



2017 State of the City

Thank you, Chris Briggs, for that kind introduction, and more importantly, thank you for your partnership as President of the City Council. Thank you to the Chamber audience, and all of you for sharing this special moment with me.

A special thank you to my family, my wife Brenda, the bedrock of our family. My son Christopher and my two beautiful daughters Adrianna and Madison.

Tonight we are joined by many elected local and state officials, our honorable city judges and fellow colleagues. We are deeply honored to have you with us.

When I last spoke with many of you, in this very room last year, we just moved passed a very tough election, and I promised we would move past the political division. Our spirits were high, we believed in the possibility of change and the opportunity to write our story.

So, tonight, my 2nd State of the City, I share with you, our new story.

It started with an idea. An idea that Cohoes, New York could once again be an All America City, that we could re-energize our community, and people would feel the pride in being a Cohosier. So, we rebranded our spirit, and Cohoes Proud was born. I will tell you here tonight, the pride in this community is beaming and our goal of becoming an All America City is within our reach.

Today I can say with great pleasure, that our community is a different place than it was just one year ago.

The evidence is in the night sky above our city that illuminates from the beauty of our bell tower. The American flag shines high from our City Hall, delivering the message that our future is bright and our City is open for business and Cohosiers have the greatest respect for the men and women who serve our country- past, present and future!

My favorite quote is "Dream big or don't dream at all." Who dreams of winning a two dollar lottery ticket? During my campaign, I shared my bold vision at every doorstep. A vision of a new and revitalized downtown where investors would come to spend millions of dollars on new housing and business opportunities. Where the Arts and Entertainment would flourish and our bars and restaurants would overflow.

Well, as I stand here with you tonight, I can say, that our big dreams of last year are today's reality.

Let me share with you the many accomplishments of 2016:

- Our Comprehensive Plan is receiving its first facelift in 25 years. With funding from NYSERDA and partnering with The LaBerge Group and the University at Albany Planning Studio, the citizens and the stakeholders; we are well on our way.
- Cohoes Music Hall- the fourth oldest active music hall in the country. Where sadly, the stage has been silent, the seats empty, and the lights dim for too many years. But today, because we dreamed big, the Cohoes Music Hall is now our economic engine. Seeing thousands of visitors passed through its doors to sold out shows and those visitors packing our bars and restaurants and creating a vibrant downtown. All this in the first six months of operation. The Cohoes Music Hall has quickly become a premiere destination in the capital region. This did not happen by accident; it happened when Holly Brown and Owen Smith from the Palace Theater came to visit our music hall. We shared our vision and our big dreams for the rebirth of the City, and how the music hall would be the driving force behind the resurgence of our downtown. I'm excited to say that several weeks after that visit we become partners with the Palace Theater and the story written. Holly and Owen, thank you for believing in Cohoes Proud and taking a chance on us. The partnership has been more that we could have ever hoped for. I can't wait to see what the next few years bring.
- The Cohoes Hotel- Once the crown jewel for the wealthy and powerful who visited Cohoes while doing business at the great Harmony Mills, has sadly, become downtown's biggest eyesore. Over the past ten years, we have seen this beautiful structure filled with drugs, rodents and slowly decay from its days of glory. But today, because we dream big and our vision and commitment to revitalizing our downtown is not looked upon as political rhetoric. Rather a genuine strategy with the political will and courage to think out of the box. The calculated risk to fight through the bureaucracy that often leads to the status quo and the commitment to put our money where our mouth is! Paul and John Bonacquisti and their team will invest over 3 million dollars to restore the Cohoes Hotel back to its days of glory with new world class apartments. Also adding a new addition to the hotel, which will house twenty-three new market rate apartments that fit into our plan to repopulate our downtown. In addition to the 3 million dollar renovation of the Cohoes Hotel, Paul and John have just purchased the Harmony Market Place which consist of three buildings on Remsen Street and will invest tens of thousands of dollars in each of these properties. Paul and John, thank you for believing in Cohoes Proud and our vision of a new and thriving Remsen Street. With people like you believing in us we can't miss! I look forward to standing with you and your team as we become that All America City once again.
- The Remsen Street Project- by Capital Companies NY. Number 122 & 130 Remsen Street on the west side and 95, 103, 109 & 113 Remsen Street on the east side are all under contract with one of the Capital Regions most successful young developers. Thirteen (13) months ago, Cohoes, New York wasn't even a dot on the radar of Capital Companies - nevermind Remsen Street. But after spending an afternoon with us and listening to our vision of how Capital Companies could be part of the transformation of

