

ANNUAL STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

January 31, 2018

HONOR GUARD

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INVOCATION

Good Afternoon and thank you all for attending this annual State of the City Address. We were delighted to be welcomed by United Methodist Church of the Resurrection Pastor Adam Hamilton to this beautiful venue for today's festivities. Leawood is indeed fortunate to have a diverse inventory of places of worship within our city limits as well as adjacent to our community. Church of the Resurrection was founded in 1990 and is now the largest Methodist Church in the United States with over 21,000 members. Since the new 3,500 seat sanctuary, designed by Minneapolis based architects HGA and Gould Evans of Kansas City, opened just before Easter 2017, we thought this was a perfect location for today's event. At the conclusion of my remarks, Reverend Hamilton will lead a tour of the sanctuary and provide oratory about the beautiful stained glass window.

Before I begin, I would like to recognize the elected officials who are in attendance. I'd also ask that City Administrator Scott Lambers, Department Heads and other professional staff to please stand. My thanks to each of you for your role in making 2017 another stellar year.

The focus of today's comments will be our municipality. However, there were some noteworthy happenings on the National, State and County scene that had ramifications for all of us. First of all, to much disbelief by political pollsters, Donald Trump taking office as the United States President ranked first on the list of the "Top 10" international news events for 2017. There have been daily stories related to our President dominating the news media since his installation...the most notable being the recent passage of a \$1.5 trillion tax cut. The Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA) had an epic year in 2017; and according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased at an annual rate of 3.2 percent in the third quarter.

Another National event that consumed everyone's attention for a period of time was the total eclipse of the Sun after nearly a century. The enthusiasm around this celestial show was a welcome relief to the disastrous hurricanes and numerous occurrences of mass shootings throughout our country and the world. Adding to those tragedies, some have predicted that the #MeToo movement appears to have only just begun with more, unfortunately, yet to come.

At the State level, working collaboratively with local elected officials, the State Legislators passed a budget that they believed would shore up our financial future for the next several years. This belief was altered dramatically when the Kansas Supreme Court ruled in October that school funding is still inadequate and unfair. Many believe that \$600 million dollars in funding to school district budgets statewide may be needed to satisfy the ruling that the current system is unconstitutional. This remedy will have to be made by the spring of 2018, and the resolution will undoubtedly impact each of us.

Closer to home, Kansas City voters passed a \$1 billion plan for a “Better KCI” with a near three-quarters approval rating. This airport improvement will indeed have a positive effect on all of us who use it. On the Kansas side, here in Johnson County, the farewell to long-time County Manager Hannes Zacharias was a big surprise since the County has long been nationally recognized for excellence...which we anticipate and hope will surely continue.

Focusing now on the City of Leawood, every year our City receives national recognition for being highly acclaimed in a variety of areas. We were voted “2017 Third Best Small City in America” by the leading personal finance outlet *WalletHub* out of nearly 1,300 cities. They analyzed 33 livability indicators, such as housing costs, schools, safety, and entertainment options for cities with populations of 25,000 to 100,000. Leawood ranked Number 1 in two of the indicators, affordability and number of people with high school education and beyond. Financial technology firm *SmartAsset* ranked Leawood for the third year in a row as one of the “Best Places to Retire in Kansas.” They base their study on tax friendliness, recreational and social opportunities for seniors as well as availability of medical care. Reviewing nearly 1,700 cities nationwide, consumer research institute *GoodCall* ranked Leawood as the Number 2 “Best City for Seniors to Retire” in the United States based on similar retirement-focused metrics but also including weather and low crime rates.

Just so you don’t think everyone living in Leawood is of retirement age, Leawood was also ranked by a published study of *MillennialPersonalFinance* as the Number 92 “Best City for Millennials.” Reviewing the data that included unemployment rate, percent of residents within the age range of 25 to 34, cost of living, future job growth, transportation costs, crime and safety, Leawood was noted as offering a solid environment for Millennials to start their careers and families.

