

2007 State of the City Address Highland Heights, Ohio

Dear Residents:

Our city charter requires that I submit an annual State of the City Report. There are no guidelines as to what to include so I have chosen again this year to give a brief overview of the city's financial position and budget for the calendar year 2007, as well as a brief overview of our various departments. This information is meant to be informative and I welcome any comments or questions you may have.

Financial Overview

We began 2006 with a General Fund Balance of \$1.9 million and ended the year with a balance of approximately \$1.4 million. Our expenditures in 2006 were \$8.402 million and in 2005 were \$8.094 million.

In 2006, City Council approved the recommendation made by the Finance Committee that a ballot issue be placed before the voters to consider raising the income tax rate from 1.5% to 2.0%. The issue was passed by the voters on May 2, 2006.

It is expected that the city will receive an additional \$1.8 to \$2.0 million dollars in 2007 as a result of this income tax increase. It is important to note that this increase will have no effect on those who derive their income solely from retirement income, social security, pension, interest, dividend and capital gains.

2007 Budget Overview

In March of 2007 city council passed an ordinance for expenses in the amount of \$17,838,500 which includes \$3,062,703 in Capital Improvements. I am very excited to report to you on some of the major 2007 City of Highland Heights projects:

- Highland Road Pedestrian Path Construction
- Highland & Bishop Intersection Improvement
- Colony Relief Sewer project
- Wilson Mills Resurfacing
- Park Safety Improvements

Highland Road Pedestrian Path

I am happy to announce that funding has been secured for the construction of a pedestrian path on Highland Road. A five-foot wide pedestrian path will be constructed on the north side of Highland Road from the Richmond Heights border and will run the entire length of Highland Road ending at our eastern border close to I-271. I was able to secure over \$500,000 in federal dollars by working very closely with Congressman LaTourette. My sincere thanks to him and his efforts as a member of the Federal Transportation Committee which provided the large

majority of the money needed for the construction of this project. Construction is expected to begin in late summer with completion in the fall. Sponsors: Federal Transportation Fund & the City of Highland Heights - Estimated cost: \$704,000

Highland Bishop Intersection Improvement

We applied for and received State Issue I Financial Assistance for the Highland Bishop Road Intersection Improvement project. One of the key components of this project is to lengthen the turning lanes on all four lanes of the Highland and Bishop Intersection, replace the traffic signals, add pedestrian signals and install handicapped ramps and curbs at the intersection. These enhancements will make the corners of this intersection more pedestrian friendly. This project is expected to begin in late summer with completion in early fall. Sponsors: State Issue I Funds & the City of Highland Heights - Estimated cost: \$707,870.

Colony Relief Sewer

This is a project designed to alleviate basement flooding in the Colony, Eastlawn, West Mill, and Oakview Drive areas. The city has awarded a project to the Fabrizi Trucking and Paving Company to install sanitary relief sewers along portions of Colony and Eastlawn Drives to provide additional sewer capacity to the area. Construction is currently underway and should be substantially completed in the fall. Sponsors: Cuyahoga County Sanitary Engineer & the City of Highland Heights - Estimated cost: \$634,000.

Wilson Mills Resurfacing

The project will involve milling, base repairs, and resurfacing on Wilson Mills from Lander Road to the west, ending at Richmond Road in Richmond Heights. This project should start in June with completion in late fall. Sponsors: Federal Transportation Fund, Cuyahoga County Engineer, & the City of Highland Heights - Estimated cost: \$2,645,000.

Many thanks to our county Engineer Bob Klaiber who was instrumental in getting Highland Heights county funds to pay the lions share of our Wilson Mills Road reconstruction and Colony Road sanitary sewer project. We were also successful in receiving a large Issue 2 interest free loan to help pay for the Highland/Bishop Roads project. Mr. Klaiber is a member of the Issue 2 board.

Community Park

I am very excited about all the new things that are scheduled to happen in the park this year. Phase 1 includes the construction of a much larger parking area, a by-pass road, several asphalt walkways, lighting along the paths, and a drop off area in front of the recreation and concession building. The parking area will be designed to create better pedestrian and vehicle traffic flow with the primary focus on addressing the safety issues of having pedestrian traffic away from the vehicle traffic. We are also hoping to make enhancements to the ball fields this year including some new lighting, home run fences and a shelter area for the pool. The possibility of a new electronic marquee sign in front of the park and city hall is also being considered. The project

was awarded to Martin Enterprises. Construction began in April and will be completed in the fall. Sponsor: City of Highland Heights - Estimated cost: \$972,000

Police Department

In a relatively small town like ours, most people would think that our safety forces are not that busy. However, that is not necessarily true. In 2006, the Police Department had approximately 12,000 requests for service. These requests break down as follows:

Assistance Related to Criminal Events	315
Assistance Related to Citizen Conflict	235
Assistance Related to Traffic Safety	2,110
Assistance Related to Miscellaneous Emergencies	4,739
Assistance Related to General Duties	2,031
Assistance Related to Jail Activities	2,551

The Police Department is made up of 22 sworn full time officers and 4 reserve patrol officers. The Department also has an Administrative Assistant, Communications Specialist, Records Clerk, 4 full time police dispatchers and 3 reserve police dispatchers. The Police Department has an auxiliary unit of 8 members who serve as non-sworn police officers and also employs 5 school guards.

