

Mayor: Amy Praught

After being in office as the Mayor of the City of Johnstown for a full year and reflecting on all the challenges we've overcome, and the one's that still lie ahead great things are coming, and our city will capitalize on each opportunity presented as we move forward. I feel confident in the direction the city is going. I see the best days of Johnstown ahead, our city has so much to offer.

After years of City leaders debating the management structure at the Water Department the voters agreed to allow the city sole responsibility for management and control of our water resources. We successfully abolished the Water Board.

The Mayor and City Engineer, along with a dedicated work force and expert outside consulting will now manage the entire DPW/WATER Department workforce, which provided Immediate synergies, increased productivity through central decision making, and most importantly, a more cohesive team atmosphere.

One area the city is currently focused on is putting several projects back on track, while also bidding out on several others. Some of these projects include updated meter replacements, and larger projects like valve replacements and continuing infrastructure maintenance. Also, for the first time, we have instituted a succession plan for the all-important Plant Operator Position.

The city hired a new Human Resource Manager, Sue Conine in 2022. All personnel management questions, policy, and procedures will move through one person. This move has created success with compliance; employee insurance, payroll and benefits, training, document and personnel management, Sue has taken the lead in updating the City Employee Handbook which has not been updated since 2005. She has provided additional guidance to City employees to ensure each person has a safe place to come about any challenges they might be facing. Sue

has fostered a relationship with Civil Service, to make sure we're staying up to date on compliance and notification with this agency. Sue has become a real asset to the city.

Moving forward, the City is starting fresh in 2023 with a new City Attorney, Mike Albanese, who will bring a fresh and new perspective to many opportunities and challenges the City may face. We have also hired a new Labor Attorney, Jay Girvin. Jay and his firm have been serving our area for many years and come with extensive experience in labor law and collaborating with numerous governmental agencies. This is a great opportunity for the City as we move forward negotiating with the 2024 labor Union Contracts across all departments.

Technology is continually evolving, and integrated systems and workflows are critical to any city's efficiency and success. So, after years of endless roadblocks with previous IT partners and complications with noncompliance of state Regulations. The city has officially contracted with a new IT Company PNJ 2022. We have seen immediate success with their implemented solution. Most notably - We are now in compliance with the State. This is another example of how past administrations have ineffectively managed their processes and have given employees too much to oversee, or projects that are beyond their scope. **Johnstown will see an estimated savings this year over \$50,000 Annually.**

Moving forward positively. Even in the Home of Continental Telephone, unbelievably Johnstown has been without a phone system contract for a few years. This has been a challenge to say the least. In 2022 after considerable consultation and discussion, we have successfully signed a contract with First Light to take over. Again, we have already seen success in implementing many features that will make processes simpler and more efficient for the staff and public to utilize.

Updates in the Treasurer's Department. After many years of community feedback, all residents can now pay property taxes and parking tickets online.

The Treasurer's Department has implemented a new software system that will soon make it possible to pay everything online. This software is also providing the opportunity for our City to make day to day operations more effective and attainable for each department to control the budget lines so we can be more fiscally efficient each year at budget time.

As I mentioned, the City still is facing and working through several challenges due to poor previous management, and no system backups or any sign of best practices by the previous City Treasurer. The software is on a temporary hold due to the AUD reports not being completed.

The NEW city treasurer, Tom Herr and his team have had to make up 4 years of Back AUD reports for the State of NY. A challenging and time-consuming task that they have accomplished almost from scratch in 18 months. Without these, the city cannot move forward with any projects that require bonding. The council is aware that this alone has caused undue financial setbacks and has cost the city valuable taxpayer dollars through delays and costs associated with hiring outside companies to complete the AUD. As soon as the AUD's have been completed, it will allow us to get back on track building the City financial structure to 2023 standards. The goal date for completion is early spring. This has certainly been one of the biggest challenges for the city in the past 5 years. **HOWEVER** even with all these challenges the City of Johnstown is financially solvent.

The inability to bond for the last year 18 months has also affected the city, **however** with constant open communication. streamlined management and better understanding our balance sheet, we have moved forward with projects and needed expenditures, such as new fire pumper to replace our 1989 model(yes it 30 years old) , new salt barn on

Crescendo Road to better manage and Identify cost savings on salt usage and distribution, paving streets, purchasing additional police vehicle as needed for the service and protection of the citizens , Updated electrical power and cameras in City parks, a New plow truck, and a new dump truck. The rescue money we received, paired with the City's general fund afforded us the ability to move forward with these much-needed projects.

