



Mayor Dennis E. Pauley

## State of the City – 2017

It is my privilege and honor to serve the citizens of Rock Island as Mayor. Sitting around this table, we have a strong team of elected officials that are called upon to make the difficult decisions that affect the day to day operations of the city.

As you know, our City Manager resigned last fall and we appointed the Public Works director, Randy Tweet, to serve as Interim City Manager. After the new council is seated in May, they will conduct a nationwide search to select a permanent City Manager.

Retirements and career advancements this past year created opportunities for the city to hire three new department directors. In early spring, our Parks and Recreation Director, Bill Nelson, retired. The Assistant Director, John Gripp, was promoted to fill that position and has done an outstanding job. Also this past year, our Community and Economic Development Director and our Director at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center accepted new positions in other communities. We were delighted to be able to hire Jerry Jones, former director of the MLK Center, earlier this year and Chandler Poole was hired in December to take over as the new CED Director and he has hit the ground running. Mr. Tweet, along with his team of new and seasoned directors, continues to address the ever changing needs of the city. Every year expenses go up, making daily operations extremely challenging, and this team has proven to be up to the task of a challenging physical environment.

I am sure everyone continues to follow the budget issues with the State of Illinois, but here in Rock Island we entered 2017 with a balanced budget. We will again fully fund our pension obligations, maintain substantial financial reserves and, as we have in the past, we will continue to evaluate all open positions to continue reducing expenses. Even though the County tax levy continues to fluctuate, I am proud to report that 2017 will be the sixth year in a row where the City of Rock Island has not increased the property tax rate. It continues to be below the 2012 rate.

Our Information Technology or IT Department continues to contain costs while improving municipal efficiencies, security and system availability. They worked closely

with the Police Department to get technology operational for the new police station. Video surveillance, card access systems, telephone services and digital signage were all selected and installed this past year.

Last spring, IT implemented the process allowing for the council to participate in council meetings remotely. Security was enhanced in City Hall and they worked with the Fire Department to deploy tablet technology for their inspections and scheduling.

During the summer, IT worked with Parks to update their seasonal facilities to the new Cloud software and they worked with numerous departments to upgrade video surveillance and security.

As the year ended, cost containment continued to be the focus and newer and more economical communications were established for all city buildings. They also updated the City's website for a newer, fresher and more easily accessible look in 2017. Recently, the IT Department moved to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the old Police Station, providing them additional space for training, more work space and additional security.

Rock Island libraries continue to be very popular venues for the citizens of Rock Island. More than 240,000 visits are made to the library each year to check out materials, use one of their computers or Wi-Fi, attend a program or receive reference help. In 2016, electronic materials saw a big jump in numbers as nearly 50,000 items were checked out electronically. Online materials now make up about 13% of the library's total circulation. Adding the new e-book platform, "E-Read Illinois", and leaving Rivershare to return to the Prairie Cat Library Consortium helped immensely with selection as the electronic material availability increased by over six million items.

One of the Library's proudest accomplishments of 2016 was integrating its summer reading program into Spring Forward Learning Centers "Summer Enrichment Initiative", offering free summer camp experiences to 384 children in grades kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Library personnel are looking forward to partnering with this group again in 2017.

As I mentioned earlier, in the beginning of 2016, the Martin Luther King Jr. Center's Executive Director, Dwight Ford, resigned and former director, Jerry Jones was hired as his replacement. As part of that transition, the board refreshed their strategic plan to reflect governance policies and replicate those of high functioning boards and made strong efforts to host our state and federal elected officials to tour the facility.

Under Mr. Jones' tutelage, the MLK Center began expanding its partnerships and programming. The Two Rivers YMCA and Arrowhead Family and Youth Services signed lease agreements to occupy space within the facility. After receiving a grant from the National Recreation and Parks Association, the MLK Center added services to support nutrition and wellness education to youth and families. The Center agreed to contract with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services to provide a family

advocacy center beginning in 2017. The MLK Center staff will now serve as support to families at risk for separation due to issues of safety. The addition of these partnerships and programming will allow the center to add to more staff and expand services further into Rock Island County.

The MLK Center remains vital to our community, providing services to over 2,000 youths with after school programs, summer camp and prevention services while an additional 18,000 people were served through special events, clubs and other programs. The center is definitely poised to provide a very positive impact for 2017.

