



TOWN OF HENRIETTA

COUNTY OF MONROE • STATE OF NEW YORK

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**2011 STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS  
BY TOWN SUPERVISOR MICHAEL YUDELSON  
TO THE HENRIETTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**Thank you to the Henrietta Chamber of Commerce for organizing today's luncheon. The Henrietta Chamber of Commerce plays an important role in promoting business in Henrietta. The board members, most of who are here today, volunteer time from their already busy schedules and have a positive impact on the Henrietta business environment.**

**If you are not a member of the Chamber, I encourage you to join and take an active role in that effort.**

**Since becoming Supervisor, I have really stressed open communication and making information available to the public so I hope you will find today's program informative and useful.**

**There is a lot to report regarding the State of the Town. Let me start right off with the Town's budget.**

**I am pleased that we were able to complete several important projects in 2010 and still stay under budget.**

**There are tremendous pressures on our budget. Less consumer spending, fewer home sales and less refinancing means less shared revenue for Henrietta.**

**We forecast that when we get the final 2010 payments for our share of sales tax and mortgage tax; they will approximately equal those for 2009. Compare those two years to 2007 and 2008, we are down about a half million dollars per year. That is a lot of money for the town.**

**The 2011 town tax rate remains the same as it was when I became Supervisor, at \$1.21 per \$1,000 of assessed value.**

**Given what has happened with the economy, it seemed especially important to not place any additional burden on Town taxpayers. This was an extremely difficult budget to prepare. Being careful to be conservative in our estimates for 2011, we forecast that revenue will be down slightly from the 2010 budgeted amount.**

**Expenses in the 2011 Budget are up about 3% over 2010. This was not easy to achieve because some increases we have no control over, such as raises included in our Collective Bargaining Agreement.**

**But perhaps the biggest strain on our budget is the mandated contributions to the State Retirement System. Consider these numbers: Our 2010 required contribution to the Retirement System was \$314,000. For 2011 that jumped up to \$492,000, an increase of \$178,000 or 57%. The State has advised us that we will see an additional increase of at least a 37% for 2012, bringing our cost to approximately \$675,000.**

**Information made available to me at a meeting of the Monroe County Supervisors' Association indicated that employees retiring from the New York State system enjoy the 5<sup>th</sup> richest benefits in the country, but their rate of contribution to the system ranks 45<sup>th</sup> out of the 50 states.**

**This has to be addressed somehow other than just passing exorbitant increases onto local government. Talk of a property tax cap sounds nice, but it must be accompanied by substantial mandate relief.**

**A 2% growth cap on the tax levy would mean that our Retirement System increases would far outpace the additional amount that we would get from property taxes. The math just does not work.**

**Our Health Care costs for 2011 will increase by more than \$78,000 over 2010, but there is an important silver lining that it is important to talk about.**

**Those same costs went up \$184,000 in 2010 vs. 2009. We have controlled the increase by entering into a Health Care Consortium with other Monroe County towns that has provided leverage in obtaining the best possible rates. It is this type of creativity and collaboration that is necessary if we are to strive to find ways to control costs.**

**Despite careful budgeting, important projects are included in the 2011 Budget:**

**The Highway Department will include several miles of roads in its annual Road Paving and Maintenance program. Work will continue on the newly dedicated Breese Park, near the Genesee River. There are plans to add a sidewalk next to the road leading into the Town Park to improve safety. The Town will also continue its program of switching over to digital record retention which is saving money on microfilming, storage space rental and file cabinet costs while providing greater access to records.**

**This has been a real team effort. We remember every day that using the taxpayers' money wisely is an important responsibility and we take it very seriously.**

**Let me mention who makes up the team that I am so proud to be a part of, namely the Town Board, our department heads and all the Town employees.**

**I don't think you could find five more different people than our Town Board. However there is one way in that we are all alike; all of us are incredibly focused on delivering a high level of services while looking for every opportunity to save our taxpayers money.**

**Our department heads are the ones who must lead their departments in keeping with the board's priorities. We do not get the chance often enough to recognize them for their efforts.**

**The residents of Henrietta are well served by the hard working employees of the town. If you were out driving in last week's snow event, you know what I mean....our employees worked diligently to make sure the roads and sidewalks were clear and safe. The same kudos are due to the people in our other departments as well. They are the people who interact with the public and directly deliver services on a daily basis. They are the backbone of our organization.**

**Let's talk about projects.....Despite the economy, businesses continued to recognize Henrietta as the place to be. Some of the projects that were completed last year:**