Since Millennials are keenly interested in financial stability, they will be pleased to learn that Leawood ranked nationally Number 143 in *LendEDU*’s study on “Best Cities for Building Wealth,” recognizing us as one of the best places in the United States to save and make money. In addition, *WalletHub* improved our ranking from 22nd to 19th “Best Money-Management Skills” out of over 2,500 cities based on 10 key money-management indicators.

Police Chief Troy Rettig took pride in *SafeHome*’s 2017 listing of “Safest Cities in the United States” where Leawood was in the 25th percentile of the “Top 101” safest cities and Number 3 in Kansas. *SafeHome* used a variety of data sources including the latest report from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) on the number and type of crimes, law enforcement officer ratio, demographics, population density, unemployment rate, and income and education level. *BackgroundChecks*, however, ranked Leawood the Number 1 “Safest City in the State of Kansas”...which we like even better.

Finally, so that our youngest generation won’t feel left out, Leawood was ranked the Number 1 City in the State of Kansas by *24/7 Wall Street* for “trick-or-treating.” This is again because of our low violent crime rate of 0.9 incidents per 1,000 residents. Indeed, we have many reasons to celebrate!

On the financial scene, Finance Director Dawn Long oversaw the reaffirmation of the City's AAA bond rating by Moody's Financial Services for our \$14,745,000 General Obligation (GO) temporary notes at a bid of .93%. Our \$19,990,000 GO improvement bonds realized a rate of 2.23%. We were also pleased to hold our mill level constant for the 14th consecutive year while maintaining the second lowest mill levy in the State of Kansas among cities of the First Class. According to the 2017 Johnson County Property Tax Listing, the average home in Leawood has a market value of \$498,269 compared to \$471,583 in 2016.

Our Police Department had a number of other recognitions as well this past year. They received an award from United Community Services of Johnson County at their 50th Anniversary celebration for their partnership with the Mental Health Co-Responder Program along with nine other Northeast Johnson County cities. Also, Officer Chris Hargis received the Kansas City Metropolitan Chief's and Sheriff's Association "Silver Award for Valor." This was in acknowledgement of his ability to bring to a peaceful resolution an incident involving an armed, suicidal young man. Finally, Officer Mike Pelger was honored as the "2017 Employee of the Year" for his dedication and exemplary commitment to the City of Leawood.

In 2017, Leawood had a number of significant farewells. The Police Department paid respect to Officer Brett Leathers who retired after 20 years of service as well as Officer Tony Woollen for his 25 years. Deputy Fire Chief Wayne Harder retired after 31 years of dedicated service. Two other notable partings were Public Works Director Joe Johnson after 21 years in public works administration and Information Services Director Mark Andrasik who served 34 years with the City. Although they will all be greatly missed, thanks to the assistance of Human Resources Director Nic Sanders, we are fortunate to have successors who are proving to be very capable and up to the tasks at hand.

While Fire Chief Dave Williams, Deputy Chief Jarrett Hawley and their department have been focused on continuous improvement with the International Accreditation and Insurance Services Organization 1 rating, they have also initiated moving from Basic Life Support to Advanced Life Support on their calls since they now utilize licensed Paramedics along with our Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). This is especially significant because approximately 70% of their calls for service are for medical incidents.

We did have some serious occasions where help was urgently needed in 2017. There was an F-0 tornado that damaged approximately 50 homes in and around the Steeplechase neighborhood. Then, within a few weeks' time this past summer, Johnson County and Leawood were impacted by several rain events that had an estimated \$2 million dollars in damages and were included in a federal disaster request. We've been working with the County, State and Federal officials to attain monetary assistance in dealing with some of the repairs to the City's infrastructure. City Attorney Patty Bennett is also working to secure insurance coverage wherever possible. In total, the Public Works, Parks, Golf, Police and Fire Departments expended approximately 3,550 hours of staff time responding to flood issues and cleanup.

Acting Public Works Director David Ley and his department administered 82 different contracts in 2017 with a total value of \$14,250,000. The majority of the projects involved stormwater and residential streets. The Arterial Program saw continuation of work on Roe Avenue from College Boulevard to 119th Street as well as Roe Avenue from Tomahawk Creek Parkway to 135th Street. Public Works also completed the fourth and final phase of the \$20 million Curb Repair/Replacement Program. In 2018, they are now beginning the first phase of the Stormwater Improvement Project which entails replacement of 20 miles of failing corrugated metal pipes with concrete pipes.