Shortly after John Gripp took the helm of the Parks Department last year, the department underwent a reorganization that reduced expenses by over \$300,000 with no staff members being laid off. This was accomplished through retirements, job consolidations and promotions.

Soon after, as another phase of the reorganization, a three tier park maintenance system based on the Ballard King and Associate's feasibility study of the department was established. This system was developed from information gained from public meetings and staff input and will be a very valuable tool when making future decisions about our city parks.

A new registration software system was developed in 2016. Activenet is very customer friendly and has advanced marketing capabilities, which boosted several recreational programs. This software makes tracking program success possible.

Our Parks Department continues to work with the local Quad City Pickleball Club. The group raised over \$30,000 to develop the first outdoor dedicated pickleball facility on the Illinois side of the Quad Cities and the facility at the Mel McKay Park has been a huge success.

For the first time, the Rock Island Fitness and Activity Center fitness room and cardio loft remained open this year during the annual two week RIFAC spruce up. All the fitness equipment was replaced at the facility this past year through a lease agreement and the replaced equipment is being utilized in the fitness room at the new police station. This lease agreement will allow the City to replace the equipment at RIFAC every five years, keeping everything in peak working condition.

A lot of work has been done at the Hauberg Center this past year. The Parks Department formed a great relationship with the "Friends of Hauberg" volunteers, helping to complete tuck pointing, exterior painting, plumbing projects, grounds work and tree removal and deep cleaning.

The Parks Department has also been working with the "Friends of Douglas Park" volunteers to upgrade the irrigation to the ball fields, electrical work on the scoreboard and buildings, work on the concession stand, turf reconditioning and general clean up.

These partnerships have been very beneficial and will continue to develop as time goes on.

In 2016, our Parks Department hosted thirteen free concerts in Schwiebert Riverfront Park and Lincoln Park. All were well attended and very well received by the community.

The annual July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration, “Red, White and Boom”, was held at Schwiebert Park again this year with over 15,000 people in attendance in our downtown area. With an equal number of people attending on the Iowa side of the river, this celebration has truly become a major bi-state event.

Later in the year, over 2,000 people attended “Fright Night in the District”, a free, family friendly Halloween event that is organized jointly with the District, the Martin Luther King Jr. Center, and Rock Island Clean and Beautiful.

Along with all the programs and activities, the Parks Department is striving to meet ADA requirements in the city. A new path was installed at Haymaker Park; path work was completed to the Douglas Park bathrooms and ADA compliant surfacing was installed at the Skafidas Parkway playground. In Lincoln Park, the stairs on the northeast corner of the park were completely rebuilt, the footings for the park’s historic cannons have been completed and the newly restored cannons will be replaced in early spring.

The one of the most positive accomplishments in the Parks Department for 2016 was the improved relationships with the public. A series of meetings providing updates and seeking public input was held throughout the year. These meetings have shown a great deal of transparency in the department that has been well received by the public.

The Rock Island Fire Department continues to make improvements to enhance their ability to serve the public:

- A new radar unit was added to the department’s boat, which greatly adds to their rescue capabilities
- A new pumper truck was purchased to be added to the fleet
- Additional computer tablets were placed into service to increase the efficiency of the department
- The department continues to participate in full scale training activities this past year with exercises at Augustana College in April and on the Arsenal in May
- Fire Department members received two awards at the Trinity EMS System awards banquet in May, 2016 – Rescue of the Year and Save of the Year
- Firefighter Brandon Baker was honored as the Firefighter of the Year by the Knights of Columbus
- Lieutenant Kyle Sebben received a community service award from Modern Woodmen
- The department expanded the type of public education offered, doubling the numbers of fire code violations that were identified and corrected

The Rock Island Fire Department is an outstanding leader in their field and they will continue to partner with neighborhood communities to promote a professional and positive image, not only for Rock Island, but for the entire metro area.

In January, 2016, our Police Department completed their move into the new facility. Their large community room now affords them the opportunity to implement a community crime prevention meeting on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00 pm. This meeting is open to Rock Island residents and provides them with information about current crime trends followed by a presentation on police operations and services. The meeting also includes an open question and answer session.

