

State of Rhinebeck/Good Egg Award Presentation by Village Mayor Gary Bassett

Good evening and thank you to the Rhinebeck Chamber for hosting this event and for recognizing this inspirational community leader Betsy Jacaruso, you share so much with our community, and help make Rhinebeck an even better place to call home. Thank you so much and congratulations.

I want to introduce our Village Board, Ric Lewit, Deputy Mayor, Howie Traudt, Brant Neuneker, John Rossi.

This is my first State of the Village address and I am very grateful for the honor of addressing you to talk about what we have accomplished and what we are working on for the future of our community.

On the fiscal side, we are doing very well. The Village's fiscal year is from June 1 to May 31st. The year 2016 to 2017, we were able to increase our fund balance and a good score on the NY State Monitoring System. This current year, which runs until June, we have accomplished a lot while continuing to keep within our budget guidelines.

We are refining our strategy for budgeting and fiscal stewardship. That means trade-offs on spending versus borrowing for purchasing things we really need, like new equipment. We needed a new highway truck with plow as well as a police car, so we issued bonds as opposed to borrowing. We partnered with the Town for the shared use of a Bob-cat Skid steer in exchange for a truck. We shared the use of Town Highway equipment and personnel to pave Montgomery, Astor and Mill streets.

We committed \$250,000 of capital for the Rt. 9 Water infrastructure project in order to make sure we qualify for a \$3.8 million dollar grant to pay for it. We also submitted grants for capital improvements for new crosswalks, parking, protecting our water supply and updating our records. So far, we have gotten \$100,000 for Crystal Lake improvements, \$48 thousand from the Frost Foundation for Market Street sidewalks, \$32,000 for water plant improvements, and \$6,000 for police equipment.

I am very proud of this record and remain committed to seek grants to cover every possible capital expense.

Of course, when it comes to grants, you cannot count on them all coming through, or know when the funds will be made available. And, like every village and town, we face challenges.

Among them:

- Increasing costs in labor and health insurance
- Finding creative ways to save money by sharing services
- Allocating proper funding for continuing the paving of roads
- Water plant resilience due to expected sea level rise
- Expanded parking availability and loading zones
- Cost of Events

One word you have heard over and over when I talk about expenses, is "sharing". Given financial realities, as well as restrictions from the county and state, it would be impossible to go it alone. But by, sharing and working together with the leadership of the Town of Rhinebeck, as well as Dutchess County, we open up many opportunities for improving infrastructure and services.

This past year, by collaborating with the Town of Rhinebeck, we have accomplished so much more than we would have without this strategic partnership. We communicate regularly as we cooperate on an increasing number of issues. I am proud that we are becoming a model for other municipalities.

We also recognize the importance of continuing to strengthen our relationships with local businesses and our schools. Regular communication helps us develop an understanding of their needs, as we work with them to plan for the future of this wonderful community. And, most important is to continue to have open dialog and communication with each and every one of you. I believe your insight is essential for the future of the village.

I want to celebrate the amazing people, both employees and volunteers, who keep the Village running.

Keeping us safe is a priority, and over the past 12 months, the Village Police Department has responded to 1600 calls, and coordinated security for a dozen events in the Village. Their commitment to public safety is impressive. As is the dedication of our superior judges who serve at our courts and help make this a safe community.

1037 calls (302 fire, 668 EMS and 67 MVA's) came into the Village Fire Department last year, and calls are increasing year to year. I thank the 43 active Fire and EMS teams for their volunteerism and for their dedication to our community. We literally could not do this without you.

The Department of Public Works includes the Highway Dept., Water Dept. and Wastewater dept. What they do touches each and every one of us every day. They are the most visible "face of the Village" on our streets, and provide high quality important services. The highway dept. maintains our 14 miles of roads, day and night, picking up our leaves and brush and servicing our fleet. Every morning at 3am the water dept., sends thousands of gallons to the reservoir for delivery of water to our customers on an aging distribution system, repairing leaks without missing a drop. These operations run 365 day a year all day! They are truly part of the fabric of our lives here.

During 2017 we made advancements to our commitment for reducing our impact on the environment. By formally putting the Village of Rhinebeck on the path to becoming a NYSERDA Clean Energy Community, we will soon be eligible for more opportunities for funding clean energy initiatives, which will help us reduce costs and protect the environment. We have changed all the lights in the Village Hall to LED, and applied for grants to pay for electric vehicle parking. We have also joined with 18 other municipalities of the Mid-Hudson Street Lighting Consortium to change our street lighting to LED and collaborated with 7 municipalities to protect our water. We are also pursuing an initiative to make earth-powered heating and cooling available and affordable to home owners, a renewable energy alternative for reducing the use of fossil fuels.

Our Village Board has also worked to adopt a major revision to the zoning code, approved a peddlers and event application, and protected our fund balance. The Environmental, Ethics, Tree, Grant, and Short Term Vacation committees have been hard at work on those and other issues. We all work alongside a team of people who are at Village Hall every day to answer your questions and assist you through the process. We are blessed to have so many committed people.

We are proud of these accomplishments, but we also are keeping our sights on the future. We are currently preparing a 2018-2019 budget. And we have to make it work, despite the 2% tax cap. My goals for the coming year include:

- Restore or improve services to Village residents
- Where possible have pay equity for employees so we can retain and attract strong candidates for village jobs

- Through shared services, continue to reduce costs and eliminate duplication
- Continue to explore and implement environmental policies for protecting our drinking water, providing renewable energy alternatives, reduce waste and improve transportation with better sidewalks and trails
- Implement a plan for maintaining the infrastructure (roads and water)
- Develop future plans for parking, fire protection and historic preservation
- Support diversity in every aspect of the community
- Continuing the development of sound policies in government

The “State of the Village” is strong and it can only get stronger if we continue to create partnerships, share resources and act responsibly. I hope you are as excited as I am about the future of the Village of Rhinebeck. By communicating, working together there is nothing we can not accomplish.

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