**Jefferson Road continues to be a prime location for new restaurants. A new Chili's Restaurant opened on Jefferson at the corner of Marketplace Drive.**

**DiBella's opened their new home on Jefferson Road.**

**Build out continued at Erie Station West Henrietta for new tenants.**

**Doodlebugs opened their third Rochester area day care facility, an 11,000+ square ft. center directly to the west of the Calkins Road Wegmans.**

**Eagles Landing moved towards full occupancy with the addition of Paychex, Veramark, and KB America**

**A really exciting grand opening was held in September for Global Village, on the campus of RIT. In addition to student housing, the \$57 million complex includes a restaurant, an international market, a post office, hair salon and an art gallery shop.**

**Global Village also includes facilities that will support RIT's continued emphasis, in keeping with President Destler's vision, on providing entrepreneurial students with additional resources and opportunities.**

**We have to never lose sight of the fact that RIT is a huge economic driver for the economy of Henrietta and Monroe County as a whole. This will continue in 2011. Groundbreaking is expected in April on a 70,000 square foot LEED platinum facility that will house the Golisano Institute. An independent analysis by the Center for Governmental Research estimates that this project could stimulate the creation of 6,000 new jobs in the greater Upstate New York region, with a high concentration in the Rochester area. In addition, RIT estimates that the construction of the new facility will generate 160 construction jobs over a two-year period and as many as 100 new jobs at RIT.**

Although tax exempt by law, RIT related uses nonetheless generate a large amount of tax payments:

Property taxes paid for non-exempt properties in 2010 were over \$338,000. The Pilot agreement for the RIT Inn and Conference Center brought in another \$173,000 in payments. Businesses in the RIT Business & Technology Park paid over \$225,000 in taxes. Properties sold by RIT that now are Park Point and River's Run generate over \$700,000 in property taxes annually.

2010 also saw the opening of Ascension Garden Cemetery on Pinnacle Road at the intersection of Williams Road. We are pleased that 109 acres will be used for a very low impact purpose and preserve ample green space.

I know that filling empty space is an ongoing item of interest to many. As I have said before it has been our experience that this process is cyclical; some spaces become vacant and others get filled every year. We cannot compel a business to go into a vacant space instead of building. What we have done is asked those who are considering utilization of vacant space what we can do to make that more attractive to them. What they have told us is that if our approval processes move along quickly it makes this type of use more feasible. So without cutting corners, we have tried to accommodate this.

Although I am sure there are several factors in play, this approach seems to yield good results. Some examples:

Verizon has opened a store in the former Krispy Kreme, which was vacant for quite a while. Although Verizon moved from a location up the street, I view this as a real plus as the Krispy Kreme location is very visible. The Anchor Bar has opened in Marketplace Mall in the space formerly occupied by Tony Romas. The Salvation Army Family Store took over the former York Furniture store on West Henrietta Road.

Angotti Beers of the World took over the old Wegmans store at the corner of East Henrietta Road and Calkins. Action Towing and Service went into the site formerly occupied by Syracuse Supply on Marketplace Drive.

Not all of the construction activity in Henrietta during 2010 was for commercial purposes. Henrietta continues to be a strong market for residential development. People continue to want to make Henrietta their home because of the low taxes and high level of services.

That is borne out by the preliminary data released by the U.S. Census Bureau. From the time of the last census in 2000, Henrietta had a higher percentage increase in population than any of the other towns in Monroe County.

Despite the slow economy, 100 new homes were built in Henrietta last year, up slightly from the previous year. People continue to see apartments in Henrietta as an attractive option. Apartment complexes opening or adding apartments included: Global Village at RIT, Lehigh Park apartments, The Province, and Hylan Place apartments. In addition, the complete renovation of Stonewood Village apartments is nearly finished.

Let me touch on two things that found their way to the front page of the local newspapers.

