

**2018 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**  
**Presented by Mayor Joe Wellman**  
**February 12, 2018**

Allow me to start this State of Our City address by saying that from the vantage point of city government, the State of our City is in excellent condition. We have finished some very worthwhile projects this past year and just as importantly, at the same time we are setting the ground work for future projects that will benefit our citizens in many ways.

It is not an understatement to say that Two thousand seventeen was another busy year in City government. Following the constant **busy-ness** surrounding all the activities associated with the City's Bicentennial in 2016, it was my hope that maybe, just maybe, 2017 would be a bit more laid-back and less hectic. Well, that was a dream that went out the window quickly!

Along with this State of the City address, I have given each Council member a copy of the annual report from each Department Head. These are compiled each year but in the past you have gotten only a few of them given to you verbally. This year I've decided to give you all of them for your review. I think you will agree that all departments had a busy year in their own way and in their own piece of making the city operate smoothly. I am not going to go through them one-by-one but I do want to highlight a point or two from each report.

From an improvement standpoint, we invested money in the city's buildings and facilities in Animal Control, Police, & Parks and we upgraded some badly-needed vehicles and equipment for several of the departments.

- You'll see that our Fire Department made 1,070 response runs including 55 fires and 636 EMS Assists. This year they also enhanced their rope rescue & confined rescue training.
- Our Police department answered over 17,000 complaints, 2900 911 calls and 275 accidents, along with outfitting all officers now with body cameras and the department with a new computer-aided dispatch system & computers in their cars.

- The Building Commissioner issued 301 building permits for construction estimated at \$13.2 million, and again coordinated our Sidewalk Replacement Program. Working with the Plan Commission & Board of Zoning Appeals, the department processed 2 re-zoning, 24 variances and 6 conditional use applications. Through Code Enforcement work, 809 grass & weed complaints and 202 trash notices were handled.
- Animal Control took in around 800 animals in 2017, about half of which came from out in the county under our agreement with the county to do so. A bit over half of those animals were sent to rescue or adopted to new owners. Most of the rest were taken in as loose animals and eventually returned to their owners.
- Our city engineering designed & reviewed many plans for projects in the city, worked on utility easements, the canal work in Eastside Park, and reviewed storm water projects. Ed also coordinated work for the sidewalk replacement program, a new lift station for the Deerfield Subdivision and other work for utility departments. He also reviewed the relocation of utilities in preparation for the 15<sup>th</sup> Street bridge project.
- Besides the normal mowing, maintenance, events and Christmas decorations, the Parks Department dredged canals, remodeled a concession stand, built new sidewalks at Longfellow Park, and managed the Water Park.
- The Street Department may have seen the most changes, not the least of which has been new management & putting together a plan to meet their equipment needs. Besides their traditional duties, they began to program to improve the appearance of alleys. They collected 4.65 tons of recycled material that was saved from the landfill.
- The Electric Department, sort of our quiet child this year, kept outages this year to a minimum and worked with the power requirements for the new CORE center downtown & M & C Tech.
- The Water Department employees – What can I say but that they busted their behinds finding & repairing leaks that resulted from pressure changes due to taking the Campbell Hill Tower out of service for a few weeks.
- Wastewater saw a reduction in annual overflows to Hawkins Creek from 14 to 8 to only 4 last year. Through MS-4 & recycling responsibilities, 521 tons of debris was removed from our city streets through street sweeping and they processed another 26 or 28 tons of hazardous waste. By coordinating with the Garden Club on the Team Up to Clean Up program and with two corporate

citizens of the city on two other programs, almost 6300 pounds of trash was removed from city streets and waterways.

- The Utility Office staff – Well, what can I say about their support duties? They collected money to keep those utility departments in business by sending out & collecting more than 96,000 utility bills for water, electric, sewage, stormwater & trash collection. They also record and report, by department, the fuel each uses, which totaled better than 80,000 gallons last year to run the city.
- The only departments you don't have specific reports from are IT & Legal. I can tell you that IT keeps busy maintaining the computers in every department and last year spent many hours specifically with the Police Department on their office & vehicle hardware & software upgrades. And Legal, that's Tim, what can I say but that Tim continually & regularly assists all departments and the Mayor & Clerk-Treasurer on everything from ordinances to dealing with lawsuits to answering questions that I'm sure he gets tired of hearing. He is always available to keep us "legal" and on the "straight & narrow"!

