**State of the City Address**

*Mayor Eric Hogue*

February 28, 2017

Welcome to the annual State of the City Address.

I want to start by offering a special thank you to the Wylie Chamber of Commerce for hosting this event and to the Linebarger, Goggan, Blair and Sampson Law Firm for sponsoring today’s luncheon.

Thank you to the Wylie East High School Junior ROTC Saber Team … Wylie Fire Rescue Honor Guard … and Police Chaplain Dan Rainey.

Today, it is once again my pleasure, honor and duty to deliver this State of the City Address, and to give you an overview of:

* Realtor.com’s Hottest Suburb in Texas and Second Hottest Suburb in the Country;
* NerdWallet’s Best Small City in the Nation for Families;
* Money Magazine’s 25th Best Place to Live in the Nation;
* WalletHub’s 13th Best Texas City for Families;
* SafeWise and Credit Donkey’s 19th Safest City in Texas

**That would be Wylie Texas.**

I’d like to recognize the Wylie City Council.

Mayor *pro tem* Keith Stephens

Diane Culver

Jeff Forrester

Candy Arrington

William Whitney III

David Dahl

I’d also like to recognize the best City Manager in the country, Mindy Manson, and thank her for her 21 years of service to the City of Wylie.

She’s joined this year by a new assistant city manager, Chris Holsted.

Chris served as our City Engineer for 15 years and stepped into his new role when Jeff Butters retired in August.

And of course – he graduated from the University of Arkansas, so you know I’m in his corner.

I’m honored to have some special guests with me today.

* Blake Henderson … Jr. Mayor today and son of Anthony and Melody Henderson.
* My mother-in-law and father-in-law, Mac and Geraldine Mathis.
* My Son, Mason, who is here with his employer, American National Bank of Texas.
* And by best friend, soulmate, biggest supporter and biggest critic…my wife and your first lady, Tammie

I have been your mayor since 2008 and have given the State of the City address eight times.

Each year, I share with you the facts and figures and what’s changed over the past year.

I let you know the number of citizens now calling Wylie home: this year, that total is very close to 50,000.

I tell you about any outstanding accomplishments the city may have enjoyed since we spoke last.

This year, there’s a big one: after years of meeting and negotiating, Wylie will have its own Collin College campus.

Collin will break ground within three years, and the campus will open in 2020.

Initially, it will consist of three buildings and will be 415,000 square feet, large enough to house 7,500 students … with future plans calling for three additional buildings and a student population of 12,000.

Located near the intersection of Country Club Road and Brown Street, students will be able to continue their post-high school education without leaving the city limits, and students from neighboring communities will be coming to Wylie to further their education and create brighter future.

**The Wylie Campus is sure be the crown jewel of Collin College.**

Each year, I notify you about sales tax receipts, which increased for the 16th consecutive year.

Up more than 13% … in 2016 sales tax receipts reached almost $2.5 million, a total that is considerably higher than all previous years’ receipts.

This year, the Wylie Economic Development Corporation, under the direction of Executive Director, Sam Satterwhite, purchased a 1.2-acre tract at 398 S. Hwy. 78, which completed a collection of seven properties totaling 5 acres.

This land has since been cleared and is being marketed for restaurant development.

Other new construction includes a 75-room LaQuinta Inn & Suites, which is expected to open in May. And two weeks ago, Holiday Inn Express closed on property bringing an additional 82-room hotel at the corner of Sanden and FM 544.

Cotton Patch Café opened this year and set company-wide sales records … following a trend we have seen over the last few years of record-setting grand openings and first year strong numbers.

Wylie value’s and welcomes good sit-down restaurants.

AND YES, Chick-fil-A is expected to begin construction next to Starbucks on HWY 78.

IHOP is coming to Wylie and will break ground later this year next to the Rock.

And construction is already underway on FM 544 for Freddy’s Frozen Custard and Steakburgers, Soulman’s BBQ, and Bush’s Chicken.

Wylie continues to enjoy beneficial partnerships with many local, state and national organizations.

One of this year’s most significant involved the Environmental Protection Agency.

