

**STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS
TROY, MICHIGAN
MAYOR ETHAN BAKER
WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 2024 AT 6 PM**

Thank you, Tara, for your always warm welcome and introduction. I've said it many times—the City's partnership with the Troy Chamber of Commerce is something I am extremely proud of, and you and your team continue to go above and beyond for Troy's business community... and we, as a City, are grateful!

Thank you, Chief Nastasi and Chief Hullinger, for opening up this evening's event with your Welcome to our Troy Fire & Police Training Center! Ironically, you both, on separate occasions, have shared with me that public speaking is "not your thing", so of course I thought you'd be the perfect duo to start things off! When you both agreed, almost immediately, it quickly demonstrated your love and care for our City and how you're both quick to go outside of **YOUR** comfort zones all for the good of Troy! I am grateful, and applaud you not just tonight, but each and every day!

This evening's colors were presented by our Troy Police Department Honor Guard, who just last week played such an instrumental role in our annual Troy Police Memorial Service. Their reverence in what **THEY** do has certainly added an important touch to this evening, and we thank you!

And when I made the decision to have the Troy Community Chorus sing our National Anthem, I never imagined their sound would fill this space with such beauty and depth. We will be hearing more from the Chorus later, but in the meantime, **THANK YOU**, for your already instrumental piece of this evening's event!

Our Police Chaplain, Pastor Bob Cornwall, always seems to know just the right thing to say during an Invocation and we thank and applaud **YOU**, Bob, for your genuine and warm care for our City! We are so fortunate to have your service to us!

This evening, I am going to do things a bit out of order. You may have noticed that my son, Canaan, isn't with us for this year's event. He is proudly at his end of season Rowing Banquet, and I am certain he is happier being there than here! But one of the "hazards" of this job is that I cannot be there at the banquet to celebrate **HIS** success, and yes...it hurts! But family **DOES** come first, which is why at this point, I am excusing Bethany so that **SHE** can get to the banquet and be there with Canaan! So on her way out, please give a warm welcome, and then goodbye, to Troy's First Lady, our favorite Baker, and the true reason I am able to give so much to this role as Mayor of Troy—Bethany! We love you, Honey! But don't worry! She'll be back later—if not here, at Escape for our "after party"!

With Bethany leaving, and Canaan already not here, my family presence is shrinking! But, not so fast! I am extremely lucky to have Arden and Aven here with us, representing the family with their beauty, charm, and wonderfully kind souls. I love you, girls; thanks for representing this evening!

State of the City 2024. Here we are! It's that time of year again, so let's get started! [INTRO VIDEO – Theme]

Troy City Bunch – it just rolls off the tongue, right? We may laugh—or cringe—but here's the truth: We **ARE** a family in the City of Troy, a blended family. And just like all other families, we don't always agree, but at the end of the day, like the Brady Bunch, we come together, not by marriage, but because we all love our City of Troy. And, I'm not sure if you noticed, but ending that introduction theme, was City Attorney Lori Grigg Bluhm, appearing in Alice's spot. Why? Well, that's easy! Just like Alice the maid, Lori is always here to clean up our messes! ... Except she is **NOT** here this evening! She has taken a last-minute trip to visit her brand new, and first, grandson, who came into this world 3 weeks early!

I should also note, Chris, from CMN TV who year after year plays a key and important role in helping me produce this event for our “television” audience, and seemingly loves to share his creative side with the introduction videos and additional audio/visual support, gave me one piece of advice when recording that intro: “Channel Greg, not Cousin Oliver!”

After nearly four years of the same City Council, we have added **TWO** new members, and, by design, the dynamics shift. I'd like my fellow Troy City Council members to take a minute and come up here with me onto the stage. When I introduce you, please come up and join me! And if you all could wait until they each have been introduced to applaud, I'd appreciate it!

In alphabetical order—we have Councilwoman Theresa Brooks, Councilman Hirak Chanda, Councilwoman Rebecca Chamberlain-Creanga, Councilman Mark Gunn, Councilman David Hamilton, and Mayor Pro Tem Ellen Hodorek.

