



## City of Beacon, New York

Office of the Mayor  
Lee Kyriacou, Mayor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### MAYOR KYRIACOU DELIVERS 2025 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

**Beacon, NY:** On March 3, 2025, Mayor Lee Kyriacou delivered his annual *State of the City* address at the beginning of the City Council's meeting. The address summarized achievements from the past five years since Mayor Kyriacou took office in January 2020 and highlighted upcoming projects and initiatives for the year ahead. Mayor Kyriacou is in the second year of his second four-year term serving as Mayor for the City of Beacon, before which time he served eighteen non-consecutive years on the City Council.

A full copy of Mayor Kyriacou's written comments is attached, and the video can be viewed [here](#).

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## **State of the City of Beacon Mayor Lee Kyriacou – 3 March 2025**

As Mayor, I am pleased to present this evening Beacon’s “State of the City” to the City Council, to our audience listening tonight, and to all our residents. I’d like to use this as an opportunity to highlight our achievements in the past year and to outline our goals for the coming one.

In a word, the State of the City remains **excellent** – with 2024 bringing a new central fire station and major investments, while maintaining our solid financial position. What makes this so amazing is how far our City has come in the last 30 years or so – transforming from a tired factory city to a reimagined one, with a reinvigorated historic Main Street and a quality of life that attracts newcomers, investment and visitors – a beacon for other communities to follow.

As I enter my sixth year as Mayor, let me begin by thanking the community for placing its confidence in me. I look forward to working with the entire Council to continue building upon not only last year’s successes but also the decades of efforts of prior mayors and councils.

As I have said in prior State of the City presentations, my overall commitments to you as Mayor of our City include the following:

1. **Financial Discipline**: Minimizing property tax increases, by prioritizing city expenses, and finding non-property tax revenue sources.
2. **Public Safety**: Modernizing our firefighting infrastructure; attracting and retaining our first responders.
3. **Infrastructure Investment**: Continuing the modernization of our roads, sidewalks, water supply, and wastewater treatment.
4. **Quality of Life**: Investing in our parks, our recreation programs and other efforts that improve our day-to-day quality of life.
5. **Climate Leadership**: Cost effectively making our community an environmentally sustainable one.
6. **Good Government**: Running a professional, effective and open government.

I will review our accomplishments in each of these areas in 2024, and our plans for 2025.

1. **Financial Discipline**. Beacon’s financial health remains the best it has been in the decades. We have undertaken some major capital projects – fire station, roads and sidewalks, water and wastewater, parks and quality of life, plus investing in our people – while keeping property tax increases modest. This has required fiscal discipline and prioritization, managing new private construction that increases our tax base, and finding non-property tax sources of funding.

- **2025 City Budget**: The Mayor proposed and the City Council passed a \$35.9 million combined operating budget for 2025.

- **Lower Tax Rate:** The City's tax rate fell to \$5.70 per \$1,000 of assessed value – the lowest rate since 2009. For comparison, that tax rate is over \$10 for the cities of Poughkeepsie and Newburgh. We expect to continue lowering the City's tax rate with new construction and increases in value of existing properties – to make sure that residents are not overburdened.
- **Modest Overall Tax Increase:** The City's 2025 total tax levy of \$13.2 million was an annual increase of 3.8%, well below inflation and the State Property Tax Cap. For comparison, the cities of Poughkeepsie and Kingston enacted 9% increases.
- **Higher Sales Tax Revenue:** As most of you know, I negotiated a 10-year sales tax sharing agreement with the County starting in 2023. Beacon's share of County-wide sales taxes in 2024 was a record \$6.1 million; it's up \$1.3 million from two years ago – equivalent to 10% of our property tax revenue.
- **Revenue from New Construction:** The City and taxpayers continue to benefit from new property construction and renovations, which added \$37 million last year to Beacon's tax base, and \$178 million in the past five years. These contribute new property tax revenue – the equivalent of a 1.5-2.0% of property taxes citywide – which reduces the property tax burden of current taxpayers.
- **New Revenue Sources:** The Mayor's 2025 Budget added two new revenue sources to help reduce pressure on property taxes – a 2% occupancy tax on hotels and short-term rentals, and a share of the state cannabis tax from dispensaries in the City.
- **Fiscal Management:** The Mayor, City Administrator and Finance Director spend much of our time focusing on the City's finances – seeking non-property tax sources of revenue, prioritizing and timing our spending, and borrowing only what we need to with the City's strong Aa2 Moody's bond rating that lowers borrowing costs.

**2. High Quality Public Safety.** Beacon continues to provide a safe community, with a great first responder team that provides rapid response times for police, fire and ambulance services.

- **Central Fire Station.** Our largest accomplishment of 2024 was the on-time, on-budget opening of the City's new \$15 million fire station. After more than 20 years of studies and debate, I required the reuse of the 1980s Tompkins Hose firehouse, trimmed down to the essentials, and negotiated new sales tax revenue. This not only minimized property tax funding, but let us invest in an all-electric facility with geothermal heat, and in a beautiful and historically appropriate brick façade at the gateway to Main Street.

