

MAYOR WALLY SCOTT, STATE OF THE CITY  
CITY OF READING, PENNSYLVANIA

January 31, 2018

Good Morning, and thank you for being here today. I Wally Scott, the People's Mayor would like to present to you, the state of YOUR city, Reading. I can hardly believe I have been here for 2 years. While running for Mayor, I presented to you an agenda for Positive Change, and I am happy to report that this Administration is bringing about Positive Change!! My first year in office, we concentrated on Human Rights issues. We worked hard with the water authority to make every effort to keep your water on! The water authority continues to improve each year, and continues to work hard with the homeowners in the City of Reading. We also tackled the problem of prison time for unpaid parking tickets. It was with great pride that we were able to revamp that system and come up with a more reasonable way to handle the problem. This year we welcomed a new Executive Director to the Reading Parking Authority, Tom MacDougal. Tom continues to tackle tough issues within

the Authority that have been neglected for years. Our garages were left in disrepair for far too long. Little things, but important things, like changing the light bulbs and cleaning up the trash, have become routine for the RPA to present clean, well lit garages to the people of the city of Reading. The new director and auditor, along with the Board, will continue to delve more deeply into the contracts we are currently a part of. We will continue to work closely with the Reading Parking Authority and transition the authority and its practices into something you can be truly proud of.

Our Fire Department continues to improve. We are updating old equipment that has been overused for years. This year we have begun to provide our firefighters with 2 complete sets of personal protective equipment that will be maintained by the city. In addition to our equipment, some of the fire houses are in desperate need of repairs, some, unfortunately, will need to be replaced. The fire department has identified two new sites that will be further considered. The Fire Chief and his team have worked long and hard to gather the best information, and we feel comfortable with the

preliminary decisions that we have made. There will be more info on this in the coming months, but know that I do not make these decisions without careful consideration of what is in the best interest of the people of the city of Reading. But probably the most exciting news from the fire department is our new fire dog called Gracie! The Fire Marshall was presented with the opportunity to receive a dog from the ATF to assist in fire investigations. The commitment was made to take advantage of this unique opportunity and after extensive training, Gracie reported for work in December. Not only is she highly trained, she is also highly adorable! Another exciting program began in May, The Berks Youth Fire Educational Coalition. Through the generosity of funding partners, this program will provide assistance to youth who have been involved with the misuse of fire. The department also distributed and installed approximately 500 smoke detectors and CO detectors to homeowners in Reading. Positive Change!

Our Public Works department has been extremely busy this year as well. After a decade of neglect, the city has begun construction of the new Waste Water Treatment

Plant. The City has put a freeze on waste water rates as a new study is being done to determine more effective pricing. We have run into a few challenges along the way, but rest assured, I will watch over that project to completion. In addition to working on a more efficient snow removal plan, Public Works has also implemented a new clean city program. I have worked with the director to implement an alley cleanup program. We had received numerous complaints of trash and furniture being dumped in alleys. I felt the need to implement this cleanup program to help homeowners maintain their properties without disruption from others. So far we have been very successful in assisting homeowners who find piles of rubbish dumped in their alley. Something I am told often, is the importance of a clean city.

Together, little by little, we are cleaning up our City. As proof of this, this year we collected almost 1500 more tons of trash than last year, and almost 260 more tons of recycling. A community trash can program has been established as well as educational programs in conjunction with the Reading School District. In addition, we have lowered the recycle rates to \$69.36 per year. That is a savings of \$22.68 directly to you.

In 2017 we began a comprehensive road repaving program. 3.3 miles of city streets have been repaved by the city with a plan to continue repaving at least 3 mile per year, along with 53 ADA curb ramps. In addition, PennDot also repaved 4.5 miles and installed 206 ADA ramps in the city. Now THAT is positive change!

