

2024 STATE OF THE CITY

Jamestown, New York

PRESENTED BY
Mayor Kimberly A. Ecklund



People Over Politics

JAMESTOWN CITY COUNCIL

MAY 2024

DELIVERED TO MEMBERS OF THE JAMESTOWN CITY COUNCIL MAY 2024

To Council President Dolce, Council Members, and to all residents of Jamestown:

As we reflect on the progress and challenges of the past year, it is with great anticipation and dedication that I present this update to the esteemed members of the Jamestown City Council and our beloved residents. The assessment of the City's status for 2023 is ongoing. Despite the recent completion of the Annual 2022 Fiscal Audit, its delayed submission created significant challenges. With the 2022 audit now concluded, our administration is focusing on finalizing the 2023 financials. It is crucial to have a comprehensive understanding of our financial position at the end of 2023 to accurately portray the current state of the city in 2024. Until the audit for 2023 is finalized, we are unable to offer a detailed summary of the year. However, I'd like to take this opportunity to provide everyone with an update on the developments at City Hall since assuming office on January 1, 2024.

This report encapsulates the collective efforts and achievements of our administration since assuming office, highlighting key areas of focus and outlining the path forward for our vibrant city. From fostering collaborative partnerships to enhancing operational efficiency, from prioritizing financial accountability to revitalizing our infrastructure, this document offers a comprehensive overview of our commitment to serving the best interests of Jamestown. As we embark on the journey ahead, let us unite in our vision for a prosperous and inclusive community where every individual can thrive.

Establishing Collaborative Partnerships & Effective Communication

Since the beginning of our tenure, our administration has diligently convened with all departments and department heads to facilitate a seamless transition. We have prioritized fostering an open line of communication with our locally elected officials at the county, state, and federal offices, and constituents, fostering ongoing collaboration. Furthermore, our administration is dedicated to nurturing strong relationships and fostering trust within our community. We recognize the importance of holding ourselves and others accountable for their actions, which is reflected in our commitment to making tough decisions that prioritize the best interests of our constituents. Embracing the fundamental value of government transparency, we are resolute in providing clear and accessible information to the public. Above all, we stand firm in our pledge to always prioritize the needs of the people, ensuring that every decision reflects our unwavering commitment to serving our community with integrity and compassion.

Enhancing Operational Efficiency at City Hall

By conducting a thorough evaluation across all departments, we have addressed discrepancies in City Hall's operating hours. Implementing a standardized work shift for employees ensures consistent accessibility for constituents. Previously, certain offices had been closed during lunch breaks. To maintain productivity during peak hours, we have introduced staggered employee breaks, ensuring continuous service unless staffing constraints prevent it. These endeavors underscore our dedication to enhancing City Hall's accessibility and responsiveness to our residents' needs.

Advancements in Software Infrastructure for Enhanced Efficiency & Engagement

Exciting developments are underway in our software infrastructure at City Hall. We have initiated the rollout of two new software platforms, Springbrook and GovPilot. These updates represent a significant shift towards improved efficiency, process streamlining, and enhanced user experience.

By consolidating information into centralized platforms, we are eliminating redundant documentation across multiple programs and applications. The new software will not only be more user-friendly but also facilitate greater interactivity and collaboration between departments. Access to information will be swift and seamless, empowering our teams to make informed decisions promptly.

One notable feature of the GovPilot software is its mobile app, allowing constituents to submit grievances directly. This real-time communication channel ensures that concerns are promptly addressed, enabling a more responsive approach to community needs. We are excited for the implementation of this feature once GovPilot nears the completion of its activation process.

With data centralized, we anticipate significant savings in payroll time, enabling our workforce to concentrate on delivering exceptional services to our residents. These software upgrades highlight our ongoing commitment to innovation and efficiency, laying the groundwork for a more connected and responsive municipal administration.

Prioritizing Financial Accountability & Stability

Addressing the budgetary challenges facing our city is a top priority for our administration. Currently, our budget exceeds projections, necessitating decisive action to achieve balance. We have diligently worked to reduce overspending over the last several months and will continue to do so in the future. Moving forward, we

remain committed to prudent financial management, conducting thorough reviews of expenditures to identify inefficiencies and eliminate wasteful practices. Our primary focus is on prioritizing essential services while ensuring the judicious use of taxpayer dollars. Transparency, accountability, and the fiscal well-being of our community are our guiding principles.