Late last year, the City Council approved the purchase of body cameras for the police department and the cameras will be purchased and placed into operation in early 2017. These cameras will allow for accurate documentation of Police – Public contacts, arrests, and critical incidents. They will not only serve to enhance the accuracy of our officer's reports and testimony in court, but they will also add the ability to review for probable cause, officer and suspect interaction, evidence for investigative purposes, and provide additional tools for officer training.

The Police Department assigned an officer to the drug enforcement administration task force this past year, which greatly strengthens our drug fighting capabilities, not only in Rock Island, but also in the Metro Quad Cities.

They have implemented a new physical agility test for police applicants based upon recommendations from the Illinois Police and Fire Commissioners Association. The new testing more closely resembles the actual job requirements and critical skills, while also eliminating the old gender based standards.

Like our Fire Department, our members of the Rock Island Police Department continue to provide outstanding education, protection and service to the citizens of Rock Island.

2016 was another busy year for our Public Works Department. We were fortunate that the Mississippi River only reached flood stage once this past year and that was a minor event at best. This allowed us to keep our resources to a minimum and the department continued on a steady work pace on projects well into the fall season.

On the maintenance side, the streets and utilities divisions performed annual maintenance of the city's infrastructure, including patching streets, replacing catch basins and manholes, repainting storm and sanitary sewers, painting and other routine maintenance. The Engineering Department managed numerous projects, including seal coating, brick street repair, asphalt patching and crack and joint sealing throughout the city.

The two largest projects were Full Depth Concrete Patching program and Hot-in-Place-Asphalt Recycling program. The full depth concrete patching projects, both contracted and in-house, were the main focus for the Public Work's Municipal Services Division

with \$800,000 expended in 2016. With this program, bad sections of concrete were replaced all the way to the base material at numerous areas of throughout the entire city. This was the first year the City reconstructed an entire street. 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue, north from 12<sup>th</sup> Street to the dead end, was replaced due to years of deterioration from ground water. A drainable base and drain tile system were installed to allow the water to be captured under the pavement and diverted to the proper drainage area.

Closely behind the concrete patching was the Hot-in-Place Recycling Program at \$456,748. With this program, the top 1 ½ inches of asphalt is rejuvenated and sealed, creating a new enhanced driving surface at a much quicker pace and at a much lower cost. The cost savings has allowed us to use this new program to repair many additional streets and has received very positive comments.

This was the second year for the free Sidewalk Replacement Program. This new program replaced the former 50/50 program that was eliminated in 2015 and has been met with great reviews. Work was done by a mix of in house and contract maintenance with over 16,000 square feet of sidewalk replaced in 2016. The program was very successful and a substantial number of locations are already scheduled for 2017. The municipal services division replaced the entire sidewalk on the north side of the parking garage on 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and in front of Circa 21. The streetscaping included tree removal and trimming and bench installation. The new program continues to get rave reviews.

The test program for the enhancement of gravel alleys also received favorable response from residents and was continued in 2016. Eleven blocks of gravel alleys were treated with asphalt millings sprayed with a liquid asphalt product, creating an end result that is similar to an asphalt street. The first year locations were tested and are still in excellent condition.

In 2016, every major street in the city was patched using our asphalt injection vehicle, right of way tree trimming was performed in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Street corridors and ditch cleaning projects were completed on 31<sup>st</sup> Street, west of Andalusia Road. Levee maintenance was also completed in 2016, including tree removal and trimming, riprap installation, weed spraying and pest removal.

The work on the Long Term Control Plan continues to progress. Work has been completed on the old Farmall storage basin and the 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue relief sewer between 5<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Streets. Design work continues on the Blackhawk Lift Station and the final work is scheduled to be completed in 2017. The entire project is mandated to be completed by 2018.

Design work on the new water treatment filtration building will be completed and the project was let out for bids. Preliminary electrical work has already begun, with full construction expected to begin in the spring of 2017. All the work on this project is scheduled to be completed in 2018 or early 2019.

The Community and Economic Development Department continues to be busy. Walmart pulling out at the last minute was definitely a shock to all of us. Up until then we were told everything was positive and moving forward towards closing. The positive side though is that Walmart put a lot of money into testing the property's environmental. We now have a shovel ready site and our staff is working hard to bring new development to that area. Citizen comments have been strongly in favor of a grocery store as an anchor, surrounded by other retail stores, and that is something that we are definitely pursuing.

