

State of the City

February 12, 2019

At 182 years of age, Bentonville is poised to see continued growth due to regional amenities, and a prospering business environment. As a thriving 21st century city, Bentonville has become a destination for regional, national and worldwide travelers. With a population estimated to be just less than 50,000, Bentonville is known for its welcoming spirit and its “can do” attitude. Home to the world’s largest retailer, a famous art museum, people groups from throughout the world, and a comprehensive trail system, Bentonville is garnering awards and recognition as one of the best places in the United States to live, work and play. I look forward to sharing last year’s accomplishments and a vision for 2019 and beyond.

City Staff

Bentonville is managed by an extraordinarily professional team. The City’s senior staff lead 470 full-time employees and 119 part-time employees. Our employees are dedicated to providing taxpayers with an “exceeds expectations” return on their investment in city government. Highly educated and certified, the professionals that comprise our team make our city a point of difference. I would like to take a moment to thank each and every one of them. I am so appreciative for their hard work and dedication to the City of Bentonville.

Sales Tax Receipts

I can start by confidently saying that the state of our city is very positive. Bentonville enjoyed another great year for sales tax with our per penny amount eclipsing 13 million for the second straight year. However, it is noteworthy that Bentonville’s 2018 sales tax receipts decreased by 6.89% compared to 2017 collections. December 2017 was a record-setting collection month with receipts 3 times larger than any previous month. Excluding that month, Bentonville experienced year over year sales tax growth of 14.81%. It is a great compliment to our city when local businesses enjoy the benefits of growth which is represented through our consistent and strong sales tax collections the last several years.

Utility Billing

The Utility Billing team managed the collection and administration of more than \$93.8 million from more than 25,037 accounts while providing a high level of professional customer service. In 2018, Utility Billing implemented an objective credit based deposit tool to better protect the City from loss. In addition, the amount of automatic payments increased 19% thanks to a 130% increase of customers using Auto Pay through our website.

Electric Department

In 2018, the Electric Department installed 1,255 new meters, raising the total electric meter count to 23,448; including 28 net meters, bringing the total net meters to 64. 2018 revenue exceeded projections by 7.32%. The Electric Department also maintained a 99.998% reliability rate throughout the year. Residential and commercial construction continues at a very high rate and shows no signs of slowing down any time soon. The 8th Street utility relocation was completed in order to make way for the widening of 8th Street. The Electric Department began coordinating the design of a new fiber infrastructure to enhance communication with all city owned facilities. The construction of this fiber infrastructure will begin in 2019 and allow the Electric Department enhanced real time communications with facilities. The Electric Department will begin the installation/conversion of LED street lights within the city limits. This will be a long process, but will ensure that Bentonville is using the best technology available.

Public Works

Our Public Works Director oversaw the completed relocation of water and sewer utilities associated with the 8th Street Improvement Project between I-49 and SW I Street. He started easement acquisition for water relocation to accommodate ARDOT's Walton/I-49 Interchange improvement project and began a "Utility Summit" with local water utilities. This is a quarterly meeting between Bentonville, Rogers, Springdale and Fayetteville. The meeting is informal and is an opportunity to exchange information and discuss issues we may be facing. It has helped all attendees better address some issues while building and strengthening working relationships. Our Public Works Director continues to collaborate with the Northwest Arkansas Conservation Authority (NACA) and Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on water and wastewater discharge issues.

The Water Master Plan was completed in 2018 and outlines several projects to initiate the planning process in 2019 and 2020, including route analysis and securing easements for an additional line to Beaver Water District.

In 2018, all departments that report to the Public Works Director (Water, Sewer Rehab, Wastewater, Transportation, Street, Engineering, Airport, and Public Works Maintenance) saw growth and improved teamwork, a goal they plan to continue into 2019 and the future, which will result in improving their service to Bentonville – improving and expanding their responsibility, efficiency, effectiveness, and professionalism.