As of February 20, 2024, Fiscal Year 2022 has been closed, but efforts to prepare for the audit for Fiscal Year 2023 are ongoing. We recently extended our contract with Drescher & Malecki to continue conducting annual audits through 2027. Alongside the extension, we are implementing new standard procedures to ensure timely closing in the future. Subsequent to turnover and vacancy within the Comptroller's Office, over the past couple of years, led to a range of inconsistencies and inaccuracies. We are swiftly addressing and fixing issues to maintain financial stability, ensure accuracy, and foster consistency in our operations going forward. The appointment of Ericka Thomas as City Comptroller on Day 1 will help facilitate the resolution of these issues.

Revitalizing the City of Jamestown Website: Enhancing Accessibility & User Experience

Our administration has undertaken the significant initiative of thoroughly evaluating and enhancing the accessibility, ease of use, functionality, and information available on the City of Jamestown website. This comprehensive effort involved updating outdated links, verifying the accuracy of pages and attachments, and streamlining the organization of information. Additionally, we have enriched the homepage with additional resources for effortless access, updated the landing slide to highlight new and time-sensitive items, and revamped the calendar for improved usability. Ensuring up-to-date information, we have meticulously updated Council Members' details and added guidelines on requesting the lighting of City Hall. Furthermore, all department pages have been refreshed, Contact Us

information has been updated, and we have consolidated the process for accessing committee, board, and council minutes and agendas. To enhance our user experience, we have made email links clickable and standardized the website's color scheme for easy recognition. As part of our ongoing efforts, we are currently developing a Frequently Asked Questions page, gathering input from all departments to address constituents' most common inquiries. This page will consolidate regularly sought-after information onto a single, easily searchable platform, complete with direct links to relevant resources on the website.

Update on Washington Street Maintenance Garage Project

Upon assuming office, our administration undertook a comprehensive review of the Washington Street Maintenance Garage project. The current financial investment and expenditures have been accounted for up until the end of 2023. No funds have been allocated to this project through March 2024, and the administration had not expended any resources on it until an evaluation was completed. Our immediate primary objective was to accurately assess the current project status before proceeding with funding for its completion.

We tasked our Acting Director of Public Works (Mark Roetzer, Jr. P.E.) and the new City Comptroller (Ericka Thomas) with evaluating the project's status, identifying outstanding tasks, and determining the final costs required to bring the facility to completion and functionality.

Following an in-depth analysis, it became evident that the project's last cost assessment in 2023 vastly underestimated the additional expenses necessary for its completion. The prevailing inflationary pressures on both goods and services further exacerbated the situation, significantly inflating the overall project cost.

In response to these challenges, our team diligently explored avenues to streamline costs and services. We made it a priority to communicate our findings

transparently with the public and City Council, underscoring our commitment to accountability and seeking viable solutions.

A bonding proposal was presented to City Council, voted on, and subsequently approved. The bond totals approximately \$2.7 million dollars, covering additional expenses and finalizing the construction of the fleet maintenance building. Despite anticipating a \$1 million dollar grant, which would alleviate a portion of the bonded amount, we proceeded with bonding the full sum to ensure seamless progress and timely project completion, thus preempting any further delays and associated costs.

Currently, we are preparing for the final construction work and equipment relocation to the new facility. Our aim is to achieve full operational status by late summer.

Status Update on American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds Allocation & Distribution

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law on March 11, 2021, aiming to provide economic relief to state and local governments grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic. Jamestown was allocated \$28.079 million in ARPA funding, earmarked for projects aligning with U.S. Department of Treasury guidelines. As of February 2024, approximately 90% of the total funds have been designated for specific initiatives, including infrastructure development, economic recovery program, public health initiatives, and community support services. The remaining 10% is reserved for contingencies, pending further evaluation of emerging needs and priorities.

