



TOWN OF HENRIETTA

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Supervisor

2009 STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS BY TOWN SUPERVISOR MICHAEL YUDELSON TO THE HENRIETTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Today I speak to you after a year as Supervisor, a year that has flown by and left me no less excited about Henrietta, and the possibilities and opportunities ahead of us, but also mindful of the challenges we face.

We all know that our country, indeed our world, is profoundly different than it was one year ago. The country was moved by the inauguration of Barack Obama as our President, a historic watershed moment for our country. Something once thought unlikely has in fact become reality.

Yet there is a weight on everyone's shoulders with the free fall of the economy. Locally, we have seen layoffs and store closings, maybe not on the same scale as nationally, but painful nonetheless. We all know people who have been affected by this crisis; I am sure there are some in this room whose businesses have been impacted. We all will be watching to see if what our leaders in Washington do to correct this situation will in fact work.

In the year previous to becoming Supervisor, I talked often of a desire to improve communication from the Town to the community, especially by using technology. That required a significant upgrade to the town's IT infrastructure and with the support of the Town Board, and the work of Mario Angotti, our IT Coordinator, we were able to complete much of the work in our first year. One of the most important elements was the revamping of our Town web site.

I also had talked about having meetings at different locations around Henrietta, at which residents could stop in with questions and feedback. I have held four of those and found them useful in talking to residents without being constrained by a pre-determined agenda, so I plan to continue those in 2009.

Three weeks in June of 2008, and a great deal of preparation time before that, were consumed as the Town defended itself in the lawsuit brought against the Town, former Supervisor Jim Breese, and our former Fire Marshall as a result of an incident at Funquest, on March 9, 2002 and subsequent measures taken by the Town of Henrietta.

The jury ruled unanimously for the Town and confirmed that the actions taken by our Fire Marshall in March 2002 and after that, by the Town Board, were about one thing and one thing only: public safety.

In October of last year I recommended a new structure for our Department of Public Works, decreasing the number of department heads from four to two and establishing direct reporting to the Supervisor. With the support of the Town Board that was implemented in November.

Despite the economic situation, several new businesses opened in Henrietta in 2008. In August, Wegmans opened their new, greatly anticipated, 100,000 square foot full service supermarket on Calkins Road. It has been well received by the community and has greatly enhanced the landscape of that street. Negotiations between the Town and Wegmans resulted in Wegmans agreeing to pay to have the sidewalks, trees and streetlights installed along Calkins down to the Town Park. We were so pleased with the result that our 2009 budget includes funds to extend them down to the Town Hall.

We are pleased that both Five Star Bank and Canandaigua National Bank demonstrated a commitment to those they serve in the Henrietta area by opening new, very attractive, branches in town. Five Star is near the new Wegmans and Canandaigua National is on Commons Way near the intersection of East Henrietta Rd. and Castle Rd.

Global Crossing built an 87,000 square foot facility on Kenneth Drive that brought hundreds of jobs to Henrietta.

Kost tire completed their new building on West Henrietta Road.

Lewis tree service added 24,000 square feet to their facility on Lucius Gordon Drive.

Fastrac opened a new gas station and convenience store on the corner of West Henrietta Rd. and Calkins Rd. and began a pricing competition that offered gas prices lower than had been seen in a very long time.

2008 saw a lot of changes along Jefferson Road:

For pizza lovers, Great Northern Pizza opened a new store on Jefferson opposite Marketplace Drive.

At the Genesee Valley Regional Market, a 3.9 million dollar addition was constructed for Palmers Fish Market.

The Regional Market also recently opened a new, very attractive administration building, which their board appropriately named the Mulligan Building in recognition of the contributions of the Mulligan family to the Regional Market and the community.

In an apparent sign of the times that I hope we will not see too often, Circuit City opened a new store last year at Market Square on Jefferson Rd. only to see it and the entire Circuit City operation close recently.

Filling empty space is an ongoing item of interest to many and there is good news to report on that front, much of it on or near Jefferson Road.

Five Guys Burgers and Mike's Brooklyn Pizza filled empty space in Henrietta Plaza.

Metro Mattress & The Men's Wearhouse took over the space formerly occupied by La-Z Boy.

Buffalo Wild Wings filled the space vacated by Don Pablo's and the space Buffalo Wild Wings left is being taken over by another eatery.

And Midtown Tire filled empty space at the old location of BJ's on Brighton-Henrietta Town Line Rd., near West Henrietta Road.