Public Works Maintenance

The public works maintenance team creates the clean, professional and appealing appearance witnessed throughout the City. Many of the kind remarks we receive from visitors regarding the cleanliness of our city can be attributed to the daily work of this team. The team heavily participates in the City's annual fall leaf collection program and the annual "Make a Difference Day" tree planting event. Currently, staff tends to approximately 3,000 trees annually, which includes watering, pruning and general maintenance, and replacing trees that do not survive the initial planting. This team supports other departments by improving and maintaining their respective facilities.

Water Utilities Department

The Water Utilities Department completed projects in nine areas of town, resulting in 3,853' of sewer main being upgraded as well as 1700' of water main. 26 manholes were rebuilt and 3 fire hydrants replaced. In addition, 114 new small water services (5/8" – 2") were installed, more than 300 water leaks were repaired, and 65 large water taps (4" – 12") were made, as well as 242 fire hydrants were inspected, and an additional 16 were repaired. With our growing population, 12 additional water-sampling stations were installed, resulting in 50 samples being taken every month.

Sewer Department

The sewer team video inspected 118,451' of main line and cleaned an additional 1,466,724'. They completed 68-point repairs and have taken on clearing sewer easements throughout town. The team inspected and provided oversight for the epoxy lining of 14 manholes and rebuilt an additional 4. The team also assisted with another NACA sewer main repair and the multi-sensor inspection of the entire pipeline.

Meter Department

The meter team installed 688 new water meters in 2018, responded to over 3,000 work orders related to water meters and changed out for repair another 547 meters. In all, the department completed over 5,000 work orders in 2018.

The 8th Street utility relocations (14,000' water and 6,000' sewer) were completed. In 2018, 64 large scale and subdivision projects were brought online. With the 64 projects, 11,766' of water main and 10,216' of sewer main were added including new water services, fire hydrants and manholes.

The department also launched a new logo, which has received positive feedback and as a department they are proud of how it turned out.

Awards

In April, Chris Earl, Operations Supervisor received the Safety Professional of the Year Award from the Arkansas Water Environment Association. In December, Nancy Busen was chosen Wastewater Manager of the Year by the Northwest District of Arkansas Water Works and Water Environment Association.

Compost Facility

The Wastewater Team continued maintenance to ensure compliance and safe and efficient operations. The compost facility added an OdorBoss machine that has greatly reduced the number of odor complaints. A leadership change has increased the number of windrows production twofold, and the amount of screened compost has doubled. The overstock of mulch is becoming manageable by the increase in compost production.

Transportation

The Transportation Department's completed capital projects in 2018 were the Central/I-49 interchange, where new on/off ramps were constructed on I-49, NW 3rd Phase III was completed widening NW 3rd St. and the bridge structure replaced, SE Walton/SE 28th signal was improved by adding a dedicated left turn arrow to the east and west travel lanes, and the 8th Street utility relocation has seen the electric, water, sewer, gas and cable lines relocated. The street department completed 1.6 miles of new asphalt overlay throughout the City. Additionally, the street department placed 1104 tons of asphalt to repair street cuts and potholes, cleaned 4 miles of drainage ditches, swept 287 miles of roadway, mowed 198 miles of right of way, mowed 411 acres of detention ponds, installed 3 new traffic signals bringing our signal total to 48 signals, and added 4 sets of pedestrian crosswalk signals.

Engineering

The engineering department completed conceptual drainage studies in several areas of town. They also worked in conjunction with the Street/Transportation Department on the traffic signal upgrade at SW 28th St. and S Walton Blvd., as well as assisted with the NW 3rd Street Phase III project.

Municipal Airport

The West Parallel Taxiway has been completed at the Bentonville Municipal Airport, and the Turf Runway has been opened to aircraft traffic. Hangar Infrastructure Improvements on the west side of the airport have been completed. Two projects are in the design and bid phase, the Runway Rehabilitation project and West Terminal Circular Apron. The Bentonville Municipal Airport is experiencing greater growth and activity than any time since its creation.

Fire Department

The Bentonville Fire Department responded to 6,789 emergency calls, an increase of 6.6%, and reported no fire related deaths in 2018. The department's commitment to continual professional improvement is validated by 32,099 hours of training for firefighters throughout 2018. Training was specifically focused on leadership, EMS, Rescue, HazMat, and Fire Fighting protocol.

