

Saratoga Springs City Council sworn in amid feelings of cautious optimism

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By PAUL POST, The Saratogian



SARATOGA SPRINGS — Officials expressed New Year’s optimism while warning of tough economic challenges ahead, during Friday’s City Council inauguration at the City Center. More than 150 people turned out for the swearing in of city leaders along with Saratoga Springs supervisors Joanne Yepsen and Matthew Veitch.

Public Safety Commissioner Richard Wirth is the only new face on the council and he has chosen Frank Dudla to be his deputy.

“There will be difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions,” Wirth said. “The council must work together as a team.”

The past year was a tough one as several police and firefighters lost their jobs. The Public Works Department’s payroll has 39 fewer workers because of layoffs and retirements.

However, the worst might not be over yet.

“2010 will probably be the toughest year economically in recent history in this entire state,” said state Senator Roy McDonald, R-Saratoga, who delivered keynote remarks along with former Mayor A.C. Riley.

“Each council has a new opportunity,” Riley said. “There will be many challenges. I urge them to show caution and thoughtfulness. You need to be careful and not just listen to the loudest voices.”

Mayor Scott Johnson said, “2009 presented us with many fiscal challenges, some unprecedented. Solutions depend on our willingness to listen, compromise and simply use common sense.”

Johnson said he would deal with specifics during an upcoming State of the City address and urged the council to “end politics of dissension.”

“In these uncertain times, more than ever it’s important for us to unite, not divide,” he said. Johnson reappointed the same people to his office team —Deputy Mayor Shauna Sutton, Executive Assistant Therese Connolly, City Attorney Joseph Scala and Assistant City Attorney Anthony Izzo.

Accounts Commissioner John Franck, the council’s lone Democrat, and Finance Commissioner Ken Ivins reappointed Michele Boxley and Kate Jarosh, respectively, as their deputy commissioners. Public Works Commissioner Anthony “Skip” Scirocco named Tim Cogan deputy commissioner, replacing Pat Design, who has retired.

Yepsen said the city and county are faced with numerous challenges, from nonprofits threatened with closing and whose programs might be lost, to homeless veterans. People throughout the U.S. are looking for leadership at all levels of government, she said.

“They want to know what their plan is,” she said.

Veitch said the local area will benefit greatly from the GlobalFoundries plant at Luther Forest Technology Campus. At the same time, the city must plan for the changes such development will bring.

“What is our identity?” he said. “What are we going to be in the future?”