This is your City of Troy governing body! We are a team; we are a family, and we all, in our own way, work day in and day out on your behalf. Even with two new members, Mark and Hirak, I feel we are a strong and decisive body. I commend them both for jumping into this from the very start with their heads on straight and ready to get to work!

This is a fantastic team of seven, the City's most diverse ever, but not just in the way we've all been trained to look at diversity. Yes, there is diversity of skin color and ethnic background—after all, Theresa is our first African American member; Hirak is our first Southeast Asian and Indian member; and Mark is $\frac{3}{4}$ Native American—but it is more than that. We have true diversity of thought, political backgrounds, ages and generations, and life and work experiences. We are a diverse body, and although **WE** are the ones that sit up at the Council table, we represent **ALL** of Troy, **ALL** of its

residents, and we want each resident to feel they **ALSO** have a seat at the table. This community representation is important to me; and I know it's important to my fellow council members up here.

Before I have you sit back down, I'd also like to state that I know if we are given the right support and tools from City Administration, there is nothing we cannot do for the good of our City! I am excited to continue working with the six of you this year and into the future, and I am certain if we put our heads, and our hearts, together, we can achieve great things. So let's do it!

Alright, Council, Thank You for coming up here. You can sit down now!

I just mentioned City Administration and gave an essential Call to Action for their support and tools so we can thrive. We are fortunate to have a large contingency of City employees with us here this evening—and I'd like us to take a moment to once again show our appreciation for what is undoubtedly one of the hardest working and dedicated teams in municipal government. When I call your name, please stand and remain standing until I've introduced you all.

City Manager Mark Miller, Deputy City Manager Bob Bruner, Assistant City Manager Meg Schubert, Police Chief Frank Nastasi, Fire Chief Pete Hullinger, CFO Rob Maleszyk, DPW Director Kurt Bovensiep, Deputy DPW Director Dennis Trantham, Community Development Director Brent Savidant, Economic Development Manager Mark Adams, City Assessor

Kelly Timm, City Treasurer Renee Hazen, Building Official Salim Huerta, City Clerk Aileen Dickson, City Engineer Scott Finlay, Controller Dee Ann Irby, Deputy HR Director Jennifer Lee, IT Director Alex Bellak, Library Director Emily Dumas, Assistant Library Director Phillip Kwik, Purchasing Manager Emily Frontera, Assistant to the City Manager Dylan Clark, and of course, Community Affairs Director Cindy Stewart!

I want to **PERSONALLY** thank each and every one of you from the bottom of my heart for doing so much to make **THE CITY OF TROY** shine! And I also want to share that many of you have provided information to me so that I could write tonight's State of the City Address. I also thank you for that! [APPLAUSE]

I know my introductions can go on for awhile... I think half my speech last year was introductions! But those of you that know me well, **KNOW** how much I value relationships and the important work relationship-building and maintenance does for our community. So with that in mind, please join me in welcoming our elected officials or their representatives, who also play a key role in representation for the City of Troy in county, state, and federal government. When I call your name, please stand and wave, and friends here in the audience, please hold your applause until they've all been announced:

Oakland County Treasurer Robert Wittenberg, Michael Tash, Deputy District Director for Congresswoman Haley Stevens, Senator Mike Webber,

State Representatives Sharon MacDonell and Tom Kuhn. Let me just say this... As a partisan person serving in a non-partisan position, it is really special to see bipartisan work being done by the men and women representing our City in county, state, and federal government. So, I thank you. We ALL Do.

Well, here we are in our Troy Fire and Police Training Center, and it paints quite a contrast to last year's event at The Somerset Collection. In fact, when I asked Chief Nastasi if I could use this space this evening, his first response was: "You're going from Somerset to here?!" Yes, it **IS** quite the contrast, and there is a bit of irony. Last year, at Somerset, I talked quite a bit about the changes we had just made to our Fire Department Incentive Plan, but I couldn't really say anything about the Kmart headquarters property right across the street. This year, at the Fire and Police Training Center, the Kmart property plans are not a secret and can be discussed!

