

State of the Town Address
Capital Region Chamber
Colonie Town Supervisor - Peter G. Crummey

March 23, 2022

The Century House, Latham, NY

Distinguished elected officials, members of the Capital Region Chamber, Guests and Friends

Good morning and thank you for providing me the opportunity to share the State of the Town Message. Our Capital Region Chamber must be commended for continuing this time-honored tradition.

Thank you, CEO Mark Egan, Chamber Chair Jeffrey Buell, and Albany-Colonie Chair Raimundo(Ray) Archibold and your entire staff for your work on behalf of our community every day. In addition, I wish to recognize the sponsors of this event, Richard Sleasman (President/Managing Director) of CBRE- Albany (Coldwell Banker Richard Ellis) and Stephen Mather and Lori Anne Harris of the HMS Agency, Inc. It is also truly an honor to deliver these comments in our historic Century House and I thank the O' Hearn Family and Colin DeMers for establishing and maintaining this landmark as a hub of Town activity.

In my first 80 days of service as Colonie Town Supervisor, we have set an energetic and dynamic course to build a better Colonie. While I serve daily at Town Hall, or at any one of our town facilities, I could not enjoy the success of what we have already achieved without the unwavering support of our Colonie Town Board. Deputy Town Supervisor Rick Field, together with fellow Town Board members, Jill Penn, Danielle Futia, Melissa Jeffers, Jeff Madden and Alvin Gamble have served collectively with me in getting the job done. Please join me in a round of applause for our Colonie Town Board many who are with us this morning.

I also have the great opportunity to work routinely with Colonie Village Mayor Tom Tobin and Menands Village Mayor Meg Grenier and I thank them for working cooperatively in so many areas of common interest.

In addition, each and every day, I have the benefit of working with so many knowledgeable and passionate fellow town employees. A number of them join us today and I ask the team to stand as I call your name. Colonie Town Clerk Julie Gansle, Colonie Police Chief Mike Woods, Latham Water Department Superintendent John Frazer, Purchasing Director Doug Sippel, Parks Coordinator Tom Breslin, Human Resources Director Rosemary Newton, Town Justice Andrew Sommers, Clerk of the Court Mary Falace-Mayr, Town Attorney Guy Roemer, Commissioner of Public Works Matt McGarry, Director of Planning and Economic Development Sean Maguire, EMS Chief Paul Sugrue, Director of MIS Lisa Travis, Chris Kelsey and Craig Blair from our

Comptroller's Office, and Pure Waters Department Superintendent Crate Voerg. Thank you for working with me every day.

Crate's long-time distinguished service to our Town as Superintendent of the Pure Waters Department is soon coming to an end as he has accepted a once in a lifetime job offer to help head up the pure waters and water departments of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands nearly 7,800 miles from here. There are fourteen islands, only three inhabited with the largest island of Saipan occupying a land mass that could fit into Lake George. Crate, all of us in the room wish you the absolute best knowing that what you learned and accomplished in Colonie will now provide for the health and safety of others thousands of miles from here. We now know that it's not just the Albany International Airport that gives Colonie an international presence. Our best wishes to you, Crate.

I was born in Colonie. I have worked for this fabulous town for forty-one years, commencing my service as an intern in the Town's attorney's office while a student at Albany Law School. From there, I served as a full-time attorney for the Town, the attorney for the zoning board of appeals for thirteen years and then most recently as Senior Town Justice for twenty-one years. I stepped off the bench one year ago to run for Colonie Town Supervisor. Early in my professional service, I also served the Village of Menands for eighteen years as village prosecutor. In the nineties, I served as an Albany County Legislator representing a portion of Colonie for eight years. I also served as counsel in the State Legislature and maintained a private practice of law for thirty-five years. Today, I am humbled to serve in the Same office where legacies have served including those Supervisors I knew and worked with, William Sanford, Fred Field, Mary Brizzell and Paula Mahan. Often for me, the position of Supervisor can be similar to the position of serving as a judge. I make countless decisions every day by marshalling the facts available, determining credibility and then taking action. As to taking action, Teddy Roosevelt taught us that, "the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing."

During my campaign for Town Supervisor, I stressed my support to manage the core issues of Town government. 1. Support public safety, including police, volunteer fire and emergency medical services. 2. Enhance infrastructure, including our roads, water and sewer systems. 3. Maintain our parks, and 4. Encourage better cell service in our Town. My friends, in the first eighty days of my term, I can report positively in every respect regarding these issues.

Our Colonie Police Department continues to serve with distinction. We will be at full staff this year utilizing the most up to date policing technologies and techniques available. Earlier this month, Deputy Chief Jay Gerace received the Recognition Award in Criminal Justice from the National Alliance of Mental Illness for his efforts in coordinating training for police officers to recognize unmet mental health needs during an encounter and how to deploy appropriate police responses. These policing techniques get the right help, for the right people at the right time. As a Judge for 21 years, I am well familiar with the quality of work set forth by our Police

Department. Thank you, Chief Woods for creating a knowledgeable and thoughtful environment for policing.

