February 6, 2018

Councilors and Partners of Prattville:

It is a pleasure to be here with you again.

Prattville is growing and going at a rapid pace. While our revenues are increasing, so are our expenses. With a financial market that is so very unpredictable, we must always be planning for the future of good and bad times. As technology evolves, the city must focus on how our world is changing with online sales opportunities and a generation that is looking for a matter of convenience. The building permits for housing are growing but so are the services influencing both the builders and buyers investing in the City of Prattville. Our Public Safety, Public Works, and the Quality of Life Division of Parks and Recreation provide some of these valuable services to the community.

We all know that no one person can do everything, but one person can make a difference. Thank you, City Council, for recognizing our hard working and dedicated department heads by extending their appointments for the remainder of this quadrennium. Although I have previously mentioned some vital departments, we would not be so well interconnected without our City Clerk, Finance Director, IT Director, and Human Resource Director. All of these departments including our Judicial Department work together as a team and are so very helpful on a daily basis.

As we can see our skyline changing daily over what used to be a sleepy manufacturing town, we still recognize the spirit and roots of Daniel Pratt almost everywhere we look. No matter what change happens, we still remain Prattville. We stay focused on our core foundation as a result of the hard work and dedication of our Engineering Department, Building Division, and Planning Department.

Councilors, please join me in giving our department heads a round of applause.

We will never be perfect, but we strive for perfection. Our focus is to work together by creating a more affordable, equitable, prosperous, and profound Prattville for all of us. As we move forward, we cannot forget Prattmont, our farming roots, and the history that identified us as Prattville.

In my opinion, there is no better place to be in Alabama than our hometown. Prattville continues to evolve and grow because we embrace change, we know how to accept change, and we know how to improvise with Daniel Pratt’s spirit of entrepreneurialism. This is just one of the many reasons that Daniel Pratt made us Alabama’s Birthplace of Industry.

We are living during some exciting times in our city. We have been awarded numerous accolades over the last few years as a result of our growth, safety, and livability while keeping a small town feeling. We did not get to this state of the city overnight. It took many leaders and investors before us to pave the way for us to walk in their footsteps today. It takes a village as we have heard, but it also takes the many investors, investments, and an intrepid nature. The investments made in Prattville over the last 179 years are being relished today. Some of those investments were governmental and some were private, but each of those investments was critical to get us to where we are today. The municipal investments include infrastructure, storm ways, waste water plant expansions, and street paving. The Public Safety Building, the Public Works Building, and the remodeling of our City Clerk, Human Resources and Judicial Offices enabled these departments to be more efficient and effective in serving the needs of our citizens.

We have also made vast investments with our city personnel. Training, pay raises, and equipment are three major components in this investment. We are a mechanized, service-oriented organization based on technology. Our employees are dedicated and willing to serve, and this alone is our most valuable asset.

One of our governmental partners is the Alabama Department of Public Health. They are investing $30 million dollars into their new Lab and Training Facility in the City of Prattville. We have had multiple private investments in our city as well. The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions chose Prattville as their home. We have had many other medical related investments in the city and continue to have a great partnership with Baptist Hospital providing key medical services in our area. We have seen many hospitality investments coming to the city through entertainment, food, and hotels.

Then we have an investment that started many years ago with our South Industrial Park. The Park had hundreds of acres of prime property that had amenities and utilities, but the property was lacking in connectivity to Highway 82. The County/City Partnership brought the long awaited bridge announcement. This announcement lead to a state partnership, chamber partnership, Prattville Water Board partnership, and so many others that brought in James Hardie. The over $280 million dollar investment and 200 plus jobs is bringing more manufacturing to Prattville.

LEDIC has made an announcement of a $30 million dollar investment with our historical buildings in Historic Downtown Prattville. We look forward to seeing this project come to fruition and witnessing its impact on our Downtown District.

Congratulations to Montgomery as they have recently been awarded the F-35 project. Prattville will definitely benefit from this through our continuous partnership with our military and Maxwell Air Force Base. Prattville is truly blessed thanks to our military. We have so many retirees that chose to move back to Prattville, and they continue to bless us by sharing their knowledge and time on committees, boards, and/or other volunteer positions. I am proud that Prattville has so much patriotism and that we are a military friendly community.

Some of these successes have occurred because of our people, the Prattvillians. Our citizens are willing to accept change, and they continue to make investments in our community that enabled us to survive some hard and difficult economic times. They understand the needs of a growing community, and they have provided us with support, constructive criticism, and suggestions with vision. I am grateful for each and every citizen’s support and especially their prayers.

We have had many successes, but we have just as many areas to improve. We need to align our city investments with workforce development in the region. We need an educated workforce to continue moving the manufacturing football through the goalposts. We have continued needs for our infrastructure, streets, sidewalks, biking paths, hiking trails, and quality of life. The Public Safety Department’s coverage areas continue to grow and so do the associated costs. We need to be mindful of families and affordable housing. I mention all of these needs because 2017 was a productive and successful year, but we still have areas of improvement while staying within our financial means. We have to control our costs and recognize that we are here to serve, but we cannot be the heavy lifter in all instances. We have limitations and our budgets have evolved since 2011. The Enterprise Funds in Public Works are paying dividends. I see budget improvements for the future and more changes in 2019.

I come to you tonight to say that the state of our city is strong, Prattville Strong. We are strong enough to name the challenges, embrace them as opportunities, and share the opportunity of prosperity more broadly and equitably than ever before. We will make Daniel Pratt proud as we evolve to preserve our roots, and we will make ourselves successful in manufacturing, as a shopping destination, and through tourism.

Partners of Prattville, our hard work and the hard work of others is paying forward. Prattville will continue to prosper in 2018. There is Progress in Prattville, and may God continue to bless the United States, the State of Alabama, and our beloved City of Prattville.

Your public servant and friend,

Bill Gillespie, Jr.  
Mayor