The EPA absorbed all cleanup costs, totaling well over a million dollars, for contaminated – and frankly, ugly – property on FM 544 east of the *Post Office*, opening it up for restaurant or retail development – and beautification.

Thanks to congressman Pete Sessions for facilitating the relationship between the City and the EPA.

Wylie continues to grow, thrive and welcome new businesses that set records, along with new residents who value our hometown feel.

All of these things are interesting and important for you to know and for us to celebrate.

However, something happened in 2016 that made it unlike any year in Wylie’s 129-year history.

**Just listen …**

***(911 tape)***

The voices you just heard were people trapped in their cars, in their homes, panicked as the massive hailstorm ripped through our town on Monday, April 11.

… flinging huge hailstones through windows … damaging over 80% of our homes, more than 12,000 houses

… bashing windshields out of our cars, and doing severe damage – in some cases, damage beyond repair – to many structures, including city facilities.

We enjoy setting records in Wylie, but we certainly didn’t ask for this one – hail with a diameter of five and a quarter inches set the record for the largest hailstone in the history of North and Central Texas, according to the National Weather Service.

The damage total in Wylie has been estimated at nearly 300 million dollars, and the repairs are by no means complete.

*However … Wylie is at its best when we’re tested.*

The voices you heard on the recording were obviously those of our 911 dispatch operators on the evening of April 11.

What you may not know is that while they were on the phone with terrified residents, their own location, our Public Safety Building on Hwy. 78, was being destroyed by the hail storm…the loud pounding sound we just heard on the 911 tapes.

As they struggled to advise and console callers, their own ceiling was falling in on them, allowing rain and hail to penetrate the building.

They stayed on the line; they continued to give advice and support, working out of the battered building through the storm.

All three fire stations also sustained damage, but the needs of the community were great, and the dedication of our employees was second to none.

Station 2 was the least damaged, so Dispatch moved there, setting up in sleeping quarters.

In the first hours, more than 250 calls came in as citizens reached out for help.

**Many Dispatchers** worked from the time their shift began on Monday until 11 p.m. Wednesday.

Dispatchers Allyson Frederick and Tristian Whittle had to be told to finally go home.

At the annual Employee Appreciation Banquet, the dispatchers were honored with a special Storm Troopers award for their dedication.

**Wylie Fire Rescue** also demonstrated its commitment to the community.

Even as water came in through the destroyed windows and roofs of their own homes, firefighters answered the call, putting their training into action, and putting the needs of the community before their own.

Firefighters worked into the early hours of the morning, boarding up shattered windows and tarping roofs for the rest of the community.

We appreciate their dedication; Chief Brent Parker and Wylie Fire Rescue … are the embodiment of servant leadership.

The **Wylie Police Department**, though virtually the entire fleet was damaged and un-drivable, also lived up to their commitment to serve and protect and allowed no lapse in response.

A total of four police cars were drivable immediately following the storm. But our neighbors from Rowlett quickly loaned us squad cars to ensure that citizens were safe and secure.

As water and hail poured in the roof of the Public Safety Building, decades’ worth of police records, including case evidence, investigation notes and other vital materials, were at risk.

Records Supervisor Alicia Bretado, Records Clerk Latreese Ellis and our City Secretary Carole Ehrlich worked through the morning to save and organize the materials.

We appreciate these members of the Wylie Police Department and other city employees for their unwavering commitment to service, despite the conditions and the hour.

*Wylie is at its best when we’re tested.*

In the days following the storm, police and fire were presented with a unique challenge; the Public Safety Building was a total loss. Efforts began immediately to regroup and create stable headquarters with a commitment to continue to provide uninterrupted service to our citizens.

Fire Administration and Police Administration were relocated to City Hall.

Dispatch was moved to a mobile command center (that’s a fancy word for a trailer) behind the Public Safety Building.

Municipal Court moved to the Council Chambers in City Hall, and prisoners are now being transported to Collin County Jail.

The City Council is currently working with City Staff on a plan to remodel the Public Safety Building which is still out of commission.

Other arms of the City of Wylie reached out as part of the reconstruction effort.

Although stressing that permits were still required in order to protect the homeowner, permit fees were waived.

