



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
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MARK EDERER
COMMISSIONER

KIRK ALLISON
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

Re: **Mayor's 2019 Budget Proposal**

My Fellow Stakeholders,

DPW faces great challenges in 2019, but with great challenges come great opportunities;

Mayor Thomas' proposed 2019 budget reflects only minimal increases in DPW spending over the budget adopted in 2018. These increases mainly reflect funding for material and salaries transferred from the Police Department to Public Works as DPW took over responsibility for the Traffic Bureau. Additional changes reflect minor funding for equipment and manpower previously authorized through legislation by the City Council to support essential services and comply with the Clean Water Act.

The City of Mount Vernon is mandated by the EPA, DEC and US Department of Justice to fix our sewers and sanitation infrastructure and comply with the Clean Water Act. Stopping the flow of pollutants to our waterways from our aging sewer systems represents not only our moral obligation, but also a legal and financial obligation to our taxpayers.

The Department of Justice has brought legal action against the City for failing to correct the problem and we now face fines of up to \$37,500 per day for every day we continue to pollute our waterways. Potential fines to date could top 153 million dollars. The responsibility for fixing this problem resides firmly on the shoulders of DPW. The good news is that we have already begun taking positive steps to inspect and repair our sewers. Every positive action we take toward compliance will lower the burden on our taxpayers by reducing the fines the City will ultimately be required to pay the regulating agencies.

In Public Works we view every challenge as an opportunity. By fixing our aging infrastructure we will not only clean up our streets and waterways, but also open the door to our future. History demonstrates that when cities such as Lancaster Pa, Atlanta Ga and even Port Chester right here in NY, were under similar mandate and began work to upgrade their sewer systems they experienced unprecedented economic growth and development. We have been given the opportunity to access millions of dollars to improve our infrastructure using State and Federal grants. Money for replacing aging sewer lines, repaving broken streets and fixing sidewalks. All we need to do is to demonstrate our commitment to progress by budgeting \$500,000 toward Clean Water Act compliance.

Think about it, if we allocate half a million dollars to fix problems already plaguing our City we will gain access to over 2 million in free state and federal aid. Funding we need to clean up our waterways, fix our streets and sewers, comply with our mandates and reduce our exposure to over 153 million in potential penalties. These benefits are all gained while fueling our City's economic growth. I call that a "no brainer".

In the last five years DPW has seen cuts totaling more than 15% in our staffing. These cuts have cost the City money, often requiring overtime just to keep up with day to day services. We are working to improve efficiency by replacing aging, failing equipment and infrastructure and increasing manpower to improve services to our community all while generating increased revenue by helping to grow our City.

Mark Ederer, P.E.
Commissioner of Public Works