Also in 2018, Information Services Director Ross Kurz is planning a number of new initiatives. They include the Virtualization for all Personal Computer workstations; fiber optic communication to all City-owned facilities; and a Fully Redundant Data Center at Johnson County Communications Center to help facilitate continuity of government.

Community Development Director Richard Coleman and his department saw total construction values increase substantially in 2017 primarily due to the increase in the value of commercial construction. This value is more in line with the average valuation over the past five years. There were 113 commercial building permits with a construction valuation of \$87 million versus \$38 million in 2016.

In the residential sector, there were 53 new single-family home permits which included 27 rebuilds in the northern part of the City and two south of I-435. There was also one multi-family permit for 74 units with a construction value of over \$16 million. Total residential construction value was \$62 million in 2017 compared to \$55 million in 2016. Overall, there were 1,830 permits issued realizing a total construction value for 2017 of \$149 million versus \$93 million in 2016.

Since economic activity is vital for a diversified and balanced tax base, we were pleased to welcome the following businesses in 2017:

- CrossFirst Bank relocated from 135th Street to the former CBIZ office building on Tomahawk Creek Parkway;**
- The Manildra Group, a food and industrial products supplier, opened an office on College Boulevard;**
- Camelot Court added Ardor Nail Lounge;**
- Town Center Plaza supplemented their inventory with Salon Ami Spa; Scout & Molly's, a women's boutique; Sundance, a premier lifestyle retailer; Freezing Moo, Thai-style ice cream; and Vitality Bowls – Superfood Café;**
- Park Place brought in sewKC, locally crafted goods; Timothy Weber: A Hair Salon; and The Ainsworth, restaurant, lounge and sports bar;**
- Town Center Crossing added Bluemercury Spa; Bonobos, menswear; Everything But Water, resortwear shop; Torch AI, technology solutions; and the approval of Zoës Kitchen;**
- Leawood Plaza welcomed the Dalmark Group, property management services; and 1-2 Another, a consignment shop;**
- In Parkway Plaza, Thee Gin Mill: Gastropub is now open;**

- Plaza Pointe brought in 5 O’Clock Liquor; and Radiant Skin & Beauty; and
- Nall Valley Shops added Taste Buds Kitchen, a culinary school; and Nall Valley Wine & Spirits.

We are very grateful to the businesses who have chosen to support the Leawood Chamber of Commerce through a Chamber membership. My personal thanks to those of you here today. In addition, I applaud the Chamber Board, EDC Board, President Kevin Jeffries and his staff for their efforts to recruit and retain companies in our community.

A few of the major 2017 construction projects included:

- First Federal Bank on State Line Road expansion permit for their regional headquarters;
- Construction starting on the Village of Leawood’s 23 single-family homes;
- The rebuild of the larger Brookwood Elementary School;
- The Manors at Mission Farms additional villas;
- Expansion of Kansas City Orthopedic Institute (KCOI);
- Ground broken for Hallbrook East Village consisting of 33 villas;
- Church of the Nativity’s lower level expansion;
- Completion of St. Luke’s Community Hospital in the Village of Seville;
- Hunter Family Vision new office building in Parkway Plaza;
- Completion of Mid-America Orthopedics (MAO) in Plaza Pointe;
- Expansion of the Central States Beverage Company in Centennial Park; and
- The Fairways of Ironhorse Retirement Community overlooking Ironhorse Golf Course.

In 2017, our Planning Department was very busy indeed. In 2018, we expect continued elaboration and definition of our 135th Street Community Plan as well as, hopefully, additional tenants added to some of our older neighborhood centers.