I **DO** want to say a few words, however, about the Training Center. This is a very special place that opened in 2001. The Training Center plays a crucial role in our in-house training, including mandatory departmental training, newly hired officer training, the Field Training Program, scenario training, Tactical Support Team exercises, and K9 training. And beyond, the Training Center serves as a venue for large-scale operational briefings in collaboration with local, state, and federal law enforcement partners. It

also hosts meetings for the Oakland County Tactical Response Consortium, road patrol shift meetings, police officer interviews,

promotional assessment centers, and union meetings. Finally, the Training Center is a valuable community resource. It has hosted blood drives, crossing guard training, and Operation Blue Sleigh, where donated gifts are collected, wrapped, and organized for delivery to those in need during the week before Christmas. Long story short, this is a cool place! Can I see a show of hands—How many of you have ever been here before? ... How many of you knew this even existed?

And Full disclosure, I **REALLY** wanted to ride in on our Police Department tactical rescue vehicle—it looks like a tank!—maybe wearing some tactical gear... or at least on a police motorcycle... but Cindy said NO. We know she's getting closer to retirement, so until then she will forever be known as: "NO FUN CINDY" in my eyes! Just kidding, Cindy! You probably saved me some embarrassment by saying No! And while it has truly taken a village of City team members to get us ready for tonight's event, Cindy took the lead in translating my ideas into a reality. So thank you, Cindy!

Most of you know, that despite my tailored suit, American flag pin, and potential risk for being called a Manchurian Candidate—it's been said!—I am actually fairly "real" and even down to earth! I also don't shy away from speaking the truth—but every year I start the process of planning this State of the City, and I think, "Oh No... I can't do this again! Some of you may be thinking the same thing! But each year has had a special component that I never feel like I can replicate. But here I am, doing it again!

Let's take a look behind the curtains here for a second, and I will ruin some of the magic for all of us! Writing a State of the City address is really, really

difficult. There are several mayors in attendance this evening from surrounding communities, and I'm certain they will nod their heads in agreement! Last year, I attended Mike Taylor's State of the City address in Sterling Heights—hi Mike!—and he talked about having AI do it, and even showed some examples...

So, it was getting closer and closer to tonight, and I thought, "well, my speech is not going to write itself" and I thought maybe this is the year I let someone else write it, and by "someone else" I meant AI!

Picture me sitting there with my phone [PULL OUT PHONE]: "Hey ChatGPT, please write an uplifting positive State of the City address for Troy, Michigan". And this is what it gave me... It said: "Certainly! Here's an excerpt for a State of the City Address for Troy, Michigan:

"Esteemed residents and distinguished guests, as we gather today to reflect on the state of our beloved city, we do so with a sense of pride and optimism. Troy stands as a beacon of progress, innovation, and community strength.

Our economic landscape continues to thrive, with businesses large and small finding success within our city limits. We've fostered an environment that encourages entrepreneurship and investment, leading to job creation and prosperity for our residents. However, we remain committed to ensuring that this growth is inclusive and sustainable, with initiatives in place to support local businesses and promote economic diversity.

Furthermore, our dedication to education remains unwavering. Our schools continue to excel, providing our youth with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in an ever-changing world. We recognize the importance of investing in our future leaders and will continue to prioritize education as a cornerstone of our community.

As we look ahead, challenges undoubtedly lie on the horizon. Yet, with the resilience and determination that define our city, I am confident that we will overcome them together. Let us continue to work hand in hand, united in our vision for a stronger, more prosperous Troy for generations to come."

Okay. Not bad, right? Maybe I should just quit here! Sorry, everyone! No such luck!! You can't go to the afterglow **YET!** You all know brevity is not my strong suit, but I really am trying this year! Really, I am!

In all seriousness, however, can we just take a minute to appreciate how Artificial Intelligence views our City? That is an extremely glowing—and **REALISTIC**—summation of our City, and represents precisely where I believe our City is. So in reality, I **COULD** end here because our City's present state and reputation is something to be proud of—something we have all worked very hard at in the past six years or so.

Part of that reputation rebuilding came when Mark Miller took over as our City Manager in 2018, after a very dark period for our City. Mark was the right choice for our City then, and I will never shy away from saying it; his ethics and integrity were unquestionable. He provided the stability we needed to move past something we all wanted to forget—a previous City

Manager fired, under federal investigation, and an onslaught of terrible press about our City, dampening the spirit of our staff, our Council, and our community at large. Mark had a tall order, and faced challenges unlike any before him. But he rose to the occasion—stabilizing City Hall, cleaning up mess after mess that was discovered in our operational structure, and at the end of this month, he is retiring after nearly 25 years with our City.