Our emergency medical services continue to distinguish itself. Just this year, we were able to staff the department at its highest level. EMS continues to deliver award winning services, recently receiving the Lifetime Gold Plus Award from the American Heart Association for exceptional care in patients having heart attacks and strokes. I have seen firsthand our EMS staff in the field. As my parents aged in place in their Colonie home, EMS was on site to respond to falls including my mom's broken hip and later a broken pelvis. Each time, I witnessed their professionalism and passion to help others in challenging situations. In addition, this year, and in concert with our Colonie Police Department, they have conducted COVID vaccination clinics, numerous COVID test kit distributions and a highly successful food drive for our Shaker Middle School Pantry. Thank you, Chief Sugrue and Deputy Chief Erin Kelly for your continued service and coordination.

Our volunteer fire service continues to be an essential part of our public safety. Twelve departments serve our town and each with distinction and commitment. We do not have to look very far to see examples of exceptional service by our volunteer fire departments. Just two weeks ago, an unanticipated ammonia gas leak developed during the continued demolition of the Tobin Plant. Our West Albany Fire Department and Chief Dan Sullivan coordinated and led the safety team and eliminated any possible threat to our community. These volunteers put their lives at risk for the safety of others, I cannot think of a higher order of volunteer service. Volunteer fire, like so many volunteer organizations, often find an increasing challenge to encourage new volunteers. We must support their work whenever we can and create opportunities promoting volunteer fire service.

As for our infrastructure, it is imperative that we take bold steps to address our aging infrastructure. Colonie has approximately 1200 town roads consisting of approximately 330 miles. It is unquestioned that we must step up our highway maintenance. This year, we have embarked on the most ambitious town road repair plan in Colonie's history. I believe that public safety includes safe roads. Our new Commissioner of Public Works and our new Highway Superintendent join me in meeting these challenges. Clearly, there are more roads requiring assistance that we can wholly repair in one year, but you will see evidence of road work throughout the town from May 1st through mid-October. As we know, Mother nature is a difficult partner. When it rains it slows the paving process. Further we only get a five-and-a-half-month window of potential weather for successful work. I must tell you that I never had a job before that I prayed that it doesn't snow in the winter and doesn't rain in the summer.

As to our Latham Water District, it maintains approximately 440 miles of pipe. Two thirds of the pipe is cast iron which was the typical pipe utilized during the applicable installation period. Cast iron does not flex so it can easily break under pressure. We have neighborhoods that have sustained thirty breaks or more within a ten-year period. We are moving forward with pipe replacement in some of our most challenged areas.

Our Pure Waters Department continues to distinguish itself, recently receiving the 2022 award for the New York Water Environment Federation for Excellence in Safety Procedures and the award for Project of the Year for the Dry River Trestle Replacement. If you haven't yet visited our water plant or our Pure Waters Plant, it's a must do. Feel free to contact my office and I'll set up a tour for you. With the help of the Town Board and the Department heads we are marching forward with long overdue repairs and replacement. Deferred maintenance is not our friend. Neither is record inflation, supply chain disruptions and the current cost of energy.

As to our parks, the Town of Colonie parks encompass 850 acres of land for recreation including 13 pocket parks, sports complexes and our largest parks which include The Crossings and The Colonie Mohawk River Park. Each park requires maintenance or overhaul. With the support of our Town Board, I have directed the immediate rebuild of the Kiwanis Park on Rt 2. Further, I have proposed a deep dive into our Mohawk River Park. Our Town river frontage is currently not accessible for watercraft, even though the park was originally served with a boat launch. Colonie residents should once again enjoy direct access to the Mohawk River. The tennis courts there have been deemed unusable for too many seasons. We are renovating that area this year to provide new park opportunities to our town residents.

As to cell service, within my first thirty days, I met with representatives of a national cell carrier. It is pitiful that our town of more than 85,000 residents, in the heart of the Capital Region, suffers from countless dead spots. Working with our Town Board, I intend to fix that. It is a public safety issue as numerous police and fire personnel have told me of too many incidents of dropped emergency calls. The state of the art cell service has changed dramatically over the past thirty years. Tall antennas are now not the only way to fill in critical dead spots. Recently, I made a field inspection along Osborne Road to view a new small cell node that sits atop an existing pole. These nodes are typically smaller than the power transformers that are placed on such poles. But still, under current Town law, the installation of such nodes, that can boost a signal up to 2000 feet in a given direction, requires an application to the zoning board. We don't require zoning board applications for the installation of transformers, nor should we require zoning board applications for the installation of these necessary small cell nodes. I plan to streamline that process, working with our Town Board, so our public safety no longer has to be victimized by dead zones.

Our Court System continues to distinguish itself as a leader in municipal courts. Routinely listed as one of busiest criminal courts in the State of New York, the Court manages with the dedication of our three Town Justices as well as the devoted staff.

