

Mayor's Report to Council

Mayor Matt Tuerk

March 2, 2022

Personnel

We're both sad and happy to report that Craig Messinger announced his retirement after 33 years in service to the City of Allentown. He will be missed, and he cannot be replaced, but he leaves an amazing team that is more than capable of keeping up the standard of excellence while we conduct a search for a new, permanent director. Mark Shahda will serve as interim director. We wish Craig the best as he is able to find more time with his family, including his beautiful granddaughter Myla.

The Department of Community and Economic Development lost its Deputy Director, Tom Williams to a national developer of commercial real estate. Tom Williams's last day was Friday, February 25th and we have begun the search for a new Deputy Director. That person's principal task will be to improve the operation of the department, with a particular focus on the permitting and inspection tasks.

City Hall

As of Monday, February 28th, masks are no longer required in City Hall. After consultation with our department heads and especially from our Health Bureau, we determined that we can safely operate with masks optional. We will keep other safety measures in place, including plexiglass barriers, but will not require employees or visitors to wear a mask. We will also not tolerate any harassment of anyone who chooses to continue to use a mask. We will revisit this policy should conditions change.

Hamilton Street

On Wednesday, February 23rd, we held a press conference to announce that our friends at the Downtown Allentown Community Development Initiative have pledged nearly \$400,000 in funds to support façade revitalization and storefront beautification on key blocks of Hamilton Street. This entirely private sector investment will be managed by Community Action Lehigh Valley and will result in the further revitalization of the Lehigh Valley's most important commercial corridor.

Crime

I want to commend the Allentown Police Department for swiftly responding to acts of violence against our community. The unacceptable actions of some individuals over the past two weeks were met with an immediate investigation and subsequent apprehension of the suspects in each case. This is a testament to the professionalism of the APD team, its commitment to patrol, investigation and community outreach. These acts of violence are a function of a host of factors that we must address in a comprehensive fashion, including from our own internal teams and through collaboration with community partners.

