

State of the Town

January 24, 2013

Welcome, my friends! Has it really been **over a year** since the last state of the Town? **Whoosh!** Since this is Chamber sponsored event, I would like to take the time to thank **President Judy Sirianni** and the Board of Directors of the Clarence Chamber of Commerce for putting together this event and the press who are attendance today for covering not only the State of the Town but also all the events that have impacted Town of Clarence residents in 2012 and will have an effect on their lives in 2013. All three newspapers and TV station YNN have been comprehensive in their coverage of all that happens in our town. In the words of former President Garfield, "Not for its own sake alone, but for the sake of society and good government, the press should be free. Publicity is the strong bond which unites the people and their government. Authority should do no act that will not bear the light."

I would also like to thank the councilmen, my department heads (in fact, many are here today) and the hard working employees of the Town of Clarence for a **great** year. It would not be an exaggeration to say that 2012 has been crazy-busy. Both the Clarence Town Board and the Town of Clarence Industrial Development Agency have been working overtime to bring new business into the town of Clarence and to keep taxes low by selective development in designated areas. My talk today will focus on the progress that we have made in 2012 and my projections for 2013. I will be taking questions at the end of my presentation. Due to popular demand, I brought back both Planners Jim Callahan and Brad Packard.

What have we done over the past 12 months??

1. Dropped the tax rate in the Town of Clarence. While most of the other towns have had tax increases, we had a decrease. We will continue to work overtime in 2013 to make Clarence affordable for all of the residents. We are currently involved in a line-by- line review of the 2103 budget so that we can cut taxes **again** in 2014.
2. We approved the first new **affordable** senior housing in the Town of Clarence in years. Located at the corner of Roll and Transit rd., this new project will give seniors an affordable alternative to moving out of the Town of Clarence.
3. We revamped the Town of Clarence Park Security Force to provide the maximum number of hours/officers/vehicles during the summer months. The presence of town security will be greatly increased this summer, especially on the bike paths and in the Town parks.
We have added seven new positions for security officers, and they will be either on foot, on bikes or in golf carts. This increased presence in the Town of Clarence will enhance security in all major parks and especially along the peanut line bike path.
4. We requested (and received) from Moody's an increase in the Town of Clarence bond rating from AA2 to AA1. We are currently borrowing (in the short term) at .52% and on longer term projects at 2.1%+/- . This means that all borrowing that takes place over the next 20 years will cost taxpayers **MUCH** less than it did during the last 20 years.
5. We brought in grant writer Bernie Rotella, who is the principal grant writer for the Town of Amherst. We are currently working on over **one million dollars** in new grant money for the town of Clarence, and expect to see the adoption of the first grant- based projects in 2013.
6. We welcomed Paula's Donuts, Towne Mini, Niagara Produce and Dr. Laura Wade's 'Specialized Care for Avian & Exotic Pets' to the Town of Clarence. The cost of these three projects (in the form of tax abatement's) to Clarence taxpayers was minimal, but the benefits will be measured in millions of dollars over many, many of years.

7. The Parks department now has **two** outdoor ice rinks. One is in the Town Park off of Main St., and is usually frozen by the time that Winterfest rolls around. This year, Winterfest will be held on Sunday, January 27th from noon to 5PM at the Town Park on Main St. The second rink, which is new, is in the very back corner of Meadowlakes Park. The Parks department has flooded Meadowlakes Park, and this natural pond is available for hockey or figure skating to any kid in Clarence with a shovel and a pair of skates.
8. As one of the fastest growing towns in Western New York, it is our responsibility as elected official and stewards of this amazing town to see that it continues to retain its unique characteristics. We voted to continue funding the Greenprint project that was started in 2002 by then Supervisor Kathy Hallock. Under the supervision of the Recreation Advisory Committee Chairman Peter Wolfe, the Greenprint program has preserved hundreds of acres of fields and forest that will not be developed and will continue to enhance the rural nature of the Town of Clarence for future generations.

What is on board for 2013?

1. Our #1 goal is always to lower taxes down-**again**- and to **increase** services to Town of Clarence residents. We will continue to be relentless in keeping costs down via shared services and other long term improvements currently in the pipeline that will keep our tax rate among the lowest in Erie County for the next 20 years.
2. We have added additional information to the agenda that we use at our Town Board meeting. This attempt to become more transparent to our taxpayers ensures that everyone in the Town of Clarence knows what is going to be discussed and voted on well ahead of the meeting.
3. We will be adding additional services for the youth and recreation department. The swimming pool will be receiving a major upgrade this March in the form of a new pool liner, curvy slide, life guard chair and handicapped accessible lift in the deep end of the pool. We also have a new NBA style basketball court planned for the park at Town Hall.
4. A Town Wide Satisfaction survey will be going out in the January 30th issue of the Clarence Bee. The last time we took a survey was 2009, and the response was sparse. This time, everyone who receives the Bee will get a survey. With a circulation of over 6000 in the Town of Clarence, we will get a jump start on reaching all 10,000 homes. Those residents that **do not** receive the Bee can take the survey **on line** via the Town of Clarence website. Lastly, residents who do not get the Bee or have a computer can pick up a copy of the survey at my office. It can be mailed anonymously to Town Hall or residents who want a call back can list their name and phone number. I will read every survey, and results will be tabulated and posted on the Town of Clarence website in the middle of March.
5. We hope that Kittinger will finish the move to the Town of Clarence in 2013. The Planning Board, Planning Department and the Clarence Industrial Development Agency are all in agreement that this project would bring both the jobs and additional revenue to the Town of Clarence. The Erie County Industrial Development Agency will get the first crack at approving this excellent project, and we sincerely hope that they vote to give it the **thumbs up**. If they don't, the Clarence Industrial Agency will get a chance to vote the following week.

Thank you! all for coming out on this **chilly** January afternoon. I truly appreciate the fact that you took the time to find out the current State of the Town in Clarence, NY. I urge you all to take the time to get involved and to make this town a better place to live. My door is always open, and I urge you to come by and chat. After all, all public officials work for you, not the other way around. Good luck in 2013, and may God continue to bless you and your families in the coming year.