Although the Parks Department sustained most of the damage from last year’s floods, it did not dampen their enthusiasm for a number of impressive projects. Ironhorse Golf Course Advisory Board Chairman Dick Fuller and Parks and Recreation Director Chris Claxton oversaw the grand opening of Vista 154, a new 5,400 square-foot banquet and event space which was added to the existing clubhouse. There have already been numerous wedding receptions, retirements, anniversaries and charity events held in the new space. Managed by Troon Golf, the world’s largest golf management company, we were delighted to see the June 2017 issue of *Tee Times* magazine feature Ironhorse Golf Course as its course of the month.

We were also fortunate to celebrate some additions to our public art inventory this past year. Council Member Jim Rawlings led a selection committee for the City’s 18th piece located on the Justice Center site. Artists David Dahlquist and Matt Niebuhr created “Weight of your Heart, Weight of a Feather,” which addresses the “origins of the concept of justice” as taken from ancient Egyptian history.

Arts in Public Places Initiative (APPI) Chair Anne Blessing, working collaboratively with Cultural Arts Coordinator April Bishop, brought forth two additional pieces for installation in 2018. The first is titled “Dancers” and was created by artist Ewerdt Hilgemann and will be placed on the west side of Roe Avenue just north of City Hall. The second piece, temporarily titled “Walking Woman,” is being commissioned by artist Michael Stutz. This piece will be located in the Sculpture Garden on the east side of Tomahawk Creek Parkway just north of 119th Street. A contest will be held for those who wish to participate in naming the piece.

Besides the additions to public art, Arts Council Chair Mary Tearney was also kept busy providing assistance to the Leawood Stage Company. During 2017, they produced five wonderful shows in a variety of venues with the largest being their summer production of “Annie” held in the Ironwoods Park Amphitheater. In total, there were over 6,500 raving fans in attendance throughout the year. Leawood Stage Company will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2018 and is planning their biggest season ever. “West Side Story” has already been announced for their summer show.

Foundation Chair Alice Hawk and the Parks Department also oversaw the donor event at Leawood’s most popular attraction, “Leawood,” our off-leash dog park. Patrons who generously contributed private dollars to augment this beloved space were honored.

Leawood is indeed fortunate to enjoy the leadership of an extremely committed City Council. In 2017, five of the eight seats were up for election. Council Members Debra Filla, Chuck Sipple, Lisa Harrison and Julie Cain were all re-elected. Mary Larson was elected to fill the vacant seat in Ward 2. The service that they provide goes well beyond their work on the City Council. They also serve as Council Liaisons or Committee Members to the dedicated citizen volunteer groups consisting of Service Clubs, Commissions, Councils, Advisory Boards and Committees. Would all volunteers working on behalf of the City of Leawood please stand to be recognized.

There were a couple of groups who truly worked overtime this past year. I-Lan Sister City Committee Chair Bette Monson assisted City Administrator Scott Lambers with a delegation visit led by I-Lan Mayor Chiang. One highlight of the trip for Mayor Chiang was the opportunity to throw out the “first pitch” at a Royal’s Baseball game. The photo displayed on the screen is currently exhibited on a billboard in I-Lan marketing his re-election campaign for Mayor.

Another accomplishment at the initiative of Mei-li and Ken Yang was the inauguration of the Sister-School relationship between Blue Valley North and the Lan-Yang Girls’ Senior High School in I-Lan. Much appreciation goes to Superintendent Dr. Todd White and Blue Valley North Principal David Stubblefield for their support. There has already been one successful student exchange from I-Lan that occurred last fall.

The I-Lan Sister City Committee hosts a Lunar New Year celebration each year to honor our relationship with I-Lan which now spans 30 years. It will be held on February 18 at Vista 154 ringing in the “Year of the Dog.” All are invited to make reservations as soon as possible.

The other volunteer group that worked tirelessly and celebrated a tremendous milestone was Leawood Foundation Chair Alice Hawk and her Board of Directors who spearheaded the fundraising of nearly \$500,000 from generous individuals and businesses to open Leawood’s “All Inclusive Playground” at City Park this past summer. *Variety KC*, the Children’s Charity, was the largest donor; and we are proud that it bears their name. This is only the second accessible playground in all of Johnson County and provides fun for children of all abilities. This playground has now been dedicated to the City of Leawood as a fabulous addition to our parks system. Alice, would you please join me on the stage so that we can get a group photo at the conclusion of my remarks.

