

STATE OF THE CITY 2019

Good morning, everyone. I'm happy to be with you today.

This is a great audience of business and community leaders, and I appreciate each of you being here and being involved in our community. I'm excited to share some thoughts about how we'll continue to move the City of Clarksville forward.

First of all, I'd like to introduce and recognize City Council members and City Department Heads, and other city employees who are with us today.

Also, I want give credit o Joel Wallace for recommending the format change today.

We are now into day 15, and I've been busy, as you might guess, getting to know and building strong relationships with Council members and department leaders.

People have asked, "So what have you found?"

I have found an outstanding workforce:

- * A young man named Austin who works for the Street Department and every day before sunrise, Austin is running the sweeper downtown, without fail.
- * Firefighter Maurice Rives, who will be retiring on Friday after more than 30 years on the job.
- * Kayla Downey, an accountant in our Finance Department.
- * And Robert Kendrick, who runs the codes abatement team. Things like high grass, graffitti, or another concern, Robert and his folks take care of us.

I have also found a city that is alive, and vibrant and diverse and strong. We have rich cultural organizations like the Korean American Association, the Clarksville Hispanic American Family Foundation, a German-American community that enlivens our community all year but especially during Oktoberfest.

We are 234 years old but our best days are ahead.

Next, let me say it's great to be here with Mayor Durrett, and I want to reiterate my focus on governmental collaboration. During the recent campaign, I talked a lot about this topic, and now we are putting our words into action.

I've met with Jim and his team already, and we plan on getting together regularly to discuss important topics and projects. I want everyone to know, we are working with our County government in a mutually respectful and collaborative way.

Some examples:

- * I'll drop the "ball" on Wednesday night when the county mayor's team squares off against the commanding general's team at the downtown commons in the annual broomball grudge match.
- * Mayor Durrett and I walked together in the Christmas Parade in early December.
- * And we have scheduled standing meetings every two weeks where we talk about specific topics and issues, and how we can work together.

Before we take some questions, let me outline some priorities we're working on at City Hall.

First, of course, are roads projects. As I've said many times, we need to battle our traffic issues and get Clarksville moving. We are developing a Traffic 2020 Plan in conjunction with our Street Department, the Metropolitan Planning Organization and our state partners. The focus is on common sense solutions done quickly to alleviate the stranglehold of traffic in very specific spots around town.

We also have some very active projects under way in our Clarksville Police Department, that will enhance public safety and improve our service to residents.

These include body-worn cameras for our police, and communication headsets for our firefighters so they can communicate more easily on the truck and around the fire.

And we are doing a lot of work on Parks & Recreation Department planning, especially in regard to youth sports facilities. These efforts are all about maintaining and improving Clarksville's exceptional quality of life.

Over the past two weeks we've met with an estimated seven groups of different sports and leagues in the city to discuss current and future needs. We will take that information into account as we expand recreation facilities in our city, including more soccer fields -- practice and game ready facilities, softball and baseball for youth and adults, junior pro football, runners, and lacrosse.

On roads, our Clarksville Street Department continues its work on the Northeast Connector, which is being designed to provide another link between our commercial district at Exit 4 with Northeast Clarksville near Exit 1, and connecting Wilma Rudolph Boulevard with Ted Crozier Boulevard.

Other key road projects are underway.

These include the Wilma Rudolph Boulevard Adaptive Signal project, which is using a \$1 million federal grant to design and implement Adaptive Signals on a 2.5-mile stretch of the boulevard from Alfred Thun Road to the 101st Airborne Division Parkway. The project will use sensors and cameras to feed traffic data into a computerized traffic-flow control system, which will make real-time adjustments to signals to optimize traffic movements through the corridor. The Street Department is finalizing the project contract with TDOT.

We will not wait on federal or state funding to make some changes to traffic signals on Providence Boulevard at Beech Street and Peachers Mill Road. We can and are doing that now.

The Street Department is also designing a major intersection improvement at Meriwether and Trenton roads, which will tackle severe traffic backups around northeast high.

The long-awaited improvements at the intersection of Edmondson Ferry road and the Bypass, with widening, traffic signals and sidewalks, are under construction now and should be done this spring. Those orange barrels have been there too long, and I'm thankful this project is almost finished after an unnecessary delay.

City engagement and investment, and the Improve Act passed by the General Assembly in 2017, also has helped the Tennessee Department of Transportation to speed up improvements to several of the City's major thoroughfares, which are controlled by TDOT.

These include Warfield Boulevard, where major construction is well underway from the 101st Parkway to the Dunbar Cave Road intersections.

The essential project to widen Rossvie Road near the Rossvie Schools Campus is behind schedule and now progressing. The right of way and utilities plans are certified and we're awaiting TDOT Final Review on Environmental and Construction plans. Phase 1 of this project should be under construction Spring 2019.

Preliminary design is underway, with the city's assistance, by TDOT on its plans to widen Trenton Road from Exit 1 to the 101st Parkway.

On police and public safety, we are working to build a new full service precinct headquarters for District Three, which encompasses the area on the east side of the City along Interstate 24. We have talked with the School System for a site on the Rossview Schools Complex, mirroring the success of placing our District One headquarters on the Minglewood School site.

The Clarksville Police Department also is making steady progress on implementing its body worn cameras project, enabled by a \$337,500 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, with an equal match approved by the Clarksville City Council. A second federal grant has also been secured.

The first live fielding of body-worn cameras took place in October, with a second round in November, with a projected completion in February 2019.

On Parks & Recreation, as many of you are aware, the City last year acquired 300-plus acres near Exit 8 as the site for a Clarksville Family Athletic Center. The City made a strong push to land the tournament headquarters of the Tennessee State Soccer Association. That didn't turn out as we had hoped, but we have gone to work quickly to evaluate our community's sports facility needs and begin planning how best to use the Exit 8 site.

As part of that work, over the past several days, I have conducted a series of listening sessions with representatives of our major sports organizations, such as little league baseball and softball, youth and adult soccer, youth football, running and biking clubs, and our budding lacrosse organization.

I've learned plenty in these meetings, and I can assure that our sports groups are excited about new high-level sports facilities and activities for their children.

Let me pause here and say we are committed to expanding recreation opportunities and facilities in our city.

Our Parks and Recreation Department, along with a consultant, completed a Public Facilities Master Plan, which will be presented in coming weeks. This report will give us direction on the types of facilities and programming we will need in the future.

In addition to informing our direction on the Exit 8 site, this will help us plan for more and better facilities in other parts of the City. Specifically, we are looking ways to add recreation facilities in more neighborhoods and areas of Clarksville. And more importantly, we will improve our existing facilities.

There are other priorities in the coming months:

- * We hope to make a major announcement soon about a project to help The Roxy Regional Theatre.
- * We are assessing ways to solve downtown's parking conundrum.
- * We are passionate about local business development and building new and existing small businesses.

Of course we want to forge a strong relationship with Austin Peay State University. And we will keep soldiers and their families at Fort Campbell at the top of our list. We will be veteran friendly and customer focused. To build our staff capability, we will soon roll out a new leadership development program inside our city workforce.

Those are just a few of the things on our agenda, our vision for our city.

With that, I'll wrap up and look forward to taking some of your questions. But I do want to thank each of you for joining with us here today, engaging with your community, and working to build a stronger Clarksville.

Thank you and God bless you.