  
12 better access to the Albany International Airport. This  
13 is accomplished by keeping this project alive and  
14 executive McCoy and myself have been working for years  
15 with John O'Donnell, CEO of the Albany Airport  
16 Authority, and the Albany County chamber CEO Mark Eagan.  
17 As I said, the County Executive and I have partnered  
18 with them for several years. So, it is wonderful that we  
19 were able to work to keep this project alive. It is  
20 actually going forward and I think they are going to  
21 start this spring and cutting the area off of the  
22 Northway. So, this is great. This is been going on  
23 forever.

24 I would also like to thank the New York State  
25 Department of Transportation for supporting the Northway

1 Exit 4 project and many others in Colonie. They have  
2 been great to work with.

3 In addition, when both the revamped Exit 4 and the  
4 new connector road from Route 9R to Route 9 are  
5 completed, we should see notable improvements during  
6 peak travel times.

7 Having said that, we must still remember that more  
8 than 200,000 cars pass through Colonie each day, the  
9 great majority of them coming from or heading to the  
10 north. Unfortunately for us, if traffic gets backed up  
11 on the Northway, it's going to spill over onto our  
12 roadways. While we are working aggressively and  
13 strategically to address traffic issues, it is difficult  
14 to be able to totally eliminate the problems sometimes  
15 created by the heavy volume of pass-through traffic.  
16 However, we will continue to strive for solutions.

17 Another collaborative project nearing completion is  
18 the one I mentioned earlier. It will establish back-up  
19 water connections between Colonie and the City of  
20 Albany. This interconnect will provide new, more  
21 efficient back-up water supplies for both  
22 municipalities. And for Colonie, it means we will no  
23 longer have to support an aging and much more expensive  
24 back-up system at our Stony Creek Reservoir in Clifton  
25 Park. The Town's \$1.6 million share of the project was

1 offset by a \$960,000 dollar NYS Water Infrastructure  
2 grant.

3 As you may remember, the Town has been aggressively  
4 investing in upgrading its drinking water and sanitary  
5 sewer systems since 2014. By the end of this year, we  
6 will have invested more than \$33 million dollars.

7 Those efforts will continue in 2019, with Latham  
8 Water anticipating another \$3.1 million dollars in  
9 infrastructure improvements. Last summer, Latham Water  
10 replaced a mile of water mains along Route 9 and Maxwell  
11 Road, replacing 1930s-era mains that had become  
12 increasingly prone to breaks. This year, we will  
13 replace an additional 3,800 feet of water main along  
14 Route 9 from Maxwell Road to Old Loudon Road. New mains  
15 are expensive, but not as expensive as emergency  
16 repairs. The cost for this year's water main replacement  
17 project is estimated at \$1.6 million dollars. Another  
18 \$1.74 million dollars has been budgeted for improvements  
19 to pumps, motors, and screening equipment at the Mohawk  
20 View Low Lift Pump station.

21 In 2018, our Pure Waters Division, which oversees  
22 our sanitary sewer system, completed \$3.1 million in  
23 major upgrades at the Mohawk View Water Pollution  
24 Control Plant and the Wolf Road Pumping Station. Next  
25 up, we expect to begin the \$1.9 million dollar

1 Albany-Shaker Road Pumping Station Rehabilitation and  
2 the \$4 million dollar Mohawk View Pollution Control  
3 Plant Clarifier projects.

4 By the way, since 2012 Pure Waters has delivered  
5 its capital projects at an average of 35 percent under  
6 budget by employing aggressive cost and change control  
7 measures.

8 I'd like to take a moment now to thank the  
9 architects of our long-term strategic infrastructure  
10 initiatives - our DPW Commissioner John Cunningham,  
11 Latham Water Superintendent John Frazer, and Pure Waters  
12 Superintendent Chretien Voerg.

13 We have been very aggressive with our investment,  
14 because the need to update our aging infrastructure is a  
15 major priority. Much of it was built in the 1970s or  
16 long before that. Now, we are well ahead of the curve  
17 when compared to many municipalities. However, even as  
18 we make these major investments, we continue to follow a  
19 very conservative financial approach. Currently, we are  
20 bonded to only about 11 percent of our constitutional  
21 debt limit - and we plan to keep that percentage low,  
22 between 10 and 12 percent per year. That's because we  
23 want to be very certain the Town can live within its  
24 means going forward. It's like using your credit card.  
25 At some point you have to pay it off. It's very

1 important to prepare for the future of the Town as we  
2 address our current needs. Those of you who are here, if  
3 you add up those millions of dollars that I was talking  
4 about, under the conditions that we have been in for  
5 several years and working on our finances which are  
6 getting better and better - it is a real challenge. A  
7 lot of credit goes to our department heads who work with  
8 us on the budget. The majority of the board members have  
9 been very supportive of the budget so I would like to  
10 thank you. I think we are truly doing our best to get  
11 those tax dollars doing the best that they can. So,  
12 thank you very much.