Those are some of the highlights you'll find in that stack of reports which I would encourage you to take with you to review.

Allow me to now turn to some specific projects that the Mayor's office spent a lot of time on this past year.

As I sat down to prepare this talk, I started making a list of all the projects we worked on last year, and easily filled a sheet of paper. Let me just mention some of them:

- The annexation of what will become the Deerfield Subdivision
- Another round of Owner-Occupied home improvement grants
- The Blight Elimination Program that continued last year
- The addition to the Hill of Heroes and the roundabout flagpole dedicated to veterans
- The finalization of work designing and implementing the EZ Zoning District
- The sale, purchase and expansion of the rail car facility by **Eagle Railcar, LLC**, to result at least **100** new jobs
- Establishment of **M & C Tech**, to result in **35** jobs
- Drafting of the new Employee Manual, a work still in progress

And...

Maybe most importantly, all the work being done on three *LONG-standing* projects in the City.

Let's talk first about the bridge over the CSX railroad at East 15<sup>th</sup> Street. The need for replacing this bridge goes back to the 1990's, to which the file in my office can attest. Shortly after becoming Mayor, three county officials and I went to Louisville to meet with CSX representatives from Jacksonville, Florida, about this bridge. While that meeting didn't result in any immediate action, I continued to keep the discussion going locally to address this problem. After 5 years of on-again, off-again meetings & conversations, I am so proud that this will finally be done in 2018.

Through our efforts working with Daviess County officials, CSX, INDOT and the Daviess County Economic Development Foundation, through an inter-local agreement with the county, demolition of the existing bridge, and construction of a new ... AND BETTER ... bridge will start later this month. This \$2.4 million project will be completed by year-end. And thanks to the Community Crossings grant that we submitted in April, and the Special LOIT fund we've maintained, the city's share of the cost of this project is already paid for. That makes me very glad!!

A second long-standing problem has been the old McCord/Tokheim property on Front Street. I thank the Council for taking the initiative on this to assure residents in that neighborhood that it is safe to live there. The testing the City conducted last summer showed that there were no immediate health impacts to any surrounding residents. There remains work to be done before the Indiana Department of Environmental Management will clear the property, but the City's work has resulted in one of the previous corporate owners of the property stepping up and conducting additional work at the site. We expect that work to continue so that hopefully one day this property will be re-purposed into something more than a vacant lot.

And as you know, we are working diligently on the Business 50/ National Highway problem. With your approval we have been working with engineering and consultant firms this past year. The State of Indiana made an offer of relinquishment to the City last summer which would have resulted in the City assuming an unacceptable level of risk to fund the work.

We have both a counter-proposal and an application for funding in the hands of the Indiana Department of Transportation. The City has offered that we would consider accepting ownership of the roadway but only with promises of substantial funding from the State over the next five years.

Our project would include new paving the entire length of the road through the city, and in the existing commercial district portion, new curbs, sidewalks, multi-use trails, lighting improvements and ADA access of Business 50. It would also include new buried utilities and improved drainage.

I can't sit here & promise anyone when or even if our proposals will be accepted but I can tell you that the City & State are closer together than ever before on coming together on this project.

Those three projects I've just mentioned -the 15<sup>th</sup> Street bridge, the former McCord/Tokheim property and Business 50 – have plagued three or four City administrations and for various understandable reasons have waxed and waned over many decades. I like symbols, simple reminders, analogies, so this year my symbol is this hour glass as a symbol of **TIME**. These three projects have been languishing for the city for a long TIME, and now it's TIME to move forward on them.

One more project that we are finishing right now as we speak is the upgrade to the Combined Sewer overflow structure that will automatically remove trash & debris from the bar screen at the CSO detention tank. This will save countless manhours previously required to manually keep the screen clear during large rain events and complies with our Agreed Order with IDEM to eliminate untreated overflows.