In November, I was honored to join elected officials and almost 300 residents for a ribbon cutting and community celebration. The station houses all our firefighters in one location with state-of-the-art equipment – which has already improved operations, training and safety. It also honors the proud history of our three volunteer companies with memorials in front of the building and displays of extensive memorabilia inside. In 2025, we will be selling our two obsolete firehouses, which is essential for financing a portion of our new one – with protections to ensure historic preservation. We will also

be seeking to replace our current ladder truck, which, while not yet outdated, is costing more than expected to maintain.

- **Police:** We added another civilian police dispatcher in 2024, which is both cost-effective and frees up officers to be out in the community. That said, our Police Department has many vacancies – a national issue, with retirements and attrition outpacing recruitment and training. We were able to promote many of our existing officers, including the appointment of our new Chief, Tom Figlia. Working with our senior officers and police union, the City is pursuing ways to attract and retain officers, including increased pay and other benefits. These efforts are starting to pay off, as we are slowly filling openings, but also incurring higher overtime expense in the interim.
- **EMS:** The City provided its second year of funding for BVAC (Beacon Volunteer Ambulance Corps), and advanced life support services from *Ambulnz*. We continue to work with both to improve capacity and maintain excellent response times.

**3. Record Infrastructure Investment.** Over the past four years, the City has implemented or advanced more than \$40 million in major capital investments for our public facilities. We continue to methodically modernize and improve our century-old infrastructure, with phased timing of project expenses and maximizing non-property tax funding.

- **Rebuilding Fishkill/Teller Avenue.** The other major project of 2024 was finally completing preparations and launching the rehabilitation of Teller and Fishkill Avenues. This effort dates back to 2001, and had City Administrator Chris White not prioritized the time-intensive right-of-way acquisition process and final engineering design, we would have lost \$9 million in federal/state funding. The work is more than half complete and on time – despite unexpected below-ground discoveries – and is slated for completion by the Summer of 2025.
- **Roads & Sidewalks:** In 2024, our Highway Department milled and repaved 28 streets (4.25 miles), continuing our yearly cycle of systematic repaving. We installed 34 ADA curb ramps, sidewalks on West Center Street, and rebuilt the exterior staircases at City Hall from Beekman up to Main. In 2025, we will extend sidewalks and repave Route 52 to the City limit, rebuild the Wolcott Avenue sidewalk along South Ave. Park, repave more streets plus the parking lots at Memorial Park and Van Nydeck, and continue to stripe side streets off Main Street to improve parking.
- **Water & Sewer:** The Water Department began a citywide water meter replacement project in 2024, installing “smart” meters that allow the City and residents to monitor water usage online. We also continued to modernize the City’s aging sewer system with the construction of a new West Main pump station and force main, and rebuilt the box culvert for water runoff under Washington Avenue. We will complete these projects in 2025, and begin replacement of the Mount Beacon water supply tank.
- **Wastewater Plant & Transfer Station:** In 2024, we upgraded the Wastewater Treatment Plant’s primary settling tanks, and renovated staff locker room and showers.

We also did a full window replacement and clean-out of our recycling center / old incinerator building. In 2025, we will replace the wastewater dewatering system and aeration blower; we just completed its roof replacement at a substantial cost savings.

- **City Hall / Court Building.** This year we are making improvements to our municipal building – using City staff to save cost – including renovating the Police locker room and dispatch area, exterior and interior painting, and reconfiguring the City’s clerk window.
- **Dummy Light:** Our much-loved and much-rammed Dummy Light survived the year intact. Maybe all the striping and signage helped.

**4. Enhanced Quality of Life:** We continued to increase the programming budget and make capital investments in parks and recreation, as well as other aspects of our community’s quality of life – funded in large part from new construction that adds to our property tax base and provides recreation fees. With careful planning and community input, we continue to steer our zoning and planning processes to make Beacon a sustainable and livable city.

- **Memorial Building:** With our veterans, we celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City’s Memorial Building on Main at Teller. This is the only municipal building in the region built and maintained to honor veterans. We have forged a great partnership with veteran groups, winning substantial outside grants to modernize the building, and more extensive use of it by veterans and the entire community. Expect more events in 2025 and 2026 as we approach our nation’s 250<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- **Recreation & Parks Budget:** The City’s 2024 spending on Recreation and Parks exceeded \$1,000,000 for the first time ever, which included a new full-time staff member. Ten years ago, it just over \$300,000. This prioritization of tax dollars has afforded a large expansion of programs for youth, seniors and the community. Plus, those numbers do not include large capital spending to upgrade our parks.
- **Park Investments:** 2024 saw the reconstruction of the **Wee Play** toddler playground in Memorial Park, with new play structures, surfacing, fencing and site amenities. In 2025, at **South Ave Park** we will refurbish tennis and basketball courts, and install public bathrooms; **Memorial Park** will see upgrades to the skate park, fencing and parking.
- **Main Street:** Last Fall, our Main Street was one of three in New York named as the cleanest Main Streets in America. This recognition complements Beacon’s “Walkers Paradise” listing, where we received a walkability score of 96 out of 100.
- **Beacon Rail Trail:** At the City’s urging, Dutchess County Planning is engaged in a feasibility study to convert the Beacon-Hopewell rail spur into a rail trail. We are encouraged that this study will build momentum for the next steps of engineering design and funding. I have made the Rail Trail my top priority for 2025, and am excited at the prospect of a rail trail connecting our waterfront and Main Street to the 700-mile Empire State Trail system.