our downtown, owner of Capital Companies Daniel Oh agreed. Following that agreement, Oh has since invested well over a million dollars to purchase all of these properties and will spend millions more in renovations. Furthermore, Danny is looking for more investment opportunities throughout our community that he will turn into top notch housing and business opportunities. Danny, it is awesome to have you as one of our partners. Your commitment to the City of Cohoes in just a few short months is incredible. Thank you for trusting in us, and thank you for taking such a huge leap of faith on a street called Remsen.

- Mosaic Village – Scott Townsend from 3t Architects and members from the Vecino Group take our slogan on Cohoes Proud to a whole new level. The Mosaic Village is an innovative, supportive and integrated model of housing that offers independent living for adults with autism spectrum disorder. This is the first project of its kind to ever be announced in the entire United States and with hopes of funding on the State level will someday soon be a reality.
- “Rock The Block” concert series- As with everything else, I want our downtown concerts to be the biggest and the best. I want our downtown to be the talk of the capital region. A Thursday night destination for people to enjoy and showcase our Downtown. Well, if you were one of the over 12,000 individuals who visited Canal Square this past summer, you know we ROCK THE BLOCK and it's only getting better. Soon, we will release our 2017 line up. If you like great music, I suggest you get yourself some dancing shoes and come on down!
- The Facility Dude- Last year I shared with you that for the first time in the City's history our residents would have the ability to go to the City website and fill out their personal work order. Requesting things like pothole repair, streetlight replacement, and garbage pickup. I'm proud to say, the employees of the DPW answered over 700 citizens requests for assistance and fixed their problems with 48 hours of their request. Also, the program allowed us to track all of the work we do as a city, and by having a better tracking system from a-z, we completed over 4800 work orders and saved \$75,000 in do it. Great Job DPW employees, especially Comissioner Radliff.
- Safe Streets Initiative + 2nd Shift of Detectives = a crime drop rate of 40% in our downtown and 33% citywide. New Assistant Chief Tom Ross, Captain Todd Pucci and Chief Heslin, you have made our city one of the safest in the Capital Region. You and all of your officers should be very proud! I know we are proud of you.
- The Cohoes Fire Department as always is the first call people make in time of need; this year was not different, over 3300 calls for assistant in 2016 and I'm proud to say we have the best fire department in the country. You may see a new gold color firetruck, with Cohoes Tiger logo on it around town. It's just another way of showing pride for our community.
- Citywide improvements of many aspects occurred in 2016. From new modern blue and white street signs that are easier to read and see, paving of a dozen major roadways to

new sidewalks along City Hall, I need to take this opportunity to thank Director of Operations Ralph Signoracci for all his hardwork and dedication to both visually enhance and prioritize many safety aspects throughout our City.

- Recreation Department 2016- we had the opportunity to partner with my good friend Albany County Executive Daniel McCoy. Through this partnership, we were able to bring to the City of Cohoes for the first time real AAU sports. We had over 100 kids partake in our weekly Karate program; we may have the toughest kids in America. We offered basketball, soccer, and tennis clinics. We had a full slate of summer programs for our community. Not just for kids, but adults alike. We hosted the park to park golf game and this coming weekend, a winter carnival. Even our beloved dog community has a Howl-o-ween party. Overall 2016 was a great year for family recreation, and 2017 will only be better. Thank you to Dan Hytko. You are one dedicated man and your comment to this community is second to none.
- Project Clean Streets –There is nothing more important than the appearance of your community, it is the first thing people notice when entering our city. Will they see garbage and broken windows, or will they see a gateway that beams with pride? I don't have to tell you what our choice was. New legislation passed by our Common Council to change the code requiring stricter fines on absentee landlords and educational classes for others was the first step to clean up our streets. Melissa Cherubino and all the code officers and staff, we are a cleaner city today than ever before because of your hard work and dedication.
- Quiet Zone- Finally, after many years of hard work the quiet zone is now in place and now every resident will have to invest in alarm clocks. The horns that once blasted throughout the community have been silenced. This improvement is especially beneficial to both residents and developers who would shy away from doing business in our city due to the loud train horns. A special thank you to our former Mayor and my Uncle, George Primeau who jumpstarted this project.
- Cayuga Plaza Towers- Anchoring our northern entrance to downtown is our 200 unit senior housing complex. The building has just sold to a downstate developer and a 20 million dollar renovation, and expansion will begin next year. Preservation Development Partners has seen our community burst with economic development opportunities and knew it was best to also get onboard the Cohoes Proud bandwagon.
- LDC and IDA policies and by-laws have been updated and are now in compliance with the Authority Budget Office and Public Authority rules and regulations.
- The LDC and IDA have partnered to acquire a line of credit to allow us to strategically acquire properties integral to our cities vision before they go on the market.