[APPLAUSE]

Mark, we've prepared this short video on your behalf. 

GOODBYE VIDEO]

Mark, I'd like you to know how much you personally have meant to me these past several years, and I'm proud to have stood by your side on many occasions, and to have worked with you for this beloved City. You were the necessary bridge to take us from a dark period and onto solid ground. I **KNOW** you are admittedly not the "emotional" one in this organization, so bear with me as we take this time to honor you and celebrate your retirement.

[TROY COMMUNITY CHORUS – SONG]

What a beautiful tribute—thank you, Troy Community Chorus, for sharing your beautiful music and for being here this evening!

And one last thing about Mark Miller: Mark, you have nine days left! We're expecting your 100% until May 31st! No slacking! Of course, Deputy City Manager Bob Bruner is waiting in the wings...we appointed him to be the next City Manager upon Mark's retirement, and we will begin that transition in June. With Bob, we look to have continued stability in City Hall and are eager to see what type of leader Bob will be in this organization we all love, recognizing he has served as Mark's #2 for five years. So, stay tuned!

When Mark made his retirement announcement, he felt strongly that he should stay on until May 31st to get us through the 2024/25 Budget Cycle. And Mark leaves the City of Troy after we've just approved next fiscal year's budget, and I'd like to share a few highlights.

The 2024/2025 Troy budget prioritizes the following: Preserving public health, safety, and welfare; Focusing on core facilities and infrastructure, including Major and Local streets, and Enhancing Recreation and Parks Services. These priorities are time and time again the stated priorities of our residents—they pop up in surveys, conversations, and throughout a variety of different settings in our community. At our Budget Public hearing earlier this month, I mentioned that I believe this is a “Bread and Butter” Budget—it may not have shiny objects and projects, but it is what matters to our community. I'm proud that we passed it unanimously, and as a reminder, it is available on our city website to view in all of its 300+ page glory.

By far and away, the bulk of our annual budget is dedicated toward Public Safety—our Police Department, our Fire Department and EMS—and that is exactly where we should be focused. Public Safety is Priority #1. Plain and simple. The reality is, we would sacrifice everything else to make sure Public Safety is properly funded because we know that if our City isn't safe, nothing else matters. Our residents want Safe Streets, which encompasses police, fire, EMS, and roads and infrastructure. That is what local government is primarily tasked with, and that is Public Safety in a nutshell.

It's no mistake that we're here tonight in our Fire and Police Training Center—it highlights some of what is truly best here in the City of Troy. Our Police Department remains a beloved part of our community. Our Fire Department is second to none for its professionalism and success. We continue to evolve our EMS services to ensure we are getting the most for our tax dollars and providing our residents with the emergency support they need.

We know that good police work happens here in Troy. You are seeing plenty of it in the news, whether it's Attorney General Dana Nessel at the Troy Police Department, giving her press conference discussing what was a prolific auto-theft ring that was busted right here by the Troy PD, or even the intense focus on senior scams and all of the work our police officers are doing in the community to educate our seniors, and those most vulnerable to this type of criminal conduct.

Our Police Department has recently announced we have completed the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police accreditation process and became accredited. The accreditation process affirms that our department meets current best practice policy and has demonstrated compliance with all 108 required professional standards. Under the direction of Chief Nastasi this task was largely accomplished by an internal accreditation team and their recognition is well deserved!

The good news and work coming out of the Troy Police Department continues. The department has been proactive in implementing new technologies to enhance our ability to investigate and prosecute criminals effectively. Our utilization of tools such as Flock Safety and Axon has significantly improved our capacity to identify suspects and prevent further criminal activity. And thanks to increased recruiting efforts, along with the introduction of positive employee contracts and incentives, we have experienced a surge in hiring over recent months. Furthermore, the launch of our Police Recruit program, designed to attract quality candidates directly from local colleges and sponsor their attendance at a local police academy, has been particularly successful.