New Equipment

A new support truck was ordered to replace the current 2000 model. Two power assist bikes were purchased for standbys and trail use. One power cot system was installed in an ambulance, 7 automatic defibrillators were installed on all of the frontline fire apparatus, and the Circa 1947 hose dryer was replaced with a multi-use dryer for equipment.

Safety Inspections

The newly established strategy for Fire Safety inspections exceeded projections. Inspectors performed more than 2,846 inspections on existing commercial structures within Bentonville during 2018. 103 educational programs were delivered reaching over 43,000 attendees.

Police Department

The Police Department and Emergency Dispatch Center processed more than 73,000 calls for service, representing a significant increase over 2017 totals. On average, dispatch has experienced an increase of more than several hundred calls each month for each of the past 7 years. Approximately 16,000 9-1-1 calls were received at the police department's Communications Center. There was no notable increase in more serious crimes or crimes against persons and no trends in criminal activity that should be cause for concern. One of the few more serious crimes recorded in 2018, a November homicide, resulted in a timely arrest and is currently under investigation.

Awards

Nikki Williams was selected as Law Enforcement Officer of the Year for Benton County in 2018. Nikki was connected to saving the life of a domestic violence victim with emergency first aid.

Bomb Squad

The Bentonville Bomb Squad finished its fifth year in a row with more than 100 calls for service, including 30 bomb related calls for service. The Bomb Squad received \$196,300 in grants in 2018 leading to the purchase of several vital pieces of equipment including a 2019 Ford F-350.

Employee Development

Employee development and retention resulted in our police department ending 2018 fully staffed with 77 sworn officers and 32 professional staff members, comprising a total department with 109 full time members.

Dispatch Center

Future needs were also addressed in 2018 with the ground breaking of a new facility that will house both the Emergency Dispatch Center and the Criminal Investigations Division. This new facility is being constructed on property located directly south of the current police facility. The approximate 22,000 square foot facility will also contain a citywide Emergency Operations Center and a multi-use area designed to provide for a variety of law enforcement needs, including training. The Dispatch Center and Emergency Operations Center are designed to be weather rated and a completion date for the project will be late summer 2019.

Safety and Education

A bike officer provided near daily security on our city Trail System and Downtown area. Additional electric assist bikes were added to the Bike Team to further extend trail and downtown area coverage capabilities.

Police and Fire Dispatchers implemented and completed a 9-1-1 education program for students in local elementary schools.

In response to growing concerns, the department offered presentations based on a nationally recognized Active Shooter training program to better educate and prepare our own staff, area businesses, churches, and other community members.

In response to a nationwide school security concerns, the Police Department continued a now established program to increase safety and security in the schools. For the sixth year in a row, officers performed numerous random school visits to provide an extra layer of protection in our schools. The Bentonville Police Department received recognition and this school security layering tactic was recommended as a school safety strategy in the Governor's Arkansas School Safety Commission Report.

One additional School Resource Officer was added at the Junior High level bringing the number of officers assigned to the district's schools within the city limits to four. An additional Bomb Squad member received certification and brought the number of certified bomb techs to six. One police K9 was replaced and paired with a new handler. The Animal Services group added one member to bring their numbers to three. This helps provide better coverage and improved animal related services. Other activities by the police department staff included outreach related programs such as the now well-established Citizen's Police Academy. Overall, the 2018 efforts and accomplishments of our Police Department will help us better support, protect and serve our community both now and in the future.

Legal Department

In 2018, the City of Bentonville Legal Department handled 2,816 new criminal and traffic cases in Bentonville District Court, including arraignment, discovery, negotiation with defendants and defense counsel, plea hearings, case preparation and trials. The department also prepared numerous ordinances and resolutions, reviewed hundreds of criminal cases for probable cause, provided legal and prosecution support for criminal investigations, prepared contracts for approval, negotiated land transactions and complex regulatory matters and consulted regularly with all City departments to provide guidance and risk management.