As you can see, we have been very busy over the past 12 months rebuilding our community, and believe me; we are just getting started! Most communities would be thrilled to have just one of the many great projects we have underway. But, for me, I will never be satisfied. We will work day and night until we receive that All America City status. Then and only then will I kick back, have a cigar and a glass of wine. Just for one day! And then back to work!

The success of our City is not squarely on my shoulders or that of the City Council. Indeed it rests in the hands of our hard working dedicated City employees. They are the ones I credit with the success of our community. They are the ones that make us Cohoes Proud. They are the ones who will lead us to an All America City. On behalf of all the citizens on Cohoes, thank you for what you do every day to make us a better community.

Here we are in 2017, just a few months into the new year. The question is how can we compete with last year? How can we do better than 2016? Is it even possible? Well, let me tell why we will be better. It all starts with Michael Jacobson (MJ), the Director of Economic Development and his staff. (Debbie Jacques, Melissa Cherubino who is our Director of Building Planning and Grant Writing and Garry Nathan our City Engineer) . MJ is the mastermind behind every one of the projects that I share with you tonight...

I guess my greatest accomplishment as Mayor was convincing MJ to come and be my partner.

1. Grants 450,000 new complete streets from Cayuga St to corner of Ontario and Remsen Street. New sidewalks, roads, streetscapes, bike lanes will be installed so people, bikes, cars, and buses can live in perfect harmony.
2. We also received funding to improve our historic visitors center to include a working canal lock model and river with other interactive kiosks to celebrate and educate our rich canal history.
3. We also just receive word that the City received \$850,000 from Bridge NY for repair to the culvert on Columbia Street.

Now if that was not enough for the first six weeks of 2017, let me share with you two major developments that are being announced for the first time here at the State of the City. A real game changer, one in the heart of Remsen Street and one that sits at the gateway into our downtown.

1. Number 12 White Street (Corner of Remsen and White)-currently a vacant lot that was reclaimed by the Cohoes Local Development Corporation with hopes of future development. This lot was once the home of the Cohoes Movie Theater where sadly it has been vacant for many years and one of our community eyesores. However today, it will rise again and be know as Remsen Place. A beautiful four story mixed use building with 20 rental units and 9,000 square feet of commercial space. A welcome addition to our community and a staple to our plan to repopulate our downtown as we continue to reinvest in Cohoes. Thank you to Dan Odabashian and Eric Moses of Remsen Place Apartments and partners Paul Halvax and Scott Townsend.

2. 100 Mohawk Street- A gateway corner to our downtown that once housed HSBC Bank will once again see new life after years of deterioration. I can't tell you how excited I am to announce for the first time tonight that Pioneer Bank will become part of the Cohoes family. Pioneer Bank is not just another bank, they are truly part of the community. Their reputation as the premier community bank is not in words alone but their actions. Thank you Thomas Amell, Frank Sarratori and David Farstad that you for believe in us, and seeing that we are a community on the rise and well on our way to being an All America City once again.

3. And finally, I have saved the sweet new addition of our community to the end..... and if you can say this three times fast, you will win a treat!!! Cake Street Sweets will be our newest addition to Remsen Street. A new specialty bakery that will be housed at the former Harmony Market Place. Congrats to Kayla Renfro and welcome to Cohoes. We are proud to have the opportunity to sample Cake Street Sweets delicious treats tonight as they were gracious enough to provide the refreshments.