The lack of work and out right destruction done in the Treasurer's office is incomprehensible due to the actions of the last administration. My administration has focused on accountability and transparency when it comes to taxpayer money. I now am confident that we have the right people in key positions that has started us on a positive path for Johnstown.

Moving forward for a better Johnstown. After many discussion with Chief Heberer and his team. We decided to reset our staffing at the Ambulance Service to 4 full time paramedics. This will enable us to enhance our cost management processes, as well as cut back overtime substantially, which ultimately leads to employee burn out.

The city understands this service is vital. However, many communities our size are without ambulance services.

We are working with Fulton County to better understand the cost and are receiving some financial support. At the end of the day, our city deserves that support. So as we look forward to future discussions, we remain steadfast in our goal: to dutifully serve our local communities and expand services without overwhelming city staff.

Just a reminder the Ambulance Service has never been part of the City of Johnstown Budget and the residents do not pay for this service. Unbelievably Ambulance Service is not considered an emergency service, so we rely on grants and other private funding

sources to keep this service going. **In the future, we will need additional local government support.**

On this topic, I would like to recognize Assemblyman Smullens for his work in securing the City of Johnstown Ambulance Service a \$50,000 NYS Grant towards purchasing a much-needed new ambulance. The search for additional funding is challenging and is not always recognized. However, we must continue to make this a priority, and you can be assured that my administration will.

Tom Herr, Councilperson Eric Parker and myself attended a 3-day NYCOM conference which all of us returned with knowledge and ideas from other municipalities and NYCOM leaders that we can use to better our City. It is important to continue to learn and educate yourself in any position you hold in the City, whether it be appointed or elected.

The one thing I have heard from the residents this year is a noticeable difference with blight and positive compliances with ordinances. Citizens want this to continue in 2023 we must continue to enforce all ordinances regardless of who or where in the city it occurs.

I take a great deal of pride in my administration being wholly transparent I want this City to look and feel like a beautiful Norman Rockwell painting. Yes, I realize that I cannot necessarily make this happen, however I will work as hard as I possibly can with Code Enforcement and DPW to keep this City as well kept as possible. The City has outstanding DPW workers that take a great deal of pride in the parks and street of this City with an incredible attention to detail. For that, the City thanks you all!

Moving into 2023 and beyond, there is much to do. We are on a multiyear plan for improvement. The city plans to start updating the Code of Ordinance and eventually making it available online, so the public has firsthand access to City Codes. This has not been done since 1968. It is time.

Grant writing and the opportunities for this City to benefit are endless, however as I mentioned until AUDs are complete, we cannot provide the accurate financial records needed to show the City's financial standing. Once we have achieved completion of the AUD's I will be engaging grant writers for opportunities that will move our City forward in success One specifically - to add more green space to our community.

This City must become competitive with other municipalities and will move forward with ideas and active development within our community. A focus on Increased Housing opportunities in and around the city must also become a priority for growth and tax base stabilization.

The City has reprised the Johnstown Loan Fund with the help of the CRG, which will allow us to loan money to businesses in the City. The loan fund currently totals approx. \$170,000.00 to which the CRG will oversee the administration of. The CRG will also continue to be a partner in helping local businesses and continue to help grow enterprise and industry expansion. These partnerships are paramount to the success of our community.

The City Engineer, Chris Vose and I have already met with CT Male about creating an analysis process and list of priorities, so that we can be shovel ready once the infrastructure bill has been distributed. We believe this due diligence of preparation and planning could potentially put us in a better position to get funds faster.

In closing, at the beginning of my speech I indicated that I see the best years of Johnstown ahead and I do. Working in partnership with City County, and Intermunicipal local partners. There is still work to be done in effectively attracting new citizens and making Johnstown a more competitive market for incoming businesses and new industry partners.

I will continue to move forward with issues of compliance, financial stability, green space, infrastructure projects, promoting local businesses and will always be willing to collaborate with other municipalities to

partner whenever we can as long as the City of Johnstown benefits. Sharing services is really the way to go due to the day and age we live in. The opportunities are endless when we share services and ideas we all benefit.

Thank You