**We were very concerned about the proposal contained in former Governor Patterson's budget to dissolve the Genesee Valley Regional Market. It obviously would not have been a good thing for the Market, but it also would not have been good for the Town and Community. More than 100 businesses with a collective 2,000 employees are located on Market property. We are talking about 123 acres in the middle of what many consider the Main Street of Monroe County's economy.**

**I brought our concerns to Assemblyman Joe Morelle. This was not a Republican or Democratic issue. This was about jobs.**

**Although there was talk about the tax exempt of the Market, It is important to note that the properties comprising the Market pay 69% of the taxes that would be paid if the market was not tax exempt.**

**Instead of a draconian measure without much thought to the long term effects; Assemblyman Morelle guided us through discussions that resulted in a solution that protected jobs; over 2000 full and part time jobs, and one that also provides new support to agriculture throughout the region.**

**I was really pleased to be part of this process, and not just because it worked out well for the Town and the Market.**

**People are tired of what they have been seeing too often in government, tired of the arguing, tired of the acrimony. This is what people want to see. This is the way government should work. I am not talking just about the result, but just as importantly, about the process.**

**Another major news item involved the deal to bring Harris Corp. to Henrietta. They are taking over the former Xerox facility on Jefferson Road. There is often discussion about whether COMIDA deals are really in the best interest of the local economy; whether they are worth the tax revenue sacrificed by different levels of government. In this instance Harris was seriously considering moving these facilities to Florida, where they are headquartered. This deal preserved 1,100 jobs for the Rochester community. They are spending over \$60 million dollars on the move and renovation of the facility. This work has generated over \$400,000 in building permit fees for the Town.**

**Let me pause to mention some of our important partners in serving this community. Henrietta Volunteer Ambulance and the Henrietta Fire District both provide critical services to our community by answering thousands of calls for assistance each year. I thank them on behalf of everyone who lives or does business in Henrietta.**

**We also continue to enjoy a close working relationship with the Monroe County Sheriff's Dept. They answer more than 25,000 calls per year in Henrietta and help us with special events and situations that need extra police attention whenever we ask them to.**

**Last but certainly not least, the Rush-Henrietta School District.**

**A Greek philosopher once said that "The foundation of every state is the education of its youth."**

**Superintendent Ken Graham and the School Board have woven a network of excellence and opportunity throughout our community that provides our young people with an education that assures us the strong foundation the philosopher referenced.**

**As a parent, I don't think I properly thanked them for the excellent education my son received leading up to his graduation last June. He now is in his second semester at George Washington University in our nation's capitol. His experience in Rush-Henrietta laid the groundwork for him to be just thriving in this educational setting.**

**Henrietta gets a lot of recognition for our low town tax rate. But did you know that our district has the lowest true value tax rate of any district in Monroe County? Providing this kind of return on our tax dollars requires foresight and financial acumen.**

**That same foresight is involved in the District's proposed third and final phase to their decade-long Facility Renovations Plan that will be the subject of a community vote on Tuesday, February 15.**

**The Phase III project is designed to improve the Senior High School campus. The proposal calls for the creation of additional classrooms and science labs, new physical education space – including a modern gymnasium and fitness center – and renovation of many athletic fields.**

**This project will not affect the tax rate. The District has the money set aside in reserve funds.**

**Under current rules for state building aid, the state would reimburse Rush-Henrietta for 65 percent of the \$14 million project cost. This means the district would be reimbursed for \$9.1 million, reducing the cost of the project to \$4.9 million. But those rules could change, possibly as soon as this summer. We need these facilities. \$14 million dollars worth of work for \$4.9 million seems like a great deal for our taxpayers.**

**With a combination of a town government that works well with businesses and a location at the intersection of the New York State Thruway and Route 390, Henrietta is an excellent home for businesses.**

**There are 18 companies located in Henrietta that are on the Rochester Business Alliance's list of the top 100 businesses in the region. Several of them are represented here today as guests of the chamber; I congratulate all of them.**

**I also express my appreciation to all the Henrietta businesses that are here today; collectively you are the business community that has helped to make Henrietta successful.**

**Even with the economy idling, there are many projects that are currently being planned or under construction:**

**Sheen Housing will construct a 70 unit assisted living facility for Senior Citizens behind the Doodlebugs Day Care Center on Calkins Road, addressing the need for more senior housing in our community. Calkins Corporate Park, with 25,000 square feet of office space will be located at the southeast corner of Calkins and Middle Roads.**

A new Mercedes Benz dealership has been approved for the parcel immediately to the south of the BMW dealership at the corner of West Henrietta and Calkins roads. Joe's Crab Shack will open on Jefferson Road next to Chili's. Planning also continues for a new Hampton Inn & Suites on Clay Road, behind Bugaboo Creek.

Car Max will open in the former Patrick Pontiac site on West Henrietta Road, across the street from Dorschel's. This is exciting as that facility has been empty for several years.

Saver Village is going into the space on Marketplace Drive that formerly was Dick's Sporting Goods, another empty space that will be filled.

