DRAFT **City of Albany**

DEPARTMENT OF LAW

MEMORANDUM

To: **Gerald D. Jennings, Mayor**

From: **John J. Reilly, Corporation Counsel**

Re: **State of the City Address/ Departmental Accomplishments**

Date: **January 4, 2011**

Outlined below please find various items pertaining to the Corporation Counsel's Office Accomplishments in 2010.

The Law Department participated in the Neighborhoods' Work II Conference, leading the discussion on the Vacant Building Court. This Court was established by the Law Department to address the unique problems of vacant properties. The program brings together City Departments such as Neighborhood Revitalization, Albany Community Development, Planning and Buildings. It also encourages private groups who have a stake in vacant buildings to be involved, such as Historic Albany and Habitat for Humanity. The collective efforts of these groups are brought to the property owner to assist in planning and financing. The court will also act to leverage the owner to transfer the property for a larger development or to a private contractor. The focus is to return vacant properties to beneficial use. In 2010 approximately 65 new properties were brought to court. These actions were commenced to ensure registration or compliance with the Vacant Building Maintenance Standard. There were over 20,000 in fines assessed this year in court. We also leveraged the transfer of 70 Morris Street to new ownership, which resulted in the building being completely rehabbed and opened for occupancy in 2010.

The office has received and processed approximately 210 Notice of Claims to date in 2010. The Law Department has maintained most of the files generated by these claims. We have reduced our outside counsel costs substantially this year. We also prosecuted over 20,000 Traffic Violations representing all Police agencies except the University of Albany Police in Traffic Court.

The Law Department completed an update to the Personnel Manual in 2010. This was the first update to the manual in many years. The policy included a new section to combat workplace violence. We also completed a Request for Proposals for Diversity Training. The selected organization will begin training City Employees on recognizing and preventing bias activities in the workplace beginning in 2011.

The Law Department participated with New York State to develop and implement a prevent Domestic Violence. Albany is one of the first municipalities to establish this important protocol. The plan includes selecting individuals from each Department who are trained to identify and assist victims of Domestic Violence. The program also affords a safety plan to the victims of this violence.

Finally, the office was successful in negotiating a Franchise Agreement with Time Warner Cable. This 10 year Agreement was approved by the Common Council and the Public Service Commission in 2010. This Franchise calls for the establishment of Public, Educational and Governmental Programming on three (3) dedicated channels. There were several Public/Private Partnerships created with the following organizations; the Albany City School District, The College of St. Rose, New School of Radio and Television and Capitolize Albany Corporation. These organizations will help ensure quality programming is created to be shown on the three (3) dedicated channels.

Law Department

Vacant Building Court: The Law Department developed and oversees this unique Court that meets each third Wednesday of the month. The Court brings in vacant property owners to ensure they are in compliance with the Vacant Building Registry and to assist them to redevelop or transfer their property to motivated developers. Various stake holders such as Albany Community Development Agency, Neighborhood Revitalization, Albany Planning Department, Habitat for Humanity and Historic Albany Foundation meet at each court session to assist property owners and to strategize about restoring select vacant properties.

Albany's Policy on the Prevention of Domestic Violence: The Law Department worked with the newly created State Office for the prevention of Domestic Violence to create one of the first municipal Policies on the Prevention of Domestic Violence in the State. This program trains selected City Employees to assist victims of Domestic Violence. It also creates safe work place plans to protect victims of Domestic Violence in their job locations. .

Franchise Agreement with Time Warner Cable: The Law Department negotiated a 10-year Franchise contract with Time Warner. This Agreement was approved by both the Albany Common Council and the New York State Public Service Commission. This Agreement pays the City 5% of all programming revenue obtained by Time Warner and also funds the creation of Public, Educational and Government programming on three (3) designated Time Warner Channels. Public/Private partnerships have been created to ensure the creation of quality programming to transmit on these stations. The Partners include; Albany City School District, the College of St. Rose, the New School of Radio and Television and Capitalize Albany.