There are a few other Leawood residents here today who had amazing accomplishments in 2017 that I would also like to present. Barstow School fifth grader Julia Luetje is joined today by her parents, Susan Bernstein and Chucker Luetje, and her grandparents, Dr. Phyliss and Bob Bernstein and Dr. Charlie and Sandy Luetje, as well as her sister Allison. Julia entered the Frito-Lay inaugural *Dreamvention Competition* which challenged kids to come up with a solution to an “everyday problem.” Her invention of *A Storm Sleeper* was one of five chosen among 13,000 entrants in the national contest. Since Julia was afraid of thunder storms as a young child, she designed a pillow fort that could mask the frightening sounds. She has a patent pending as well as a trademark application in and plans to have it manufactured and available very soon. All five finalists earned \$10,000, and the person with the most online votes had a chance to win \$250,000 as the grand prize winner. Julia has that distinction as well! Julia, congratulations! You are an amazing inventor and entrepreneur, and you make us very proud. Would you please join me on the stage?

Congratulations are also in order for another exceptionally talented young lady, Chloe Puetz, a Blue Valley North High School senior, who competed with more than 200 singers from across the metro in the “American Idol/The Voice”- style contest that was held at the Johnson County Community College Yardley Hall and sponsored by The Jewish Community Center. During its eight years, this event has also served as a very successful fundraiser providing assistance to many deserving individuals. During the contest, ten finalists were narrowed to four by a panel of judges with professional experience in the performing arts. At that point, the 1,100 audience members voted electronically and chose Chloe as the 2017 *KC SuperStar* that also came with a \$10,000 scholarship award. She is still deciding where to go to college, but one thing she has decided is that she plans to major in musical theater wherever she goes. Chloe is here today with her parents, John and Michelle, as well as her brother, John. Chloe, would you please come on stage with us as well?

Blue Valley North High School graduate Hannah Motley received one of the most prestigious academic honors in the nation when she was selected as a 2017 *U.S. Presidential Scholar*. The award ceremony this past June in Washington, D.C. recognized her near-perfect 35 ACT score and 4.573 GPA. However, it was her commitment to serving her community that provided her the most distinction. Hannah regularly volunteers with a variety of nonprofit organizations and says that her parents have provided her with that inspiration. She is currently a freshman at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with the Morehead Cain Scholarship, a full-ride, and planning to major in global studies with a concentration in international politics. We regret that Hannah is away at school and could not be in attendance today.

Finally, it is a great honor to recognize Regina Kort, daughter of Sonia Warshawski, who many of you may know as “*Big Sonia*.” Regina and her family were very instrumental in the production of the documentary about Sonia, the 91-year-old great-grandmother, businesswoman and Holocaust survivor. This award-winning film portrays her traumatic journey as a refugee and eyewitness to annihilation. It also demonstrates that love conquers racism. To quote Rachel Morrow of *Film-Forward*, “One of the most interesting aspects of this documentary is the second-generation Holocaust survivor’s perspective and the insight into living with intergenerational trauma.” Regina, thank you for supporting your mother and lending your own voice to ensure that we remember and learn from her painful story. Would you please come on stage for a photo with the entire group?

Now, would you all please join me in a well-deserved round of applause for these extraordinary individuals? We congratulate each of you on your numerous accomplishments and feel certain that you’ll have many more successes on your life’s journey.

In closing, I want to remind you that Pastor Adam Hamilton will lead a tour of the new Sanctuary in just a few minutes. We are also pleased that two of the books that he’s authored and autographed are gifts for those individuals whose birthdays are closest to January 31. Again, my sincere thanks to Church of the Resurrection for your gracious hospitality.

I also want to thank each of you for your attendance and attention today. Leawood is truly an exceptional community, and it is a great honor for me to serve as Mayor. Together, we will strive to continually live up to our motto of “Growing with Distinction.” I hope that you all enjoy good health and many blessings throughout 2018.