One of the most exciting projects in recent years is Park Point at RIT, located on the northeast part of the RIT campus, near the intersection of Jefferson Road and John Street. The plan was to have more on-campus amenities to enhance the desirability of a RIT education. The result is a

wonderful complex that has retail facilities that are fully open to the community. You can visit Lovin Cup and you will see both RIT students and patrons who are not students enjoying a wonderful menu, as well as live music on many nights. The same can be said at King David's restaurant and Wok With You. They offer other dining choices as does TC Riley's, a sports themed Irish pub. There also is a Barnes & Nobles Bookstore and a salon. The complex also includes close to 30 townhomes available for rent and student apartments that were really needed by RIT.

Speaking of changes on Jefferson Road, this spring the New York State Department of Transportation will begin a major reconstruction project, similar to the work that was done on Ridge Rd. in Greece over the past couple of years. We are told that most of the work this year will involve utility relocation and the major road construction will take place in 2010. I have met with D.O.T. officials twice about this work and I am pleased with the planning they have already done to make sure that the disruption, although not totally avoidable, is kept to a minimum.

The Henrietta Chamber of Commerce and the Town of Henrietta will be working together with the DOT to keep the public and the affected businesses informed about the project.

Not all of the construction activity in Henrietta during 2008 was for commercial purposes. Henrietta continues to be a strong market for residential construction. People continue to want to make Henrietta their home because of the low taxes and high level of services. Although there was a county wide slow down in the construction of houses last year, Henrietta saw 117 new homes, which is down only a couple of dozen from the previous year.

There is a unique residential development that was in large part completed in 2008 that many people do not know about it.

At last year's Henrietta Chamber of Commerce Community Awards Celebration, the Award for Outstanding Facility Design and Construction was presented to Rivers Run. That community sits on 38 acres bordering the Genesee River in a forever wild private setting. Ten acres of wetlands are part of the property and are preserved forever as an asset to the community. There are several cottages and 82 apartments opened last year in their main building.

A feature of rivers run is the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. In partnership with RIT it offers a wide range of classes to adults 50 and over.

One of the reasons I mention Rivers Run is because it is a project that has stressed good environmental stewardship. This is a topic that is of great interest to our Town Board.

In recognition of town wide efforts to address environmental issues, Henrietta was presented a Green Community Award from Audubon International. The award signifies that Henrietta has been dedicated to improving environmental sustainability while still promoting local development. We made a commitment several years ago to join with Audubon International in bringing a sustainability model to Henrietta, specifically with a focus on how to have planned development with regard for the environment. I think it's had exactly that intended effect.

This is an initiative that has been spearheaded not only by the Town but also by several community partners. When making the award, Audubon International cited the following examples of groups in Henrietta thinking green:

- The Town for deeming certain areas "no-mow" habitat zones reserved for wildlife.
- The Chamber of Commerce for hosting seminars on green business practices and for awarding businesses for their efforts to preserve land and conserve energy.

- The Rush-Henrietta School District for opening the Wetland Education Trails in August 2007, which are used by students and town residents.
- The Henrietta Foundation for maintaining the Lehigh Valley Trail, along with 22 acres of wetlands and woodlands located nearby.

I commend them all for their participation in this effort.

Speaking of partners let me pause here to recognize my fellow members of the Town Board. As Supervisor, I am the one up here talking to you today, however I am but one of five on the Henrietta Town Board. We are a team that shares a passion and enthusiasm for Henrietta. We are also a team that has regular differences of opinion, but I can tell you those lead to thorough discussion and examination of issues in a way beneficial to the Town, and that those discussions are always conducted with the utmost respect for the opinion of others.

Before talking about what is coming up in 2009, I want to mention some of our other important partners in serving this community.

The residents of Henrietta are well served by the hard working employees of the Town. They are the people who interact with the public and directly deliver services on a daily basis. They are the backbone of our organization. Several of our department heads are with us today and I thank them for joining us.

I would be remiss if I did not mention each of the organizations that provide emergency services in Henrietta. The Henrietta Fire District is an extremely professional organization of both career and volunteer staff that answer thousands of calls for assistance each year. Chief Comstock and Commissioners Joe Martin and Jim McGovern are here today and we ask that they pass along our gratitude to everyone in their organization.

The same must be said for the career and volunteer members of Henrietta Volunteer Ambulance. They respond to thousands of calls each year and are dedicated to serving our community.

As you know Henrietta does not have its own police department. We rely on the services of the Monroe County Sheriff's Department and they come through for us. They answer more than 25,000 calls per year in Henrietta. During my first year as Supervisor, I have been so impressed by the responsiveness of Zone B Capt. Steve Siena when there are issues affecting the town.

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 attractive place for businesses to locate.

Shortly after I became Supervisor an economics professor told me that the "Main Street" of Monroe County's economy is not in the city, but rather is Jefferson road in Henrietta.

