

State of the City

January 31, 2011

I do not have to tell any of you that we live in troubled times, We, in Hornell, are no longer sheltered from events that impact our world. We are not an island unto ourselves, we are part of a larger global community and we must move with the times or be left behind.

We all remember the good old days when commerce was based on Main Street and the goods and services we wanted were available in our neighborhoods, when neighbors were actually neighbors and you knew all the kids in your neighborhood by name and household. We remember the days when neighborhood children would actually knock on your door and ask if you wanted your walk shoveled. Where those days have gone and why they no longer exist, there are many answers and many reasons.

We live in an era where the family structure is and has been under tremendous stress, hard economic times, lack of opportunity and the failure of many to understand the importance of higher education and the economic consequences that result from lack of education and lack of marketable skills. We live in the innovation era and innovation economy where new ideas become what consumers demand, Look at all the technological advances that we have seen in our life time, then imagine what technological advances our young people have seen; it pales in comparison. There have been more technological advances in the past five years then the previous 50 years.

The point I am trying to make is we must not be left behind as a community; we do not have the luxury to think that we can survive and thrive without taking the global community and technology for granted and that we will not be affected. We must insure that we, as a community, demand enhanced broadband access and that we insist that our children

have access to the technology available to other student's world wide. China has more honor students than we have students in the United States.

We must become the "Entrepreneurial City"; we must work with existing businesses to develop a climate locally that will attract technology and work with local educational institutions to develop a work force of technology savvy individuals. We should develop an environment that breeds business innovation and success. We can do it, we have survived many economic challenges over the years and we will survive this current down turn. But, we must realize we cannot and we will not continue to survive unless we change and develop a 21st century environment for our community, it's current and future residents to survive. If we fail to change, we will fail to meet the challenge before us then we must accept our fate, one where we will be left behind and cast adrift as the world moves on without us.

We must first come together as a region and heed the call of government consolidation, reduce the cost of government and work together as a region to move into the 21 century together. Recently I heard the statement that a "Crisis is a horrible thing to waste" it is so true. We have shown others in this State what can be accomplished when local governments commit to work together for the common good. We have done this through the Wal-Mart and Lowe's projects and everyone has benefited. We can show the state what can be accomplished once again by seriously sitting down as regional governments begin in earnest to change the face of government in our valley once and for all. Let us do so willingly before it is forced upon us, We could be so much more than we are without these imposed boundaries; boundaries that were imposed decades and decades ago in a time of little or no communication and virtually no technology. Let us not wait for someone else to do it, Let us step up to the plate and do it ourselves. Let us show the state and world what the Canisteo Valley is made of, lets embrace change not oppose it, lets meet the challenge not hide from it. We can create an environment locally that could be the model for the rest of New York State, it is up to us.

Do we fiddle as Rome burns or do we accept the challenge and lead our region into the 21st century; the choice is ours. I, this evening, extend a challenge and invitation to government, business and educational leaders to begin discussion on moving our region forward, the time is ripe the time is NOW.

Thank you and God Bless.