Currently, we are in the final stages of assessing the allocation and utilization of these funds under the diligent oversight of City Comptroller Ericka Thomas. A comprehensive audit of expenditures and remaining funds is underway across all municipal departments. With a projected balance of just over \$1 million

from the ARPA allocation, we are strategically considering various initiatives to maximize the benefits for residents. A top priority is addressing the long-overdue roof replacement at City Hall. This commitment to essential infrastructure improvements underscores our dedication to fiscal responsibility and citizen well-being.

Moreover, the looming deadline stipulating that all ARPA funds must be allocated and contracts signed by the end of 2024 adds urgency to our efforts. Prioritizing projects addressing immediate needs while contributing to long-term resilience is paramount. As we progress with our comprehensive report, our commitment to meeting the ARPA deadline reaffirms our dedication to responsible stewardship of public funds and the continued advancement of residents' quality of life.

Enhancing Grant Initiatives in Jamestown

The City of Jamestown continues to make significant strides in securing grants, largely due to the exceptional efforts of our dedicated grant writer, Paula Pichon. Through meticulous research and strategic planning, we have successfully identified and secured numerous opportunities to support critical projects and programs that directly benefit our community.

Moving forward, our commitment to expanding grant initiatives remains steadfast. We are actively exploring new avenues for funding and leveraging these resources effectively to drive positive change and enhance the quality of life for all Jamestown residents.

Notable recent grants awarded to the city include \$50,000 for the Chadakoin River Master Plan and \$100,000 for an Engineering and Planning Grant (EPG) for the Board of Public Utilities.

Furthermore, we have recently completed the preparation and submission of several applications for the 2025 Congressionally Directed Spending Requests with the Federal Government. This process demanded meticulous coordination and collaboration between our grant writer and department heads. To enhance our chances of securing funds, we proactively gathered multiple letters of support to accompany our applications and bolster our request for funding. Despite not receiving funds in recent years, we are optimistic about our prospects for 2025.

Joint Effort: Mayor and City Council Unite to Advocate for Increased AIM Funding in 2024 – 2025 State Budget

In a unanimous decision on February 26, 2024, the City Council of Jamestown, alongside Mayor Kimberly Ecklund, approved a resolution proudly supporting the recent Senate and Assembly Legislation urging Governor Kathy Hochul to bolster AIM (Aid & Incentives for Municipalities) Funding in the upcoming 2024-2025 Adopted Budget. Recognizing the vital role AIM plays in sustaining local services and infrastructure, our joint commitment in advocating for increased funding underscores our dedication to meeting the evolving needs of our community. By advocating for a stronger financial foundation through AIM, we aim to enhance our capacity to deliver essential services, support economic development initiatives, and ensure a high quality of life for all residents. We stand united in our efforts to secure the necessary resources to foster growth and prosperity within our beloved city.

In addition to Jamestown, municipalities such as Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Albany also endorsed this Senate and Assembly Legislation. With a unified voice across the state, we stood in solidarity and conveyed to Governor Hochul and other key decision-makers that additional AIM funding is a priority and necessity.

With the release of the FY 2025 Enacted State Budget in April, we were delighted to learn that it includes a \$50 million temporary increase in AIM funding for local governments. This marks the first increase in AIM funds in over a decade and underscores the importance of pursuing such allocations in future years.

Community Collaboration in Addressing Homelessness

Addressing homelessness remains a priority, and our administration has been actively collaborating with various agencies and organizations to provide support. We have met with non-profits, churches, local community members, and county agencies to foster an open communication and partnership. Our administration strongly advocated for the prompt opening of the Code Blue Emergency Shelter with Recovery Options Made Easy (ROME) in February. We are also pleased to announce the commencement of construction on the Women's Shelter, scheduled to open in late 2024 with 18 beds.

Additionally, our administration was in communication with the United Christian Advocacy Network (UCAN) following their closure due to asbestos concerns. We received updates indicating that the remediation process was progressing positively, and we are happy to report that they have since resumed full operations.

In efforts to address homelessness, the involvement of every community member is essential. We are dedicated to providing assistance and promoting information sharing to effectively confront this challenge. While we are committed partners, it is key to recognize that Chautauqua County and Chautauqua Opportunities Inc. (COI) lead as the designated continuum of care and homelessness prevention service providers for the entire county.