Over 3,500 permits were pulled in the days that followed the storm, and Building Official Bret McCullough, who had only been hired one month before, hit the floor running.

Thank you to the Building Inspections and Code Enforcement Departments for your efforts.

Also, our thanks go to Dallas, Plano, Rowlett, Garland, Rockwall, Richardson, Allen, Murphy, Sachse, Lucas, and Parker, who helped us assess the damage and provide over 35 pieces of apparatus to help us meet the needs of our community.

Public Works, the Parks Department…virtually all city departments were affected and went above and beyond the call of duty, and I regret that we don’t have the time to acknowledge all their contributions.

But let’s return for a moment to April 12, the morning after the storm.

The skies cleared, the sun came up, and with it came news crews from all over, broadcasting images of Wylie as a sea of blue tarps.

As they broadcast from the battered Public Safety Building and from neighborhoods, the message continued to be “Wylie pulls together.”

I’ve told you of some of the extraordinary sacrifices and contributions made by our city departments.

Their commitment to community service makes me very proud, both as your mayor and as a citizen of Wylie.

I’d like to focus now on other organizations, and how they pulled together to put the community back on its feet.

Please know that there is no way to recognize every single person and organization who moved the reconstruction effort forward.

Time does not permit it, and there are, no doubt, unsung heroes about whom we are simply not aware.

At this time, we would like to present a few ***Stronger than the Storm*** community recognition awards to just some of the deserving groups and individuals.

Wylie ISD administration and members of the Board of Trustees joined maintenance crews on campuses, sweeping up with the goal of returning students to school as soon as possible.

In the interest of students’ safety, school was forced to close Tuesday, April 12; however, classes resumed Wednesday after hundreds of workers spent all day Tuesday cleaning up.

Akin Elementary was the hardest hit, but many campuses had water leaks, knocked-out ceiling tiles and broken glass.

Many campuses lost their HVAC systems, with as many as 36 units having to be replaced at one campus.

On social media, parents praised the school district for the constant communication in the wake of the storm.

We’d like to present Superintendent Dr. David Vinson and Board President Heather Leggett and the entire WISD family with the first of several **Stronger than the Storm awards**, and thank the Wylie ISD faculty, staff and school board, for their hard work in getting our children back to class.

(award)

Perhaps the most inspirational example of teamwork and cooperation, deserving of a **stronger than the storm award**, began just days after the hail storm when Kris Segrest and Jon Bailey from First Baptist Church Wylie spearheaded Rebuild Wylie, a coalition made up of FBC Wylie and other members of Wylie’s faith community, local organizations, school district and city personnel, which mobilized efforts to get the community back on its feet.

A website was established to put in touch those who had needs and those who had goods and services to donate.

Over 500 FBC members and community volunteers, put in thousands of hours helping others, going out into the community in teams, assessing the needs and lending moral support and labor to the devastated homeowners and business owners.

I had the opportunity to sit down with David and Kris to create a videotaped request for assistance, to be distributed by social media.

Donations that would eventually total $193,000 poured in from all over.

I wish we had time to honor and recognize everyone who took part in the Rebuild Wylie effort.

Since we do not, allow me to present the Stronger than the Storm award to Jon Bailey, representing First Baptist and Rebuild Wylie. And let’s give everyone involved a round of applause.

(award)

I would also like to recognize the top three donors of Rebuild Wylie with the stronger than the storm award.

American National Bank of Texas contributed $25,000. We thank Anita Collins and her staff for always having Wylie’s back.

(award)

Farmers Electric Cooperative donated $25,000. Thank you Nancy Runge and Shaun Chronister, who is here with us today.

(award)

Atmos Energy also helped out, with a donation of $15,000. Thanks to Eva Hummel, Roy Moss and Johnny Pecina.

(award)

The St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Anthony’s made an exceptional contribution.

Working with Rebuild Wylie, the group provided a replacement mobile home to a family with six children.

They absorbed additional costs, including hookups and several months’ rent, and performed or funded numerous other repairs for our citizens, especially those who had limited resources and mobility.