Our senior resources department tirelessly serves our growing senior population in navigating complex situations so that our seniors don't lose benefits and advise our Seniors of new options available. As you may know, the Town of Colonie does not have a senior citizen center. A town of our size should have such a center. In fact, nearly 20% of our population is 65 years or older, including me. As we gather today, I ask all of you to join me in planning and establishing a Colonie Senior Services Center once and for all that will benefit our Colonie senior citizens. The

center would serve as a hub for senior activities and advancements. I want our Senior Citizens staying in Colonie to live, work and play. Our Town's Library continues to be recognized as a best library in the Capital Region. Our library now maintains nearly 250,000 holdings and provides expanding computer access portals all which play a pivotal role in the education our community. Our library presents so many opportunities to its patrons. It even maintains a TV station. As a judge, I filmed sixty-four shows for the library interviewing judges and attorneys of the highest order concerning our legal and justice systems and how they relate to the citizens of the Town of Colonie. My son, as a then Shaker student, after studying at the library, came home and told me that some of my shows were available for circulation on DVD. And then, he said, "do you know what, someone actually took one out." Aren't our children the best at humbling us?

Our Community Development Department continues to solicit applicants for federal funds we receive to support qualifying first-time home buyers and home repair projects and to support section eight housing needs.

Our Town's assessed value continues to rise. The combined assessed values of the properties within the North and South Colonie school districts alone total nearly \$6 billion which continues to allow our Town property taxes to be lower than many municipalities.

Our management information systems (MIS) will continue to modernize town operations. This year, we expect to make available the option to pay water bills online and I seek more complete electronic opportunities to facilitate the ease of use of Town services by our citizens. Credit card payments should be made available at entry points for our parks as well as for fees collected by the various Town departments. Also, new software has just been installed at the Colonie Town Golf Course to set up tee times for all patrons and to best organize and monitor the activity.

As to our golf course, I have established a committee to advise on the maintenance and operation of this asset. All procedures are under review in order to make the experience the best it can be for Town residents.

Our Human Resources and Civil Service departments face similar challenges as most in this room are facing. Recruitment and retention of personnel must be a top priority.

I believe our economic development Initiatives should support small businesses. My family was long involved in maintaining small businesses. Michael Crummey emigrated from Ireland to Albany in the 1860s as a twenty year old baker. He opened his first bakery in Albany on North Pearl Street. The family continued to grow the business in Albany and added a site at the intersection of Beaver and Lodge Streets and its last location at the former intersection of Hamilton and Eagle Streets. My dad's mother's family owned and operated WE Walsh & Sons in Albany from 1865 to 1977, my dad serving as its last President.

As a child, at home, you hear the adults speaking each night and each morning about the trials and tribulations of operating a small business. You learn of the successes and the failures of striving to maintain a business. Government should not foster unnecessary impediments to the establishment of commerce. I have shared my belief with all department heads including those involved in our Town's planning and building process. I work with Building and Planning officials daily to develop proper response times to applications for business start-ups. I have directed that an updated specification sheet be developed and implemented this year so all applicants will know the requirements for submittals. This saves time and money for the applicant as they are on notice up front of the submittal requirements and saves Town staff the time of having to review incomplete submittals and having to make extensive comments ultimately requiring reworking the submittal. I encourage a customer focused government.

Our green initiatives are already underway; just last month our Town board dedicated forty-one acres to be preserved and maintained by the Albany Pine Bush Commission expanding their environmental holdings to roughly 3400 acres. In addition, I have asked our Climate Smart Communities Task Force to achieve climate smart community designation for our Town in this calendar year.

Later this month, the town will finalize the purchase of 4000 street lights from National Grid ending escalating rental and electric costs and replacing each street light with LED lights which we already have in stock. We are told that this action will save money and use 50% less electricity in order to safely light our streets. We continue to sell methane from the landfill which is converted to electricity and the town receives energy credits paying several of our accounts by doing so.

Our Conservation Advisory Council on May 7th will distribute more than 1000 seedlings and pollinating plants to Town residents to celebrate Arbor Day. The Town has been designated as a Tree City USA for our commitment to protecting and promoting trees in Colonie.

The Planning Department continues to see evidence of economic recovery as the pace of new and redevelopment projects continue to pick up.

The Town's Economic Development Department, which supports the Industrial Development Agency and Local Development Corporation made some important strategic advances for the Town.

As many of you may know, I believe sustainability begins with a sound economy. A town where our children, their children and future generations can live work and play. You may have noticed new welcome Signs as you enter our Town, welcoming you to Colonie – "a great place to live, work and play." I work each day to keep these words true.

All of us in this room understand the challenges ahead. We are called upon to manage within the economic impacts of record levels of inflation, elevated energy costs and supply chain

disruptions. Let's work together cooperatively to meet these challenges and to maintain our proud history and forge a sustainable future for the Town of Colonie.

Harvey MacKay, a syndicated business columnist, whose column is found every Tuesday in our hometown Times Union newspaper, recently reminded us that, "Days are expensive; when you spend a day, you have one less day to spend." Let's leave here today and make this day and every day count. Our Town depends on it.

Thank you.