

---

---

**ONEONTA CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE**  
**STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

---

---

February 18, 2015

To Mayor Russ Southard and Members of City Council:

Pursuant to § C-16 of the Code of the City of Oneonta, I do hereby submit my "State of the City Report".

2014 was a year of tragedy, transition and leadership change as the City dealt with the loss of our beloved **Mayor Dick Miller**; solicited City Charter refinement recommendations and hired a new City Manager.

The community will always remember Mayor Dick Miller for his quick wit, commitment, dedication and many contributions to the City of Oneonta. In honor of his legacy, we will forge ahead with his vision of a vibrant community, as vivacious as the man himself that affords equal opportunities for all.

Upon the passing of Mayor Miller, and pursuant to provisions in the City Charter, the City Council voted unanimously to have Councilman **Russ Southard** continue his role as Acting Mayor until January 1, 2016 when a new mayor will be voted into office to fill the unexpired term of Mayor Miller.

Following the departure of Michael Long, the City's first City Manager, and having operated under this City Charter for three years, (adopted November 11, 2011) the Common Council sought an objective review of the Charter and its implementation. Upon the recommendation of the Mayor, the Common Council requested that the original Charter Commission members serve as a Charter Review Commission. The explicit purpose of the **Charter Review Commission** was to assess how the Charter is working. The Charter Review Commission issued its Final report on July 31, 2014 and tasked the incoming City Manager with implementation of full compliance of city government operations as prescribed in the Charter.

**Martin D. Murphy**, ICMA-CM, was appointed as the City's second City Manager in September, 2014. Mr. Murphy has over 25 years' experience in village, city and county government operations. Murphy has a Master of Public Administration degree, is a Credentialed Manager by the International City County Managers Association (ICMA), is a qualified member of the

American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) and is certified by the National Development Corporation as an Economic Development Finance Professional.

Despite the many changes and challenges, the City forged ahead and made very notable achievements and much has been accomplished to advance various and specific plans already in process. One of the most notable achievements in 2014 was, after two and one-half years of concerted effort, recognition of the **Oneonta Police Department** as an accredited police agency by the state Law Enforcement Accreditation Council. Less than 30% of the 500 law enforcement agencies in New York State have attained such distinction.

The **Center for Public Safety Management (CPSM)** was retained by the City to complete an abridged operational and administrative analysis of the city's fire department fleet. Fire departments tend to deploy resources utilizing traditional approaches which are rarely reviewed. As a result of this study, the Fire Department will complete a fire and community risk assessment as a component of future department and city planning and develop a formal vehicle strategic replacement plan that is benchmarked against national fire and fleet standards. In 2015 the City will spend over \$1 million to replace the 1987 aerial apparatus and the current brush truck vehicle that does not have the equipment, water, and pump capacity modern brush trucks have. A much more comprehensive analysis of police, fire and ems services designed specifically to provide local government with a thorough and unbiased analysis of emergency services is included in the 2015 budget.

**Housing Visions**, a not-for-profit corporation, will continue to work on their Silver Creek proposal to construct a four-story building with four 40 senior housing units and two, 4-unit townhouses on Monroe Avenue. The proposal also calls for the rehabilitation/demolition/construction of selected sites that will result in the development of eight new housing units. The project is slated for completion in 2016.

Several of the departmental goals established for 2015 include recommendations identified in the **2013 Comprehensive Housing Plan** including, but not limited to, improving land use review procedures to assure timely and objective decisions, developing a broad based communication strategy, creating a sustainable incentive program to address safety and, building stabilization and neighborhood blight.

I am pleased to announce a major downtown initiative that will integrate several separate but interrelated projects into a single, comprehensive strategy to stimulate new investment and development of the Downtown Entertainment District. The primary purpose of the **Downtown Redevelopment Plan** will be identifying major development site(s) to stimulate downtown reinvestment; identify potential redevelopment sites with preliminary "build out" scenarios of vacant and underutilized sites; identify potential markets for retail development, professional office space, downtown housing needs assessment of available housing types and market rates and, demand for additional hotel and hotel rooms and improvements. Ultimately, the goal is to generate independent traffic to the downtown area and to give travelers a reason to exit off Rt. 88 and enjoy the many attributes of the greater Oneonta area.

The strategy will enhance the City of Oneonta as a twelve-month destination for those seeking a vibrant downtown environment with strong culinary excellence, outstanding craft beer production and tasting joined with sought after entertainment choices.

The Downtown Redevelopment Plan is made possible by a 2013, \$75,000 Empire State Development matching grant that will incorporate a \$20,000 Downtown Hotel Study and a \$400,000 Main Street Streetscape project. Working closely with the successful consultant, city staff will coordinate and implement a \$200,000 NY Main Street Commercial Renovation Project; a \$200,000 Microenterprise Business Grant Program; a \$227,000 Neahwa Park Entrance Improvement Project; and a \$600,000 Infrastructure improvement Project along Market Street.

A valued partnership forged by late Mayor Miller with the Otsego County Industrial Development Agency (OCIDA) continues to move forward with a jointly developed vision for downtown re-investment, neighborhood re-development and a strategy to bring the **Oneonta Rail Yards** back as an economic driver for the City. A jointly supported focus on Market Street, including the attraction of a “food hub” project and boutique hotel to the area continues with strong support. Connecting Market Street to Main Street providing a natural flow of consumers with an enhance access to a renovated Damaschke Field will also be important priorities.

A review of growth opportunities in the **River Street** area continues as significant infrastructure, strong highway access and property poised for re-development as key drivers. A “hard look” at the potential growth and value of the airport is a future agenda item with focus of investment and business related projects. Lastly, countywide broadband is moving forward providing important connections to the City, our business community and an amenity necessary for suburban and rural growth of residents dependent on strong broadband resources.

Overall, growing the City, enhancing the walkable connections, creating sites for dynamic investment and adding exciting things to enjoy year-round are jointly identified goals embraced by both City government and our economic development partners at the IDA.

In conclusion, much has been accomplished during these challenging times and more hard work lay ahead but we are well-positioned to leverage the unique characteristics, natural resources and exceptional quality of life that make Oneonta such a wonderful place to live and work.