The department maintained its commitment to continuing education and innovation, attending the National Association of Drug Court Practitioners Conference on Treatment Courts, together with the DWI Court Team, including defense counsel, treatment providers, law enforcement and supervision. Additionally, the department paralegal, together with the court clerks, received training at the Elevate Journal Technologies Conference. During this 5-day conference, our representative attended individual classes for needs specific to case management, report building and business rules of the court, as well as break out classes to enhance our knowledge of document functionality and web based programs available for information sharing. Journal Technologies supplies case management software, "Justware" to courts, prosecutors and other justice agencies in 500 courts throughout 42 states.

Parks & Recreation

Bentonville Parks and Recreation's Community Programs continue to grow in size and popularity with our citizens and visitors. In 2018, Parks and Recreation hosted 120 recreation programs involving more than 230,000 participants, with more than \$4 million in revenue.

Memorial Park

Memorial Park softball fields were given a much-needed facelift last spring with the renovation of four fields. The 1.2 million dollar project, paid for by the Advertising and Promotions Fund, included new artificial turf and new fencing. The park, named the National Sports complex of the year in 2018, produced a 2.9 million dollar economic impact for our community with state and national tournaments.

Citizen's Park

Park development continued at Citizen's Park with the completion of a new amphitheater, pavilion, and parking lot. In addition, construction began on a new eight court tennis complex that should open in May 2019. Development of this park should conclude with the construction of Bentonville's first inclusive playground scheduled to begin construction later this year.

Master Plan

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board completed two major master planning processes when they studied the future use of Melvin Ford Aquatic Center and the design of a future park located on SW 28th Street. Staff and board members hosted multiple public meetings to speak with citizens regarding ideas for both of these facilities. The new 26-acre park could be constructed in 2021.

Trail Projects

Parks and Recreation has worked with non-profit partners to construct and open the final section of the North Walton Boulevard Trail. This provides cycling and pedestrian access from Walmart Store 100 to the Bentonville Bark Park and the Razorback Greenway. Work is almost complete on the Applegate Trail that will prove to be the first major section of trail to open in the west part of our community.

Trail safety was improved immensely with a grant from the Trailblazers. A new tunnel was constructed at the intersection of 8th Street and SE J Street to provide safe access through what was one of the busiest intersections on the 36 mile Razorback Greenway.

Library

In 2018, Bentonville Public Library recorded 667,538 circulations. Compared to 2017, physical material checkouts increased over 2,000 and e-book circulation grew more than 8,000. Library visits increased to 302,398 with 5,573 new library cards issued. Program attendance totaled 80,718, an all-time high for Bentonville Public Library.

Special Events

Bentonville Public Library was one of fifty libraries nationwide selected to host the Thinking Money: A Financial Expedition exhibit. During the period February 10 through March 15, more than 3,000 patrons viewed the exhibit or attended exhibit related library events. Additionally, Bentonville Public Library presented the Fourth Annual Youth Literature Festival and First Annual GeekCon, featuring Free Comic Book Day. Both events realized record-number attendance. Bentonville Public Library co-hosted with Bella Vista Public Library "An Afternoon with Lisa Wingate." The presentation kicked off the 2018 "If All Arkansas Read the Same Book" statewide tour.

Tech Card Program

Bentonville Public Library's Tech Card program began its fifth year by issuing 25,000 library cards to local students in our service area. Library databases have been used 700,000+ times since program launch. Use of the databases has grown 327% since 2014.

Upgrades

The Library upgraded several areas to benefit patrons. The Library reupholstered furnishings in public areas and added two new picture book bins, two courtesy charging stations and four custom book display units. The Tech Loan Program improved by purchasing new laptops and iPads.

Summer Reading Program

Bentonville Public Library's Summer Reading Club participation was the best ever, with nearly 2,800 participants reading a total of over 51,000 hours. Program attendance totaled more than 15,000 and over 110,000 physical item checkouts in June and July. Bentonville Public Library partnered with the Bentonville Library Foundation during Booked for the Evening to honor community supporters with Library Service Awards.

