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**** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ****

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Albany Common Council Passes City of Albany Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

ALBANY, NY – The budget for the City of Albany is an important document that establishes the City's financial course for the coming year. It is also policy document that reflects how the City chooses to invest in its future. In her Fiscal Year 2024 Proposed Budget, Mayor Sheehan outlined a financial direction that we as a Council agree with and appreciate. Those investments include the following commitments:

- A partnership with Albany County to deploy teams of mental health professionals and housing resource specialists across the City to help support the homeless and those struggling with addiction
- APD investment in social workers who will be available around the clock at both Center and South Stations
- A new Department of Engineering that will include Engineering, Traffic Engineering, Building Maintenance, and Permitting
- Improvements to the City's recreation facilities, including a new Lincoln Park Pool, a new West Hill Community Center, an upgraded Hoffman Park Recreation Center, a restored Tivoli Preserve, and a rehabilitated Tricentennial Park
- Millions of dollars of investment in streets, sidewalks, speed humps, and pedestrian safety infrastructure
- Ensuring a living wage for all of our workers plus settled collective bargaining agreements with the majority of the City's union bargaining units
- Continued support for the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services, which was created in Fiscal Year 2023 and is now off to an incredible start

We support these items, and while we recognize that it is difficult to raise taxes in a community faced with a uniquely unfair tax burden—63% of assessed properties in the City are tax-exempt—we support Mayor Sheehan’s modest 1.64% tax levy increase and understand and respect the complexity of arriving at that difficult number.

As much as we appreciate the vast majority of the Mayor’s proposed budget, we as a Council feel that it is important to adjust certain items to reflect our strong dedication to housing for all, neighborhood engagement, and community policing. These changes include the following amendments:

- An additional \$75,000 to the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services to support a housing vacancy study. The data gathered from the study will help inform City decisions around the housing crisis we now face. It will also allow the City to gauge whether it is appropriate to move forward with emergency tenant protections.
- An additional \$145,000 to the Community Police Review Board (CPRB) to ensure adequate training and support for the upcoming fiscal year. We also call for the CPRB to be incorporated into the City by 2025. During this transitional year, we will work with the CPRB to find a new structure that will support their mission and directive.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to find the full amount of savings in other revenue streams to support these vital additions. Furthermore, we as a Council do not support an increase above the Mayor’s proposed 1.64% tax levy increase, and as a result, we have reluctantly amended the budget to trim the supply, office equipment, and miscellaneous lines of many departments. We appreciate the hard work of each employee of the City of Albany and have focused on those accounts that will have the smallest impact on our workforce.

We understand that some of these additions will need a long-term budget adjustment—notably, the CPRB, whose budget needs will change as we work to bring the Board into the City. We appreciate the Mayor’s awareness of the Board’s increased funding requirements, and we look forward to her partnership in future budgets to find long-term funding solutions. Additionally, we believe that a continued partnership with the Mayor will be critical to addressing the many housing issues that we now face.

With these changes, we proudly pass the City of Albany Fiscal Year 2024 Budget.

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