The PD has also worked very hard at building Community Partnerships. Our partnership with the Oakland Community Health Network to provide a Mental Health Co-Responder has been invaluable in addressing mental health issues within our community. This collaborative program continues to evolve, with increasing participation from other police departments, thereby expanding our options for assisting individuals in need.

Shifting gears a bit, behind me is our newest fire apparatus, which we took delivery of in January this year, and placed into service in March. And yes, it's RED, unlike our other trucks. This is not a mistake, or even a scandal. Current Fire Department leadership has made the decision to transition back to red trucks—a process that will take a while, but won't cost the City any additional or wasted tax dollars. Ladder 2 is a 2023 Sutphen SPH100 100ft Aerial Platform. The contract was signed in December of 2021 for \$1,438,942. Today, the current price for that same truck is now roughly \$2.2 million, with a 36-month lead time from contract signing to delivery. Two and a half years later, it costs 50% more, and it takes three years to have it delivered! Because this, Chief Hullinger is working with City staff to properly plan the future for fire truck apparatus purchasing. This, combined with an existing and ongoing study of our EMS needs in the City, means the City of Troy Fire Department will do whatever it takes to stay in good shape and to plan for the future.

But as I said, Public Safety isn't just about Police, Fire, and EMS. Our Roads and Infrastructure are equally important in keeping our community safe. We are about to start an asphalt overlay of Rochester Road from Sylvan Glen Lake Park north all the way to South Boulevard. And that will complement the major renovations coming to Rochester Road south of that new asphalt overlay—building a boulevard from where the current boulevard ends just north of Wattles all the up to Sylvan Glen Lake Park. This project will officially begin in Fall this year, a project driven primarily by federal funds... which also explains the long delay in finally getting here!

And that third major focus of this year's budget is Parks and Recreation. We know our residents want an increased focus on our parks and recreation services and we continue to find ways to creatively provide more, recognizing there is a limited pot of funds. This year, we should see continued major additions to our Sylvan Glen Lake Park, but what I think will be dominate Troy's Parks and Recreation is the official opening of our Pavilion and Ice Skating amenity at the Jeanne M. Stine Community Park! I took a tour last week, and let me tell you, I was amazed at the quality and true beauty of this space. Trust me when I tell you that what you've seen when you've driven by, does not do it justice. You will see what I mean when you finally get the chance to take your first steps into the space.

And fortunately, you don't have to wait much longer! I'm excited to share that we are having a formal dedication ceremony and grand opening on Thursday, June 13th at 6:00PM!

While we won't be ice skating yet, remember this is a four seasons park space, and I really do mean it when I say you will be blown away by what you see! When you're there, be sure to take notice of the numerous benches installed—benches that were made possible by a very generous gift from Dr. Inder and Indra Saini. The Saini family have been Troy residents for over 30 years, with two graduates of Troy High. Their generosity didn't start with **THESE** benches, however—they have previously donated benches at the Stage Nature Center and Sylvan Glen. And they are here this evening! Will you both please stand so we can thank you for your generosity?

I'm also excited to share that by the end of the Summer we will be opening a performing arts stage as part of the Jeanne M. Stine Community Park expansion, a component of the original design that had to be cut as costs escalated. But we are excited that the Troy Community Foundation has stepped up and provided the City with the ability to get this done! The record-breaking attendance for Troy Family Daze over the last few years allowed the Troy Community Foundation to give back to the community in a big way. The foundation donated \$100,000 to help add back the performing arts stage to the Jeanne M. Stine Community Park expansion. Adding the Troy Community Foundation Performing Arts Stage will be just one more amenity to Stine Community Park and now will allow the entire community to enjoy outdoor performances in the park. So, a very special thank you to the Troy Community Foundation! [APPLAUSE]

Here we are talking about the Jeanne M. Stine Community Park, and let me take a quick moment to acknowledge the namesake herself, Jeanne M. Stine, our Mayor Emeritus, who joins us this evening! Jeanne, please say hello!