- **Fjord Trail to Cold Spring:** As Mayor, I recently testified on my strong support of the proposed Fjord Trail from Beacon to Breakneck Ridge (and maybe to Cold Spring). The City is partnering with the Fjord Trail for them to build a trail maintenance facility at our Transfer Station. Our partnership will help to accelerate trail construction in Beacon, which will connect to our parks, trails and train station.
- **Route 52 Concepts Committee:** This Committee has made progress on envisioning how Route 52 will shift gradually from largely commercial and industrial uses to include more mixed residential and retail uses. That includes planning for connections to the directly adjacent Rail Trail, and an access road to our schools and Camp Beacon area.
- **Encouraging Housing and Affordability.** Dutchess County Planning has recognized that Beacon continues to do more than its fair share to improve housing and affordability in Dutchess County, with almost 30% of Beacon’s rental units in affordable programs (second only to the City of Poughkeepsie). We have encouraged the County to look at developing part of its DMV lot on Main Street to include affordable units. The State has recognized Beacon as a Pro-Housing Community, opening up funding options. Metro North is reviewing proposals to build housing on top of its north parking lot – fully consistent with current zoning, with 10% of units with below market rents. In addition, New York State has just announced that Beacon qualified for State funding for homeowners to build accessory dwelling units under the Plus-One ADU program.

**5. Climate Leadership.** As lifelong environmentalists, Chris and I are committed to making Beacon a cost-effective model of sustainability in the Hudson Valley. Beacon was one of the first (and one of only 15 of 1,600 local governments in New York) to achieve the State’s highest Silver-Certified Climate Smart Community status – which gives us access to grants that fund additional sustainability efforts.

- **Highway Garage Solar / 100% Renewable Electric:** In 2025, we expect to install a photovoltaic system atop the City’s Highway Garage to add to the City’s self-generated electric capacity. The City generates over 70% of its electric needs from solar arrays, and purchases Renewable energy Credits for the rest.
- **Green Municipal Fleet / EV Charging Stations:** The City will continue to grow its all-electric and hybrid fleet in 2025, taking advantage of State Climate Smart grants to finance the purchases. We added EV charging stations at our fire station lot, and this year will see additional chargers installed at other municipal sites.
- **Green Central Fire Station:** Our central fire station is fully environmentally sustainable – one of the first regionally with all-electric, high efficiency insulation, geothermal heating/cooling, and natural lighting.
- **Municipal Composting:** In the past year, we’ve continued to grow our popular municipal composting program. We increased the number of composting totes, wash them each week at pickup, and provided clearer instructions.

- **Trees & Pollinators:** In 2024 we earned our longstanding status as a Tree City, planting 55 trees, including a new program for property owners to purchase and plant trees at a large discount. We also expanded our pollinator footprint, with a 2,500 square feet of pollinator patch in front of the City’s Hiddenbrooke rural park.

**6. Good Government:** All the above projects could not have been done without the ongoing effort of our City’s workforce and managers, who have saved taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars – by preparing building sites, doing in-house renovations, and managing effectively. Chris and I are committed to providing residents of Beacon with a professionally-run city – one that uses taxpayer funds effectively, provides superior infrastructure and services, is responsive to residents, that empowers department managers, and develops our employees.

- **Labor Relations:** The City Administrator and I have a strong collaborative relationship with our employees and three unions. In late 2024, we negotiated a new three-year contract with CSEA for half the City’s workforce. In light of higher inflation in 2021 and 2022, this agreement provides a sizeable three-year salary increase. In 2025, the City will be negotiating new contracts with our police and fire unions.
- **Attracting Quality Workforce:** Our investments in staff and management style are paying off, as the City is becoming known as a local employer of choice. That allows us to attract and hire strong and motivated candidates. Our new City Planner joined in 2024, and our full-time HR Director continues to improve workforce policies, training and support. We are in midst of hiring a new Building Inspector, and expect first responder hires to come.
- **Transparency:** Beacon continues to record, livestream and air on cable all Council , Planning and Zoning board meetings. We regularly share City news on our website, with the press, and via social media/YouTube. That makes us a leader in the region for our accessibility, inclusion and transparency. We are here to serve you.

**Final Words.** As I said at the start, the state of Beacon remains excellent. Together we have accomplished much during my five-plus years as Mayor, and I look forward to the goals we have laid out for 2025.

I want to thank our City Council, the employees of the City, including our department heads, and our City Administrator, who make it all happen, as well as all the residents who volunteer their time for the City and the community in so many ways.

The focus of my community service across more than three decades has been the City of Beacon – 18 years as a City Councilman and now my sixth year as Mayor. It is an honor to serve the community I love. Onward.