Strengthening Communities in Jamestown

In response to impending New Housing Legislation in New York State, the Department of Development (DOD) proposed a comprehensive overhaul to combat housing issues in our city. With the approval of two new city ordinances by the City Council and another on the horizon, Jamestown is taking proactive steps to address these challenges.

The Vacant Property Ordinance targets LLCs and absentee landlords to prevent property neglect and deterioration. The proliferation of vacant properties, exacerbated by the LLC loophole, has negatively impacted communities statewide, including Jamestown. These neglected properties often become hotspots for criminal activity, posing hardships for tenants, residents, and taxpayers by reducing property values. The ordinance mandates registration of vacant properties and requires contact information for a local representative available at all times, with penalties for non-compliance.

The Public Nuisance Ordinance is aimed at addressing illegal activities that frequently draw the attention of both law enforcement and code enforcement agencies. This ordinance enforces penalties, such as temporary condemnation of problematic properties and the possibility of jail time for repeated offenses, to deter such activities.

Additionally, the forthcoming Rental Inspection Ordinance will focus on ensuring landlords maintain their properties to a high standard. Initial and subsequent inspections will be conducted on rental properties to uphold community aesthetics, safety, and property standards.

Through these initiatives, Jamestown aims to revitalize its housing sector, bolster community safety, and enhance the overall quality of life for its residents.

The Impact of Executive Order 30 and the Pro-Housing Community Program

In July 2023, Governor Kathy Hochul signed Executive Order 30, leading to the establishment of the Pro-Housing Community Program. This initiative signifies an innovative approach to acknowledging and incentivizing local governments dedicated to addressing the housing crisis across New York State.

The Pro-Housing Community Program is a policy framework designed to incentivize municipalities to address housing challenges in their areas. It promotes the simplification of permitting processes for housing projects, the adoption of fair housing policies, the incorporation of regional housing needs into local planning, and the implementation of strategies for diverse housing development.

Localities that attain Pro-Housing designation stand to benefit significantly, as they will receive priority consideration for key state discretionary funding programs. With up to \$650 million in state discretionary funds earmarked for these designated communities, the program offers a substantial financial incentive to drive meaningful progress in housing initiatives.

In February, the City Council of Jamestown took a pivotal step forward by passing a resolution to pledge its commitment to becoming a Pro-Housing Community. This forward-thinking decision reflects Jamestown's dedication to addressing the housing challenges head-on and its eagerness to access vital state discretionary funding to support its endeavors.

In March, we were informed that we had received Pro-Housing Certification. We are committed to maintaining this certification for 2025 and beyond through our ongoing efforts.

Economic Development Milestone in the Heart of Jamestown

The City of Jamestown has witnessed remarkable strides in economic development, with numerous noteworthy projects contributing to our community's growth and vitality. Among these initiatives are the redevelopment and expansion of Tim Hortons by TAR Enterprises, the expansion of The Chop House on Main, the Brazil/Labyrinth expansion, and the Lafayette Street addition and expansion at Dave Warren Auto Group. Furthermore, Shawbucks is set to undergo a redevelopment and expansion, while the commencement of work at 106-108 Fairmount Avenue signals the beginning of the Prendergast Landing project, representing a significant milestone in the revitalization of our cityscape.

We take pride in announcing the successful completion of both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Chadakoin River Basin Stabilization Project, which sets the stage for the Chadakoin River Basin Activation Project, significantly enhancing our waterfront amenities for residents and visitors. Looking to the future, we eagerly anticipate the opening of a new brewery in the Jamestown Brewing building, under the ownership of the Wicked Warren's group, with plans for an anticipated grand opening in summer 2024. Moreover, we are excited about the upcoming establishment of a state-of-the-art facility for Northwest Savings Bank in Brooklyn Square.

As we celebrate these achievements, we remain resolute in our commitment to collaborate with our partners to sustain the momentum of economic development within the City of Jamestown. Together, we aim to foster a vibrant and thriving community for all.