I know you're not supposed to talk about age, but Jeanne will turn 95 next month, and her energy and good community work never wane. Just last week I ran into Jeanne in a Kroger parking lot—she was helping a woman with special needs, driving her home after her shopping trip. And then just a couple hours later, I ran into Jeanne at Buddy's Pizza, sharing a drink and meal with two of her close girlfriends. Jeanne was holding court and I am fairly certain left Buddy's and went off to do more good works that

evening! I think she has more energy than me!! Keep it up, Jeanne—you represent the best of Troy and we are grateful for you! [APPLAUSE]

Our parks continue to evolve and expand, and our recreation services based out of the Troy Community Center do the same. We continue to find ways to improve services, across all recreation departments, and know that we still have work to do. Our dedicated Recreation team is up to the challenge and continues to feel the push and pull from residents, from City Administration, and from City Council itself, as we all look for ways to make impactful improvements.

Recreation staff is excited that this year will see the implementation of the Oakland County grant funding for the upgrades to the Senior Dining Room, which will include additional programming and a refreshed and improved area for our seniors to congregate. In addition, this summer the shuffleboard and bocce courts at the Community Center will be refurbished, and certainly well used!

Last year, I announced my intention to create the Mayor's Senior Advisory Council, an informal committee to help communicate concerns and generate ideas to help benefit our Troy seniors. After a bit of a slow start, I'm excited we got the ball rolling, and I'm also excited to introduce you to some of them here this evening! I think most of you are here—so please stand up and say hello! [APPLAUSE] This group, which Friends of Troy Seniors President Bill Rhodes helped me form, will undoubtedly be beneficial as we work on doing what we need to do for our Seniors.

Tonight, I'm pleased to state that just two nights ago we approved an important update to the Master Plan, doing solid work hand-in-hand with our Planning Department, Planning Commission, and residents throughout the City to provide better guidance to developers, and more protections for our residents abutting our Neighborhood Nodes at key intersections. Development projects of all shapes and sizes, and of all types, continue to be a pressure point for our residents, and I'm very thankful and pleased we were able to approve this Master Plan update and implement changes in the policy document that will then be replicated in our Zoning Ordinance.

[Drum roll] One development, however, seems to get the most attention in Troy. The former Kmart headquarters has lived as a vacant and obsolete building for nearly 20 years, but progress is finally happening at the corner of Coolidge and Big Beaver, in the heart of our City and adjacent to the Somerset Collection. This past year we've seen the old headquarters come down as the owners make the property ready for re-development, and just a couple of months ago, the news was formally announced that University of Michigan Medicine has purchased approximately 7 of the 40 acres of that property and will be building a state-of-the-art medical facility. Michigan Medicine has a void in Oakland County. It is estimated that 200,000 Oakland County residents frequently travel a great distance for Michigan Medicine services, and now many of them will be able to come right here to Troy!

And while initial news made it sound like all the Kmart property would become part of Michigan Medicine, the reality is, it is only about 20% of the total property. But this news is only **GOOD** news, as it now spurs the redevelopment of the remaining 33 acres, and I shouldn't say too much, but I've seen the redevelopment plans Nate Forbes expects to submit to the City for approval, and I can't stress enough how excited I am about what's on the horizon! And even better, the process is underway, as a PUD application has recently been submitted to the Planning Department and the process is truly underway.

As I continue to share the good news of the City, I'm going to take a departure here and try something new. Typically, a State of the City address is pretty one-sided, and tonight, it has been so far! But something very important to us on Troy City Council is working to do quality community engagement. And since you are all here and a captive audience, I want to try something!

I learned about this type of interaction during a presentation to the Troy Chamber Hospitality Committee by OHM Advisors. We were in the planning stages of the DDA Big Beaver Landscaping renovation, which by the way, officially commences this Summer with DDI Interchange upgrades and landscaping. As part of OHM's presentation, there was an interactive portion. And I'm going to try it here!

So if you all could pull out your cell phones, if you have it with you, and open your camera. [REDACTED]

On the screens in front of you is a QR code that should open up a website. If it does not, that's okay, you can manually enter: www.menti.com and enter access code: 6777 1962.