No wonder than that on the Rochester Business Alliance's 2008 list of the Top 100 Businesses in the area, no less than 14 of them are located in Henrietta.

Even with the economy struggling, there are many projects that are currently being planned or under construction.

Brinkman Precision is constructing a 42,500 S.F. manufacturing facility on Park Centre Drive that will bring many jobs to Henrietta.

Buy Buy Baby is a new tenant on Jefferson Road near Clay Road.

Planet Fitness recently took over space at Southtown Plaza.

Discount grocer Price Rite has opened in Henrietta, filling what was empty space at Southtown.

Gates Automotive is modifying an existing 25,000 square foot building for vehicle service, collision repair, & towing.

The Province is an upscale apartment complex consisting of thirteen 3-story buildings being planned for John St., opposite Park Point. These apartments will target, but not be limited to, RIT students looking for this type of housing, such as international students and graduate students.

People ask me how the economy will affect the town of Henrietta. It does affect us but not in the ways some people might think. As businesses close, many are concerned that the Town and other taxing jurisdictions lose the property tax they collect on the property the business occupied.

However the tax is collected from the owner of the property so we collect those funds whether the property is occupied or not.

However the Town will be negatively impacted. Less consumer spending will mean that less sales tax is collected in Monroe County. All towns get a share of that sales tax so less collected means less for Henrietta. We do not yet know the extent of this loss, but we know there will be a reduction.

Because home sales and refinancing have slowed, less mortgage tax is collected. Henrietta gets a share of this as well, and again, less collected means less for Henrietta.

We do a good job of controlling town government spending. The town board has already talked about the need to be aware that decreased revenues will require special care when planning for our 2010 budget. At the same time that we brace for a difficult economic period, we have to remember that it is times like these where some people are in greatest need of help from their town and their community. As illustration of that I can tell you that during these past few months of bad economic news, utilization of the free services of our Henrietta Public Library is up by 20%.

So what, if anything, can local government and our partners do in face of these challenging times? So much of what will happen is out of our hands, out of our control.

One thing we can do is continue to promote Henrietta as a great place to locate a business, further your education, and raise a family.

That is where the Henrietta Chamber of Commerce plays a vital role. I serve as a member of the Board of Directors of this chamber because I see the Chamber making progress towards being an economic development agent, in addition to its traditional but important role as an excellent networking vehicle and organization to promote its members.

The Chamber Board members have done an excellent job this past year developing a vision and an action plan for the Chamber.

That includes an enhanced web site and establishing a part-time office for the Chamber at the Henrietta Town Hall where people can call or stop to get information about living and doing business in Henrietta.

Another way we can try to positively impact business is to think outside the box and see if we can leverage the assets we have here in Henrietta to greater economic advantage.

The most significant of those assets is the Rochester Institute of Technology. We all know that RIT calls Henrietta home, but many people do not know the impact it has on Henrietta. Consider some of these facts:

RIT has over 16,000 students that either live on campus or commute to the campus. They have over 3,100 full-time employees and thousands of part time employees.

Under President Bill Destler's leadership the growth of the college, and the resulting facility improvements, have accounted for over 60 million dollars of construction just for the two most recent fiscal years.

RIT pays nearly \$900,000 a year in taxes on properties they own that are not considered tax exempt. Through recent land sales for the Rivers Run development and Park Point, RIT returned 85 acres to the tax rolls.

Rush-Henrietta high school students have a great opportunity to get a head start on college because RIT allows them to take courses at no charge while they are still in high school. In just the past two academic years 200 students received waivers worth a total of \$223,000.

Leaders of many businesses located in Henrietta, especially those of a technical nature, have told me that they chose Henrietta for three reasons:

1. Location
2. Low taxes
3. Proximity to RIT – they consider RIT to be their pool OF future employees.

RIT is an economic driver for Henrietta and I would welcome the opportunity to sit down and discuss new ways that the Town, RIT, and the business community can create real business growth opportunity together.

And I believe the Rush-Henrietta School District has a place at that discussion table too. I have to note how fortunate I feel to be the Supervisor in a town where we enjoy such a good working relationship with our school district. In dealing with the R-H School Board and Superintendent Ken Graham, all I have experienced is openness and cooperation; and a commitment to do what is in the best interest of those we serve.

There are many items that we plan to work on this coming year. We need to go forward with a study on the possibility of developing a town center, otherwise known as the main street concept, on East Henrietta road. Updating our master plan and studying the long-term needs of the Town are also high on our list of priorities. In addition we soon will begin a process of reviewing and updating several of our town codes, a process which will include participation by community members.

In closing let me say how honored I feel to serve this community as Supervisor. Please never hesitate to call my office on any matter involving the Town of Henrietta, and if you are in the Town Hall, please stop and say hello.