In 2006, the DARE program, which was organized in 1992 by Officer Carol Ganser, graduated 160 students. Since its inception, the program has graduated 2,171 students. This program offers guidance and a structured course to children in the elementary school system on drug awareness.

For the calendar year 2006, the total funds for court and miscellaneous receipts collected by the Police Department were \$251,492.07.

Over the next five years, the police department has identified the need for capital purchases of slightly over \$690,800. These purchases include equipment such as defibrillators, speed enforcement equipment, communications equipment, police cruisers and renovations and upgrades to existing offices and jail facilities.

Fire Department

Part of the Mission Statement of the Fire Department is “To protect the lives and property of all residents, businesses and the general public within the city limits of Highland Heights.” This is one simple sentence but quite a responsibility to a city of over 9,000 residents and approximately 160 different businesses.

In 2006, our fire department responded to over 766 ambulance calls and 143 fire calls for service. Fire Chief Ed Bencin and his staff provide a variety of services to the community that extends beyond fighting fires and providing paramedic services.

Probably the most important other service they provide is through the Fire Prevention Bureau that includes fire inspections, system testing and public education. They are also responsible for the general maintenance of their equipment and the hydrants throughout the city.

The Fire Department currently has 18 full time employees and 11 part-time employees. This includes one chief, one captain, and four lieutenants. The department operates on a 24 hour on, 48 hour off basis with a minimum of 4 people per shift. Chief Bencin and his crew have done an outstanding job providing such a high level of service to an increasing population without increasing staff.

For the calendar year 2006, the Fire Department's total receipts for ambulance service, permits and inspections were \$192,829.

Chief Bencin and his staff have identified capital needs over the next five years of approximately \$507,000 which includes, among other things, a new ambulance, air exhaust system, building repairs and protective clothing.

Building Department

The Building Department is staffed with three individuals. Larry Stouffer is the department head and serves as the city's Building Commissioner. George Wilson is our Building Inspector and Linda Rogowski is the Administrative Assistant for the department. This level of employment has remained for many years despite the significant growth the city has experienced.

The primary responsibility of this department is to assure that all construction that occurs within the city, both residential and commercial, adheres to our building code. The department is also responsible for the collection of permit fees and other miscellaneous receipts from both residents and businesses. In 2006, the total receipts collected by this department were \$216,755

Fortunately, the capital needs of this department are not that significant. Larry Stouffer estimates his department will need only \$35,000 over the next five years, predominantly for software and system upgrades and vehicle replacements.

Service Department

The Highland Heights Service Department is comprised of a staff of 10 full time laborers seasonal employees, a part time secretary and a director. Department personnel are on call 24 hours per day, seven days per week, 365 days per year to respond to emergency needs of the community.

Service Director Thom Evans is responsible for the day-to-day function of the department and his department is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of publicly owned land and public works infrastructures, which include more than 90 lane miles of roadway and 52 miles of storm and sewer drainage.

Their responsibilities include providing services to more than 3,200 homes and 150 businesses. This increase in population and infrastructure in recent years continues to challenge the

department's delivery of services. To their credit, the department has been able to maintain its current level of employment despite the addition of hundreds of residents to the city. In fact, we have one less employee in the department now than we did in the year 2000.

Some residents who have lived in the city for a number of years may recall that the city used to perform rubbish collection in-house. The cost to maintain the equipment and the extra personnel costs made it more cost effective to contract a private rubbish hauler. Our current service is provided through J&J Refuse Company of Dover, Ohio. The service provides for unlimited curbside collection of rubbish, yard waste and recyclables. The current cost to the city per household is \$7.96 per month for solid waste and \$1.93 per month for recyclables. This equates to an estimated annual cost of roughly \$386,000.

In addition to programmed activities such as road patching, crack sealing, street sweeping, catch basin cleaning, leaf collection, snow plowing, etc., the department responded to hundreds of miscellaneous requests for services in 2006.

Thom Evans and his department have projected the capital needs for their department to be \$858,000 for vehicles and equipment and \$812,000 for building and grounds improvements

Park and Recreation Department

Capital needs for the Park and Recreation Department are projected to be \$1.967 Million for the next 5 years to continue to implement the Park's Master Plan which includes new lighting, a pavilion and gazebo. I'm sure you have noticed the new playground that has already been installed.

Conclusion

I feel it is my responsibility to continue to provide a high quality level of service and will continue to work together cohesively with the entire city staff and our city council to do everything possible to continue to provide our residents with the services they deserve and expect.

Sincerely,

Scott Coleman
Mayor