That should give you the opportunity to answer this prompt: Please describe Troy in ONE word. I'm going to give you about a minute to enter that ONE word. What's going to happen is pretty cool as a word cloud capturing all of your answers appears on the screens. If you do **NOT** have a smart phone with you, that's okay, maybe find a neighbor who will do an entry for you. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Okay, that was awesome everyone—thank you! One more question and this one is a little bit harder, but very important.

Here is a new QR code and web address: [CUE QR CODE #2 AND WEB ADDRESS]

Again, if the QR code doesn't work, you can manually enter: [REDACTED]

www.menti.com and enter access code: 2575 4867.

That should give you the opportunity to answer this prompt: What is Troy missing? I'm going to give you about a minute to enter your answer on this one, and please be realistic! Troy is not going to have a tropical beach...
[WAIT NOW FOR RESULTS] [CUE RESULTS PAGE FOR #2]

Okay, that was my attempt to do a little bit of Community Engagement with a captive audience. You are all here because you play a dynamic role in the City of Troy and you represent various sectors and stakeholders in our community. So thank you for taking part in that! I plan to dive into these results a little deeper in the near future and will certainly share them with Council and City Administration.

Community Engagement can encompass so much, and we know it will be key as we continue to plan for Troy's future. So again, thank you for playing a role in some of it this evening, and be on the lookout for more opportunities coming this year!

I'm confident Community Engagement will play a big part of this next year because we are at a point in our City's history where some serious planning needs to be done, and we need our community stakeholders to be involved and on the same page.

Year after year, I've shared how our City remains on a strong financial footing, which is the truth. Our Triple A bond rating, our consistent conservative budgeting practices, a healthy unassigned general fund balance for our rainy days, and one of the lowest property tax millages in the state of Michigan. So I comfortably say our economic health is strong. Our day-to-day operations budget is solid. Year over year we consistently bring in more than we spend and so long as the economy remains stable, that will continue.

Yet, while we tout our financial prowess and good budgeting, there remains a hole in how we look at the capital needs of our city and community. The City will celebrate its 70 year anniversary, or birthday, next year. Thus, it is time to look at the next 30 years towards our centennial. We need to hone in on the state of our infrastructure—our buildings, equipment, roads, sewers, and drains.

For example, last year I showed Ellen in her bathing suit to highlight the fact that our Troy Family Aquatic Center has not changed in more than 30 years... and neither have you, Ellen! :) But a year later, we have not addressed what to do with the Aquatic Center for the long term. We've addressed ongoing maintenance needs—it would be close to misconduct in office not to, but we are still faced with questions about our aging civic buildings and amenities, and how we can and should address them moving into the future and for the next generation of Troy.

One of the biggest threats to our City's aging civic infrastructure is our beloved Troy Public Library, which remains a jewel to our City and remains

the most visited community gathering space for residents of all ages. Please don't get me wrong—the Library is humming along, welcoming hundreds of thousands of visitors yearly, and circulating close to one million items. The library has begun offering many new collections and services, and in June the library will be able to take services on the road with its new bookmobile that will allow the public to browse and check out books at its various stops. TPL will also soon be presenting its Strategic Plan that was guided by input from the community, staff, and other stakeholders to shape the library's next five years. I had a recent tour of the Library, looking deeply at the building itself, of which half is more than 50 years old. I learned that during an evaluation as part of the Rethinking Libraries study, the message was clear: We provide A+ services in a D building!

Well, I don't know about you, but I don't want a D building. Why can't we provide A+ services in an **A+ BUILDING?!**

I know I'm not alone in sharing my opinion that I think our City deserves a new Library building. And frankly, it's about time we start having that real and honest conversation about how we can do it. I recognize one speech from one Mayor tonight isn't going to make it a reality, but it is my hope that each of you here tonight can think about how we **SHOULD** approach this, and build support for something the residents of our City deserve.

And let's talk about how we've built major city buildings and infrastructure projects in the past. Our City initially had a very large annual capital millage—today, it's a fraction of what it used to be. Our original Library and City Hall were built with debt financing, as was our Community Center and

Aquatic Center. Sanctuary Lake Golf Course was paid for with debt financing, and remains our last piece of long term debt (aside from the DDA bonds that the DDA pays on its own). My point is, this City has a long history of building major projects with debt financing and we shouldn't be afraid to consider doing the same now—especially with our Triple A bond rating, a very low property tax millage, and an increasing and stable property tax base.