We appreciate their commitment and their generosity and present the Stronger than the Storm Community Award to St. Vincent de Paul represented by Roberta Mallory and Ronni Fetzer.

(award)

Tragically, the Wylie Senior Recreation Center was also damaged in the storm.

You’ll remember that this was the former location of the Smith Public Library, and a grassroots group, Wylie Advocates for Senior Activities, was formed for the purpose of raising funds to refurbish the building and dedicate it for their use.

They were successful – it had opened to serve the senior members of the community in 2013 – but now the roof was damaged and it was not safe for the many classes and activities our seniors were enjoying.

So – in another example of Wylie community partnership – the Waterbrook Bible Fellowship, located across the street from the senior center, has allowed the staff – to this day –to hold these events in their church at no cost.

I’d like to recognize Waterbrook Bible Fellowship and Jeff Denton for being our seniors’ port in the storm – or actually ever since the storm.

(award)

Other area churches and community groups, including New Hope, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The Bridge Connection, Wylie United Methodist Church, Knights of Columbus, Wylie Lions Club and Rotary Club, led their own campaigns, assisting with the rebuilding efforts.

Again, please know that there were surely many more that we are not able to mention. But thank you to all who helped to rebuild Wylie.

Area businesses also pitched in.

The Wylie Walmart Supercenter, damaged by the storm, donated a truckload of tarps as well as produce and meat for our citizens.

These donations were distributed to those in need by the Wylie Christian Care Center.

We’d like to thank Gene Burn and Stephen Farmer from Walmart for their generous donations and Raymond Cooper and the Christian Care Center for handling this logistically challenging effort, in addition to its usual good work. You deserve the Stronger than the Storm Awards.

(awards)

These individuals and groups proved once again that Wylie is best when we’re tested.

We value our relationships with elected officials such as State Representative Jodie Laubenberg, who made calls to the Texas Insurance Commission;

State Senator Van Taylor who offered help and support;

County Commissioner Cheryl Williams, who visited our community following the storm;

and Congressman Pete Sessions, who not only toured the city, but went to bat with the Texas Department of Insurance and the head of the Insurance Commission, speaking on behalf of many Wylie citizens and business owners who were facing two insurance deductibles.

This effort resulted in several insurance companies relaxing that ruling.

It wasn’t just organizations, civil servants and elected officials who answered the call; individuals also stepped up and did what they could do.

Watch this clip from channel 5 on two kids that embody the Wylie spirit…

(Play Channel 5 Clip)

Blaine and Jack are two examples of our youth serving the Wylie community. Please join me in honoring these young men with the Stronger than the Storm award.

(award)

Charlene Foster, chef and owner of Southern Goodness Catering & Kitchen, tended to the soul and spirit of those who had suffered.

She hosted a Hail Recovery Community Luncheon at the National Guard Armory, hoping to bring some peace and happiness to those affected by the hailstorm, charging nothing for a home-cooked lunch, much like the one you are enjoying today.

I’d like to introduce and honor Charlene Foster and her staff AKA her husband Brian Foster for helping us get through the storm.

(award)

I’m sure there are many more powerful stories of hands reaching out and neighbor helping neighbor.

Without a doubt … Wylie is best when we’re tested.

I’ve told you the facts and figures of Wylie’s success and ever-growing influence in Collin County and North Texas, and as I said when we got started, they are important.

But I want to you to walk away with two things…

**First**, at a time when our nation is pulled in various directions, changing with each news cycle **or tweet**…

Wylie’s organizations stand together.

Our city employees, school district, faith community, chamber of commerce, downtown merchants, Christian Care Center, and all the numerous organizations clasp hands together when people need help – or when it’s time to celebrate.

The **second** is something you already know. Wylie embraces a spirit of community, of friendship, of family…setting us apart from other North Texas communities.

We stand together.

We don’t wait to be asked; we reach out.

This is something intangible and so ever-present, we may tend to take it for granted.

Although we have assigned it different names – the Wylie Difference, the Wylie Way – it’s something we all know and the reason we proudly call Wylie home.

I am honored to be your mayor as we strive to be a community known for its actions and heart.

May God bless each of you, and may God bless the **GREAT** City of Wylie, Texas!