13 Speaking of living within our means, I am very  
14 excited to tell you about a new project now nearing  
15 final approval. This project will allow us to save on  
16 our utility bills while promoting sustainable energy in  
17 our region. Through this project, the Town is investing  
18 in hydroelectric power, which allows us to earn green  
19 energy credits. These credits will offset a significant  
20 portion of our energy usage and stabilize our energy  
21 costs over the next twenty years.

22 We are also weighing our options for converting the  
23 Town's 3,982 streetlights to LED lighting, which would  
24 also yield substantial cost and energy savings. You may  
25 remember that last year we signed the NYS Climate Smart

1 Communities Pledge, underscoring our commitment to  
2 reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, we are  
3 working to become a certified Clean Energy Community.  
4 As part of that certification, we are now finalizing the  
5 process of adding unified permits for solar  
6 installations. Through all these actions, Colonie is  
7 building on its earlier efforts to be a good  
8 environmental citizen by adopting new sustainable energy  
9 practices. This is another area highlighted in the  
10 Comprehensive Plan preliminary recommendations.

11 As I have indicated, the Town has recently been in  
12 the process of reviewing its 2005 Comprehensive Plan.  
13 The 2007 Land Use Law changed many zoning provisions to  
14 support the Plan. Both were in place when I first took  
15 office. Some things worked, and some not as well.

16 Now, through the review process, we have an  
17 opportunity to determine if there are areas that should  
18 be updated and to modify the land use law as necessary.  
19 Many of the preliminary recommendations reflect goals we  
20 have been actively working on throughout my tenure. The  
21 next step is to present the draft recommendations and  
22 implementation processes at a Town Board public hearing  
23 in February. I appreciate the efforts of the  
24 Comprehensive Plan Review Committee members in  
25 conducting a very thorough review.

1           The Siena Research Institute survey conducted as  
2 part of the Comprehensive Plan Review process indicated  
3 that more than half of our residents support  
4 conservation of open or environmentally sensitive land,  
5 and we are now looking at new ways to fund open space  
6 preservation through the development process. I think  
7 that satisfies the comments that were received to the  
8 survey.

9           Just as a reminder, the Town currently has 1,155  
10 acres of Town-owned land dedicated to recreation and  
11 open space. We've added more than 185 acres of open  
12 space total during my tenure. Also, we recently  
13 dedicated 157 acres of Town land to the Pine Bush  
14 Preserve. Finally, we will continue our ongoing efforts  
15 to enhance connectivity, mobility, and pedestrian  
16 accessibility throughout the Town, as we have in the  
17 past by securing four convenient new connections to the  
18 bike-hike path.

19           Through all my years in office, we've emphasized a  
20 well-balanced environment that supports a diverse  
21 economic base. We've focused our development efforts on  
22 redevelopment of existing properties, and have been  
23 successful with some of our most difficult sites,  
24 including the Latham Mall and Starlite sites. Now we  
25 are in the beginning stages of redevelopment of the

1 Tobin packing plant site. We also welcome the recent  
2 news that the Department of Environmental Conservation  
3 will invest \$16.6 million to clean up the former Altech  
4 Steel site.

5 Regarding the Starlite site, you may remember that  
6 Ayco chose Colonie for its new headquarters after an  
7 exhaustive search. That it chose Colonie speaks volumes  
8 about our desirability. Ayco's decision means that not  
9 only will more than 600 well-paying jobs stay right here  
10 in Colonie, but it also brings with it a potential to  
11 add 160 more. I'm happy to report that the project,  
12 which is proceeding according to plan, is actually  
13 somewhat ahead of schedule, and the connector road  
14 between Route 9R and Route 9 being built in connection  
15 with the project is likely to be finished this fall.

16 I'm proud of the many sites that have been  
17 redeveloped and repurposed, both beautifying the Town  
18 and ensuring its continued vibrant activity. We  
19 continually receive many compliments regarding the  
20 redevelopment of commercial sites throughout the Town.  
21 Going forward, I will continue to focus on creating a  
22 Town that welcomes new projects while at the same time  
23 preserving all the its best aspects - welcoming  
24 neighborhoods, great recreational facilities, abundant  
25 open space, and beautiful vistas.

1           In closing, I'd like to all of you for being here  
2           and for your commitment to Colonie. It's all of us  
3           working together that makes Colonie the successful  
4           community it is today. I think we've exceeded all  
5           expectations. Thank you all so much for being here.  
6           This is televised so any of your friends want to see it,  
7           they can see it on our website.

8           (Whereas the above entitled proceeding was  
9           concluded at 7:31 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.

\_\_\_\_\_

NANCY L. STRANG

Dated \_\_\_\_\_