### Comprehensive Plan

When I spoke to you last year we were just beginning the process of updating our Comprehensive Plan. We held some public scoping sessions and then during the summer we conducted a survey of Henrietta residents and businesses to get their views. We sent out 15,000 surveys and were pleasantly surprised to receive almost 5,000 completed surveys.

After tabulating the results we presented them in a general public session as well as to various stakeholder groups.

The Town Board reviewed all this input, and we are working on a draft of the update that we will share with the public. Let me give you a preview of the report. This information has only been presented to the Town Board before today.

Interestingly, based on input from the community survey and subsequent discussions with the community, three (3) significant priorities have emerged for Henrietta. They are:

- Economic Development
- Green Infrastructure
- Building Community

Let me say a little more about each of these.

### Economic Development Strategy

In recent decades, the Town of Henrietta has witnessed consistent growth in both its residential and commercial sectors. Having relatively low property taxes does make Henrietta more attractive for development than some other communities in the region. We know that a certain measure of our "development success" can be attributed to the Town's location and regional development patterns over the last few decades.

When I spoke to you last year I talked about my desire to develop an Economic Development Strategy for the Town. That has been a central part of the discussion as we worked on our update to the Comprehensive Plan.

I plan to have three major areas of concentration:

1. Participate in the Henrietta Chamber of Commerce's Economic Development Committee.
2. Network with business leaders who can offer insight as to Economic Development opportunities, including Greater Rochester Enterprise..
3. Implement the Economic Development Strategies contained in the Comprehensive Plan Update. Let me talk a little more about those:

We know that the community has expressed a strong preference for examining options to redevelop previously used commercial sites as an alternative to new commercial developments.

One of the first things we are likely to do is conduct an inventory of vacant and underutilized commercial space. The vacancy rates could be benchmarked against other communities in the region. During our focus sessions it was interesting to me that the opinion of several developers and builders was that such an inventory would show that Henrietta does not have a vacancy rate that exceeds the norm.

Achieving economic development goals will require us to consider some options that have not been previously utilized. Some examples:

- Inspire the market by increasing the allowed density and/or allowing a greater mix of uses in commercial development, or redevelopment projects.
- Consider the establishment of “shovel-ready” development sites for job-creating, high tech businesses – perhaps in partnership with RIT.

### Green Infrastructure

The second area our Plan Update will focus on is what is referred to as our “Green Infrastructure” resources, such as agricultural landscapes, parks and trails.

While the town has steadily added greenbelts, parks and other open space, there is not a formalized plan to link these resources into a green infrastructure network.

Respondents to the community survey overwhelmingly showed support for protection of agriculture and open space as well as the creation of more trails and sidewalks throughout the town. As such the creation of a green infrastructure plan seems to be a logical next step for the town to pursue. The goal of the green infrastructure plan would be to create a vision and strategy for an interconnected network of open spaces – active farmland, natural areas, parks and trails, etc.

This is a reasonable strategy as opposed to buying scattered parcels for preservation, which of course is a costly course of action that frankly the Town does not have the financial resources to pursue.

### Community Building

Enhancing the “sense of community” in Henrietta is an issue that has been on the minds of many in the community for several years. Though it is a caring and generous

community, supportive of numerous organizations and activities throughout the region; there is a sense that residents do not identify strongly with belonging to “Henrietta”.

Building a sense of community in a large and diverse suburban town is not a simple task, but we plan to reach out throughout the community to solicit ideas and establish working partnerships that could improve awareness and pride of place in Henrietta.

This discussion will also include examination of the issue of developing a Town Center. Although Henrietta does not have a natural four corners, it is widely agreed upon that a Town Center, known to some as the Main Street concept, can help build the sense of community that some feel is lacking.

Look for the draft of the Update to the Comprehensive Plan to be presented to the public sometime in February.

Long range planning also means ensuring that our employees have the equipment necessary to perform their work. During 2010 we developed and implemented an Equipment Replacement Schedule that covers the next 20 years and distributes the cost of equipment replacement as evenly as possible over that time period.

#### Code Update Committee

Another other major project that was just underway a year ago is nearing completion, namely the process of reviewing and updating our Town Codes. Planning Board Members Rick Page and Peter Minotti chaired an inclusive committee of about three dozen people. They worked diligently throughout 2010 and have presented draft recommendations that are being reviewed by the Town Board now and will be presented to the public in the near future.

In closing, allow me to thank you for the opportunity to give you this update on matters involving the Town of Henrietta. I continue to feel incredibly honored and privileged to serve this community that I love as Supervisor.