Agreement to Secure Tarp Skunks and Russell Diethrick Park Stadium until 2030

Our administration wholeheartedly supported the recently amended lease agreement between the City of Jamestown and Jamestown Community Baseball, which secures the usage of Russell Diethrick Park Stadium by the Tarp Skunks until 2030. This extension guarantees that the league will continue to enhance the local sports scene for years to come, fostering camaraderie and excitement among residents and visitors alike. The Tarp Skunks hold a cherished place in Jamestown, providing entertainment, unity, and a sense of pride to the community. As a city, we are dedicated to ensuring the team remains a beloved fixture, recognizing its positive impact on the well-being and enjoyment of our residents. Furthermore, our commitment to preserving the stadium as a valued city asset emphasizes our dedication to maintaining a vibrant and prosperous community for generations ahead.

Enhancing Jamestown’s Recreation: Construction Begins on Splash Pad Projects

Construction has begun on two Splash Pad projects set to debut this summer in our city parks – Jackson Taylor Park and Allen Park. These ventures represent a significant expansion for our Parks Department, embodying our dedication to enriching the recreational landscape of Jamestown. These Splash Pads will serve as dynamic hubs for family fun and community engagement. What makes them truly special is their unique designs, promising distinctive water play experiences at each location. As we look ahead, these additions symbolize our ongoing commitment to providing diverse and inclusive leisure opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

Strengthening Community Safety Initiatives: A Comprehensive Approach

Ensuring public safety remains a paramount concern for our administration. In collaboration with the Fire Department and the Red Cross of Western New York, we orchestrated the successful Sound the Alarm event on March 23, 2024. During this initiative, we installed over 177 new smoke alarms in homes across our community, mitigating potential risks and safeguarding the well-being of our residents and neighbors. This effort was crucial as many of these households lacked functional smoke alarms, posing a serious risk.

Following the successful relaunch of the Citizens Police Academy in 2023, we are delighted to announce the continuation of the program this year, which started on February 21, 2024. The current class has been engaging in comprehensive sessions covering various topics, including the different divisions, responsibilities, guidelines, laws, policies, procedures, equipment, and practical, reality-based training exercises. This academy is significant as it fosters direct communication with law enforcement officers, establish rapport with the community, and equips participants with the necessary tools and knowledge to positively impact our community. We extend our gratitude to Cummins Jamestown Engine Plant for their generous grant, which facilitated the provision of training materials and books.

Acknowledging the nationwide challenge of recruiting new Police Officers and Firefighters, our administration actively supported the lifting of hiring freezes imposed by the City Council in 2016 and 2020. On January 29, 2024, City Council unanimously voted to lift these freezes, enabling the Police Department to recruit an additional Officer and fill a Crime Analyst vacancy. This strategic move aims to bolster safety measures and enhance the overall well-being of our citizens and neighborhoods.

Furthermore, our administration fully endorsed the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) sponsored by the Jamestown Fire Department, held May 4th and 5th at the Northwest Savings Bank Arena. This event played a vital role as a

gateway for individuals aspiring to serve as career (paid) or volunteer firefighters. Over 40 candidates underwent an exhaustive 8-point physical assessment to determine their readiness for the demanding duties of a firefighter. This hands-on experience offered prospective candidates with invaluable insight into the daily challenges faced by firefighters, fostering a deeper understanding of the profession. We extend our gratitude to our partners, including the Northwest Savings Bank Arena, for their contributions to the success of this event.

Addressing Concerns: Nuisance & Blight in Jamestown

The City of Jamestown remains committed to ensuring the peace and tranquility of its residents. Since May 2023, Police Officer Zach Sandberg has been diligently enforcing laws related to nuisance offenses, including loud disturbances (such as music and exhausts), littering, trespassing, and various other infractions. Officer Sandberg collaborates closely with the Department of Development (DOD) to address issues such as improper trash storage, abandoned vehicles, and trespassing in condemned buildings, among other DOD offenses. The role of the nuisance officer is pivotal in enhancing the quality of life in Jamestown and preserving its beauty for all residents. We extend our sincere gratitude to Officer Sandberg for his unwavering dedication and continued efforts in keeping our city safe and welcoming.