I mentioned earlier our Sidewalk Replacement Program – Last year that project grew about 25% with just under \$125,000 spent between the city & property owners, PLUS the man hours contributed by City employees toward removal of those sidewalks.

I alluded previously to the Campbell Hill water tower. We re-coated the interior of the tower. We also purchased and demolished 11 abandoned homes through our Blight Elimination grant with three more to be demolished this spring to finish up that grant. Of the 11 properties, 8 will have or already have new homes built on them, 2 are yet to be sold and 1 was purchased by an adjoining neighbor. My office also worked with volunteers to expand our Hill of Heroes, install the roundabout flag pole, and see the city's first Veterans Day parade in many years, if ever.

As you know, we also completed last year an analysis of the city's present and future office facility needs, and I believe you have all received a copy of that report.

Now, for what projects I anticipate for 2018 –

We WILL continue our efforts to eliminate dilapidated homes around the city and fight the continual fight of making sure trash & weeds on private property is eradicated, at least as far as the city can legally & practically address with private property owners, realizing that recurring violators take an inordinate amount of employee time.

We will continue our efforts to upgrade and replace equipment as needed by the various departments, relying on department heads to identify the needs and funding. One of those immediate needs will be the replacement of the salt storage barn at the Street Department, which I learned just in the last month needs to be replaced due to its deteriorating condition before we can take delivery of salt for next winter.

We are currently analyzing the best way to fund our Wastewater Department so that we can continue our efforts at attacking drainage and flooding in the city. Within the next couple of months, we will be bringing to you the results of that study and proposals to do two things: return the Stormwater utility to profitability and provide money to invest in drainage projects.

My office also is cooperating with three other ongoing volunteer efforts in the City that all have the goal of improving Quality of Place for residents. Those are the Healthy Living program, Hometown Collaboration Initiative, and Sustaining Hoosier Communities program. I have additionally had the honor and privilege of annually hosting the high school CEO classes and the Leadership Daviess County classes. This year you should know that we have three city employees enrolled in the latter program, thanks to support from the Board of Public Works.

Again this year I plan to apply for Community Crossings grants to assist in paving streets. You will see quite a bit of paving this spring as this winter has been hard on our streets. This summer we hope to start a new program of crack-sealing program on our streets. This program is designed to extend the life of streets by reducing the amount of moisture that seeps under them. We continue to analyze the need, cost, placement & design for a second wastewater treatment plant on the city's east side and the need to replace the filters at our water treatment plant. The sidewalks around Longfellow Park will be finished, but added to that project will be installation

of exercise stations along the path as an opportunity for patrons to improve their health. These will be paid for through our share of the cigarette taxes the State of Indiana collects and sends to us.

So, it's been busy. I'm not sure how we get it all done, except I can tell you that we have some hardworking employees and department heads, to whom I now wish to express my gratitude once again. We owe all 156 of them our thanks and praise.

Thanks also to Debbie Neukam my assistant who works hard year in and year out to make things run as smoothly as possible in the Mayor's office. Not only does she perform work for the mayor, but she also answers many of the questions from the public that come into the office daily. I also express my thanks to Beth McGookey and her staff who not only keep the records and file the reports, but also keep our finances in line and don't let us overspend what you all have budgeted.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank my wife, Elaine, for her understanding, her guidance and her support through a job that can be demanding of one's time and attention. She's my wife, and she's also my confidant and sounding board. Without that support, I can assure I could not be doing this job, and would probably gone insane juggling it all.

Finally, I want to thank each of you around this semi-circle up front here, plus Diane Snyder of our Board of Public Works, for your support and your caring attitude about the citizens and well-being of our community.

Back to my hour glass analogy, not only is it time to attack some long-standing issues but it's also the best of times to continue attacking current projects. When the hour glass of our lives is emptied, I believe we will all be able to look back over this time and be grateful that we are accomplishing much for the present and future citizens of Washington. I thank God we've been able to accomplish what we are accomplishing and I pray that He will continue to bless our City.

Here are copies of this report if you wish to take one of them along with the others.

Thank you again for what you do.