The Reading Police Department overall manpower is good. The normal hiring and retirement process has stabilized, and we are averaging 5-10 retirements and new hires per year. I understand the terrible event of the quadruple homicide this past Sunday has us all feeling uneasy, but the police feel strongly that this is an isolated incident. It is important to note that the crime rate has decreased in the past two years. This year the RPD was able to purchase new firearms and tasers. This provided a required update in safety and proficiency for all Reading Police Officers. In addition, we continue to update the police fleet of vehicles, and the technology used. It is anticipated that the Reading Police Department will have a new command center in 2018 for better management of crime scenes and emergency operations. We continue to update the camera safety

program, and are working closely with the Reading School District to continue this improvement. In 2017 the RPD initiated the first Reading Police Youth Academy to guide young adults to a better path for the future. Training includes classes in leadership, team work, discipline and community service. As this was the first year, we are currently working with 25 students in this program. Interview for next years' program brought 200 interested students! This program will continue to grow and develop in the years to come. The Police department has also been included in meetings with myself and the Bodega owners. These meetings have led to a better understanding and communication with the community leaders and its citizens. In addition, a Community Response Coordinator position has been reinstituted to establish better communications with community groups, religious groups and other organizations in the City of Reading.

Also in 2017, through the generosity of the Berks Alliance, two motorcycles have been purchased and will be rolled out in the Spring.

The Community Development Department has also undergone some changes this year. The CD office will be a resource for business and home owners who are looking to improve their properties. Funds have been allocated for a façade program as well as roof improvements and sidewalk improvements. The CD office continues to stand ready to assist start up businesses in the city. In addition, I have made the Parks a priority for the year 2018. We will continue to work closely with the Rec Commission and the Community to make necessary and long overdue improvements to our Parks. Keep an eye out for reduced fees in the zoning and codes department as we work to come up with a more reasonable fee structure, as well as creating a warning process prior to fines being issued. In addition, please know that I have met personally with the DCED and Secretary Davon with a never ending pitch to bring new employment opportunities to the residents of Reading.

And of course, a very important update is necessary with regard to our finances. I am so happy to report that the City of Reading received a glowing report from the



auditor last week. He complimented the administration and commented that it was the best he had seen from the city in quite some time! Our budget is balanced, we are paying our bills, and continue to find ways to improve services. In addition, the refinance of a bond will save the City 2 million dollars without extending the term of the bond. More positive change!

And speaking of improving services....Have you been to the library lately?? Last week at council we had the absolute privilege of hearing from the President of the Library Board of Trustees. The information she gave us was a proud moment. Did you know that in 2017 the Library branches had 285,500 visitors? Did you also know that the Reading Public Library is available online all day and night every day? And there's so much more to know about the Library. Classes and programs and improvements to every branch have all highlighted positive change this year. I strongly suggest you become a part of the excitement that is Reading Public Library!

The Mayors Monday morning meetings continue to go on every Monday morning from 9-12. This has become a great opportunity for me, as the leader of the city, to get



to know the people and their problems a lot better. By meeting with the citizens one on one, I can better understand what they are going through and try to help them find solutions. It is safe to say we have assisted over a thousand citizens at the Mayors Monday morning meetings.

And of course, we had to work some fun into the year. The safe Halloween event held in front of City Hall was once again a great success. Thousands, yes thousands of children came with their families to enjoy some safe treats. And speaking of thousands...how about that Christmas Parade?? Another bigger and better than ever effort. Penn Street looked great all decorated for the season, and our Christmas Tree grew another 4 feet!!

Of course there would be no way I could accomplish all this alone. My administration is very busy every day working hard for the people of the City of Reading. We continue to fine tune the staff and make new additions as necessary. But one thing I assure you is that all the employees are as excited about positive change as I am. Again, I invite you to visit your city hall. Stop in, take care of business, enjoy the music and stop by to see the train.

It's your city hall and I am your Mayor, the Peoples Mayor!

I respectfully submit this report to you on the state of our city, Reading. As always, my door is always open.