Charting the Future: Revitalizing Jamestown's Zoning Laws for a Vibrant Community

Our administration's future aspirations include conducting a crucial study and updating our Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Codes to ensure our community remains vibrant and responsive to evolving needs. With the last comprehensive plan and zoning code updates dating back to 1998, it is imperative to modernize our regulations to align with current realities and aspirations. As part of this initiative,

we are meticulously evaluating zoning codes, including the consideration of lowering lot square footage requirements. By reducing square footage requirements, we aim to accommodate smaller-sized homes on vacant lots within our historic neighborhoods, fostering revitalization and sustainable growth. This proactive approach underscores our commitment to preserving the character of our city while promoting accessibility and inclusivity in housing options. Through thoughtful review and strategic updates to our zoning laws, we are ready to unlock new opportunities for community development and enhance the quality of life for all residents of Jamestown.

Charting a Sustainable Future: Jamestown’s Board of Public Utilities (BPU) Infrastructure Initiatives & Collaborative Efforts

In the forthcoming years, the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) is poised to embark on a series of transformative projects and initiatives aimed at fortifying Jamestown’s infrastructure and bolstering community resilience. Chief among these endeavors is the Jamestown Community Microgrid Project, a visionary undertaking anticipated to incur a \$23.2 million expenditure, with a substantial \$17.4 million contribution from the Department of Energy. This ambitious endeavor, projected to span four to five years, represents a cornerstone in our commitment to sustainable energy solutions. Concurrently, we are charting a course for the future through the Retool District Heating initiative, a \$15 million engineering design project slated for the next two years. This endeavor not only underscores our dedication to innovation but also extends support to local manufacturing companies and businesses through NYSERDA Flex Tech studies.

Furthermore, our proactive stance towards environmental stewardship is exemplified by our collaboration with NYSERDA to analyze the anticipated impacts of the Climate Leadership & Community Project Act (CLCPA) on our electric distribution system. In alignment with our commitment to advancing sustainable

transportation solutions, we are partnering with the NYPA EVolve program to facilitate the installation of a substantial Electric Vehicle Direct Current Fast Charging (EV DCFC) station on the City’s east side. Additionally, we have secured a Wastewater Engineering Planning Grant to drive enhancements in Sewer Shed #7 on the west side of the City, as well as initiated phase 2 work for water main replacements on five streets through the WIIA Grant.

Our proactive approach extends to public health initiatives, with the execution of the Lead Service Line Inventory mandated by the EPA, driving forward the “Check Your Pipes” initiative. Collaboration remains central to our efforts, as we work alongside the Village of Falconer on an Engineering Planning Grant study to identify opportunities for Inflow & Infiltration reduction in their wastewater collection system. Lastly, in recognition of the critical importance of water infrastructure, we are conducting an initial engineering study for the design of a new Cassadaga Pump House station for the Water division. As we embark on these projects and initiatives, we remain committed to fostering a sustainable, resilient, and vibrant Jamestown for generations to come.

Embracing Unity, Envisioning Jamestown’s Future

In conclusion, it is evident that Jamestown has made significant strides towards advancement and prosperity. From fostering collaborative partnerships to prioritizing financial accountability, the city has embarked on a journey of transformation. As we reflect on the achievements highlighted throughout this report, it becomes clear that Jamestown is poised for a bright future.

We have seen the tangible results of our efforts in enhancing operational efficiency at City Hall, revitalizing the city’s website for improved accessibility, and securing funding for essential projects through diligent grant initiatives. These accomplishments underscore our commitment to serving the needs of our community and fostering an environment where all residents can thrive.

In closing, I want to express my gratitude to the members of the Jamestown City Council, President Dolce, and all residents for your unwavering dedication to the prosperity of our city. While we await the results of the upcoming 2023 audit, I'm proud to highlight the strides we have made since assuming office in January 2024. Despite the ongoing assessment of the city's status for 2024, our administration has remained resolute in its commitment to enhancement and innovation.

Looking ahead, Jamestown is not only focused on addressing immediate challenges but also on charting a course for sustainable growth and development. By modernizing infrastructure, embracing innovative solutions, and prioritizing community engagement, we are laying the foundation for a vibrant and inclusive city.

As we move forward, let us remain committed in our dedication to Jamestown's well-being. Together, with continued collaboration and determination, we can overcome obstacles and seize opportunities to build a brighter tomorrow for our beloved city.

Respectfully Submitted,

CITY OF JAMESTOWN

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kj A Ecklund". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

KIMBERLY A. ECKLUND

MAYOR



People Over Politics:

**Accountability, Integrity,
Transparency, People First!**