Our City will be 70 years old next year and we are rapidly showing our age, with no plan on how to address some necessary major overhauls. We need to do this planning; we need to engage our residents and stakeholders, and as a Council, we need to be confident in our decision-making. We need to be bold; we need to lead, and we need to do what we can do today to ensure Troy's tomorrow remains bright. I refuse to accept that we can't, and shouldn't do more for our City!

As I talk about these long-term needs and challenges, and what I believe we need to do for the good of Troy, I don't want anyone to think for a minute that I am not extremely proud of our City, and that I'm not Troy's biggest cheerleader, and that I don't recognize what we **DO** have, which is absolutely plentiful! Each of you also know why Troy is so special and how generations of Troy residents and leaders have designed, built, and made this City the shining city it truly is. And it's not just you and I that know it! In 2023 and 2024, Troy was ranked the #10 best place to live in the **COUNTRY** by Livability.com—two years in a row!

As a place where families and businesses thrive, and as a community recognized for its excellent quality of life, with the A+ rated Troy School District, recognized nationally for excellence in Academics and Fine Arts education; a City with unsurpassed city services, and considered one of the safest cities in Michigan; a City that also boasts 1,000 acres of parkland and greenspace, two golf courses, a nature center, historic village, and a variety of lakes and streams. Troy has it all! [SLOW DOWN] And so... it is very easy for me to say,... once again, ...that the State of Our City is **STRONG!**

I would like to close with an observation and a challenge for us all to ensure we capitalize on where we are in this moment.

As I make my way around this City, I have the privilege of taking the pulse of the community... to get a sense, frankly, of the emotional sentiment. Whether having these conversations with Bethany by my side while we're out and about, or through conversations with my council colleagues to work and learn and understand what our fellow residents are thinking and feeling, I absorb a ton of information from an unbelievably large sample size.

I am so proud to see time and time again the people of this community working together to seek common ground, to listen to one another, to provide input and opinion on very important matters with intentional civility and professionalism.

Examples of this are many, perhaps none greater than when we saw leaders of our Jewish and Muslim communities join together to speak for peace.

I see this as one of Troy's foundational strengths, honed over time by fellow residents who worked hard through past divisions to do so.

Here's what I know to be true: the majority of the people in this community want us to continue to develop this... this muscle, if you will, of civility and professionalism so we can govern effectively and deliver city services with excellence.

Frankly, I think there is a hunger for civility and professionalism everywhere, but I **KNOW** there is here in Troy.

So here's our challenge going into our next fiscal year—those of us who have the titles of leaders and those of us taking on leadership roles in our respective and valuable corners throughout the community:

In an election year when division can reign supreme, let's instead put our heads down, push up our shirtsleeves and keep on doing the good work of our community without the interference that election politics can bring. That is, keep on working **TOGETHER**, across political ideologies, across generations, across our many beautiful faith traditions, across our many unique neighborhoods, across our parks, across our many businesses, across and throughout the 32+-square miles that comprise this community...

Our ongoing success depends upon it, as does our ability to set this City up for future generations.

And so, I commit with everything in my power in this form of government to work with my fellow council members and to continue to set that tone to the very best of my ability. I call upon all members of the community to join me in working together in that spirit, because it takes all of us listening, fact-finding, and working collaboratively to find common ground, to properly ensure the safety, security, and success of our exceptional City! Please join me in this commitment—my fellow councilmembers, City Staff, City stakeholders and residents. We **CAN** do this!

We are a family. We are a community. We are destined at this moment to make a huge difference and impact for this City, for not just today, but for its future! I was humbled to be re-elected last year, and now in my 5th year,

it remains my absolute honor..... to be your Mayorand to serve this City that I love so very much! Thank you so much to all who are here this evening, all who are watching, and all who helped make this evening possible! I leave you tonight with a smile on my face and warmth in my heart for you and for this City of Troy! Good night and God Bless you all!

As we wrap up here, please enjoy this final number by the Troy Community Chorus!

[TROY COMMUNITY CHORUS SINGS LAST SONG]