Community Development Highlights:

- Estimated Population: 49,629 -- up 4.2% from 2017
- 487 single family building permits issued
- 494 single family houses completed
- Average value of new home -- \$289,317
- Average new home size -- 2,883 sq. ft.
- Multi-family units permitted -- 1032
- Multi-family units completed -- 372
- Total number of all building permits issued -- 1,732 -- up 11% from 2017
- Value of all building permits = nearly \$500 million

Bentonville Community Plan

City Council approved the new Bentonville Community Plan on October 23, 2018. The plan establishes a vision for the future and serves as a guide for decision-making. In 2018, planning,

electric, engineering, water, sewer, transportation and wastewater collaborated to improve the submittal and review process for preliminary plats and large-scale developments. The process requires more information up-front from developers to ensure a more comprehensive review. The new TrakIt project management and permitting software has improved the response time and has improved communications between all departments. All planning submittals are now accepted digitally online, eliminating the numerous copies previously required for each submittal and providing a cost-savings to applicants. Beginning later in 2019, building applications will also be accepted online.

Regulatory Changes

On March 27, 2018, City Council adopted an ordinance amending the city's zoning code. This was part of a bi-annual review to make clarifications, corrections, or updates to meet current conditions. A similar review with amendments for the development code is planned for early 2019.

Community Enhancement

Other initiatives designed to enhance Bentonville's appearance, environment and sense of community included: tree and flower plantings, tree giveaways, volunteer events, neighborhood meetings and public art. Two Bike Tower sculptures (one in blue tones and the other in red tones) designed by Tyler French were installed serving as gateway features when entering Bentonville via the trail system.

Bentonville maintained its Tree City USA designation for the nineteenth year in a row, exceeding the per capita spending requirement for community forestry initiatives. Due to a grant from the Walton Family Foundation, the Tree and Landscape Committee was able to give Bentonville residents almost 800 trees.

Tree Planting Blitz

The October Planting Blitz resulted in the planting of an additional 430 trees.

Community Planning Month

For the sixth consecutive year, the city proclaimed October as Community Planning Month. This is part of a national campaign sponsored by the American Planning Association with the goal to increase understanding of community planning.

Taxi Program

Transportation assistance for low-income, elderly and disabled Bentonville residents continues to be offered by supplementing the costs associated with taxi and Ozark Regional Transit (ORT) fares. In 2018, 219 riders were approved for the taxi program and 51 for the ORT program. In the 2018 ORT program, the city issued 190 \$25 fare cards.

Final Words

As I begin my first term as your mayor, I want you to know I consider it an honor and a privilege to serve the City of Bentonville. I am excited about the future of Bentonville. There is much to do as incredible opportunities lie ahead for our city. Bentonville is fiscally sound and filled with passionate people who want to work together to provide a vibrant, safe and clean city. In my first few weeks in office it has been an honor to visit each City Department, meet and speak with our hard working employees and see the expansive day-to-day operations that keep Bentonville a thriving city. City staff is focused on a collaborative team effort bringing people together and working together as we progress to find the best direction and solutions for Bentonville. As we grow, listening carefully, speaking clearly and respecting all will guide our decisions. We will continue to promote a high quality of life and reinforce Bentonville's identity as a welcoming community striving for excellence in safety, business, residence, recreation, and education.

In closing let me say, I truly love this city and I hope you do too. I ask that you join with me, city staff, City Council, and area community and business groups who are working to make a difference in Bentonville. You can join volunteer groups or choose to serve on city appointed boards. You can start a Strong Neighborhood Program, get involved with our coming Animal Shelter or volunteer at our public library. Nominate someone for our Quarterly Outstanding Citizen's Award. I encourage you to be engaged and encourage others to serve. Find a place you can make a difference. I strongly believe the good people of this community will guide what I am certain will be a very bright future for the City of Bentonville.

Thank you all ~ may God continue to bless our City, Northwest Arkansas and the United States of America

Mayor Stephanie Orman
City of Bentonville