Other achievements from our CED Department this past year include:

- The 8 new homes constructed in Rock Island in 2016. (3 in Chippianock, 2 ARC homes, 2 private residences and a Habitat for Humanity home and more anticipated in 2017)
- The Heritage Resource Plan was finalized and approved
- El Patron restaurant moved and expanded in the downtown
- Beaver Builders continues their housing development off Blackhawk Road
- The new Blackhawk Crematoria was constructed and approved
- Knox Chapel of Wheelan Presley was beautifully restored with a chapel and crematoria
- Custom Eyes moved from the Hawk Technology location to a completely renovated 8,000 square foot space on 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue Court
- Johannes Bus Service relocated to an expanded property in the Southwest Business Park
- The Teamsters Union Hall moved to a location on 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue that had been vacant for several years
- Statewide Tire did a complete remodel and renovation of their newly purchased facility
- The new CVS on 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue was completed and opened in February
- Bridges Catering purchased the Stern Center this past year and the renovation continues with the anticipated addition of 120 employees to the downtown
- The new H.O.M.E. program was founded and has begun
- The entire zoning ordinance is being reviewed for adoption in the spring of 2017
- UnityPoint Health-Trinity has 3 remodel and repurposing projects in progress with many more to come
- Augustana Student Union was renovated into a new theater for performing arts
- Skeleton Key Art and Antiques had their second season operating a farmers market, adding the Artists Market to the event this past year
- Skellington Manor added a new awning and landscaping with additional renovation plans for 2017
- 2016 saw the creation of an EPA revolving fund, the first project was assistance for the development of Star Block
- Our Inspections Department has been busy. There were 35 demolitions of residential and commercial properties in 2016. 3000+ permits were pulled, 2900

building inspections were conducted, 816 housing inspections, 1500+ nuisance violations written with inspections and follow ups.

Our commercial and residential loan programs were very successful again this past year.

- Seven businesses used a total of \$257,403 of our Commercial Industrial Revolving Loan Funds to grow their businesses
- Seventeen businesses utilized over \$230,000 of our Facade Funds to enhance the visibility of their businesses. Each City dollar utilized leveraged \$5.00 of private investment
- We granted fourteen Lead Grant requests, totaling \$128,560 and thirty entities used \$149,502 of housing rehab dollars

Renaissance Rock Island and the City have had a true public / private partnership. The partnership has granted nearly \$310 million in development over the 30 years. There are things both entities specialize in and by working together, we capitalize to enhance development. Brian Hollenback leads a team of outstanding professionals that know how to stretch each dollar and assist in rebuilding our community one block at a time. A lot of communities say they have a public private partnership, but we have one that truly works.

The Live Work Rock Island program in 2016 saw ten employees of local businesses purchase homes in Rock Island, \$1,100,000 in real estate sales and \$48,357 in down payment and closing cost assistance.

In 2016, we had the ribbon cutting of the Garden Addition – a \$2.1 million development consisting of seven single family homes just north of Jackson Square.

We also celebrated the ribbon cutting of the Star Block Building, a \$2.1 million project with eight living units and 1,200 square feet of commercial space on the main level.

The District hosted numerous events throughout the year including “Gumbo Ya Ya”, “Ya Maka My Weekend”, the “Grand Prix”, “Gallery Hop”, “Small Business Saturday” and “Dashing Through the District” and several more with new events scheduled for 2017.

Downtown Rock Island has really become the area’s artistic epicenter with the Quad City Ballet, The Center for Performing Arts, Skellington Manor, The Establishment Theatre, Circa 21, and The Speakeasy all located within a several block radius.

DARI created a series of downtown magazines this past year that focuses on downtown’s growing neighborhood and where residents can shop for furniture, clothing and services downtown.

New businesses in the downtown area that opened in 2016 include:



- Celebrate! A special event consignment store recently tripled the size of their space
- Spellbound is a new retail store offering a wide variety of crafts, classes and new age items
- Taste Buds relocated to our downtown area. They feature smoothies, coffees, loose leaf teas, gourmet popcorns, nuts and candies
- Salon Bardot offers hair services including cuts, colors and natural keratin treatments
- RIDRS, aka Rock Island Dirt Road Saloon, is open and playing all your favorite country and western music
- Two a T is a new special occasion retail shop in the Shoppes on 2<sup>nd</sup> location
- Switch Stance Skate Shop relocated and expanded its store. They hosted their annual Bi-State Skate Jam
- Barefoot Place – Women's business center in the wellness incubator downtown
- Galleries in the District is a new restaurant in the former El Patron location
- The Black Sheep will be opening very soon as a new arcade bar on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and plans to be open every day at 2:00 p.m.

Put it all together, our public private partnership and all the great additions to the downtown and we truly have a lot to be proud of in Rock Island.

The Quad Cities metro area has a population of over 450,000 and Rock Island solidly supports regionalism and the Chamber of Commerce's 2030 Vision. We have fully supported the activities of the Rock Island Arsenal in the past and will assist in any way to secure the future of that facility.

In a brief preview of major prospects in 2017, we will see:

- Construction will begin on the new water filtration facility on 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. Our current facility is 100 years old and is outdated and worn out and we want to be sure to protect the quality of Rock Island's drinking water for the future
- Utilizing a combination of federal and city dollars to resurface 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue from 17<sup>th</sup> Street to the Moline border and 38<sup>th</sup> Street from 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Blackhawk Road. The intersection of 38<sup>th</sup> Street and 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue was previously reconstructed in 2016
- The Police Department will be getting body cameras. These cameras will allow for accuracy in all situations
- In the Fire Department, the new pumper truck was already put into operation at Station 4 right after the first of the year.

Coming in 2017 in the Parks Department:

- The historical cannons will be placed back in Lincoln Park after being gone for several years. The two 1918 Watervliet Arsenal 105 cannons were donated to the city by the Federal government in the 1940's. In 2012, they were removed to be refurbished. The footings were completed in 2016 and when the wheel work

is completed in 2017, the cannons will be returned to their rightful place in Lincoln Park.

- The gazebo at Lincoln Park will be remodeled. It will be scraped, painted and have a new roof
- The basketball courts at Lincoln and Hodge parks will be resealed, painted and have new rims installed
- The roof will be replaced on the garage at Douglas Park
- Gaming funds will be used to develop a playground at Douglas Park. The intent is to install a playground, proper ground material, benches, landscaping and playground lights

One of the City's largest projects in recent history was actually the culmination of three developments resulting in a \$20 million investment. Missman, Inc. built their new, three story corporate headquarters and Blackhawk College relocated their new campus in the newly developed Blackhawk Commons area and Hill and Valley relocated to the Columbia Park area and retained 140 jobs, added 70 more since their relocation and plan an expansion and to add another 50 in the near future.

The City of Rock Island has become very progressive in the past several years and we have achieved a number of large development projects, while still working with the small business owner. I am very much honored to have worked with our City Council and staff during the past eight years and to have been a part of projects such as:

- UnityPoint Health – Trinity made a solid commitment to Rock Island with their \$63 million expansion
- Green Thumb Industries built their marijuana growing facility in the southwest area shortly after medical marijuana was legalized by the State of Illinois
- FedEx relocated and built a 189,000 square foot state of the art distribution facility, also in the southwest area
- Hawk Technology expanded multiple time and they are still growing
- We built a new Public Works facility
- And we built a new Police Department
- Our Fire Department received a new fire rescue boat
- MetroLink relocated and expanded their main terminal facility
- MetroLink also built a new transfer station downtown by the Locks apartments
- The Locks added 36 housing units to our downtown area
- Bridges Catering bought the Stern Center and brought their corporate facilities to Rock Island, along with 120 jobs
- We added a new Family Dollar on 38<sup>th</sup> Street in the former Aldi building
- Schwiebert Riverfront Park continues to thrive as a beautiful, family friendly attraction on our riverfront
- The Housing Authority built the new 3<sup>rd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Townhomes as part of their Homebuyers Incentive Program
- The Housing Authority also built Cascade Gardens, Linden Lane and Douglas Park Place, offering many more housing choices and opportunities

- Beaver Builders built several new housing units off Blackhawk Road
- Plus numerous more smaller projects

As you can see, a lot has been accomplished in Rock Island in 2016 and over the past several years and we have a lot to be proud of in Rock Island. The City is positioned for very strong growth in the future and I am honored to have been a part of this as your mayor.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dermot E. Conley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dermot" being more prominent.

Mayor  
City of Rock Island