

2008 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 2008, 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

With the passage of the tax rate increase by the residents effective January 1, 2007 the City's General Fund Balance of \$1.4 million at the beginning of the year grew to a balance of \$2.62 million at year's end. Income tax collections were up over \$2.7 million dollars from the previous year in the General Fund. Total General Fund revenues climbed from \$7.9 million to \$10.8 million.

Our expenditures also increased mainly due to the additional funding now available for projects put on hold, \$8.4 million in 2006 to \$9.6 million in 2007.

The City was able to obtain equipment for various departments of the City:

- \$71,000 for 4 new cruisers for the Police Department,
- \$26,000 for new upgrades to the Fire Department computer system,
- \$20,000 for new fuel pumps and a new fuel management system for the municipal complex,

Additionally, the City was able to:

- Continue minor road maintenance at a cost of \$56,000
- Continue with city-wide street striping at a cost of \$30,000

A variety of projects were funded in 2007; namely,

- Community Park Safety Improvements
- Colony Relief Sewer Project
- Wilson Mills Resurfacing

Community Park

Phase 1 of our park plan was completed and includes the construction of a much larger parking area, a bypass road, several asphalt walkways, lighting along the paths, and a drop off area in front of the recreation and concession building. The parking area is 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. A new electronic marquee sign in front of the park has also been installed displaying around-the-clock information. The project was completed at a cost of \$950,000.

Colony Relief Sewer Project

This was designed to alleviate basement flooding in the Colony, Eastlawn, West Mill, and Oakview Drive areas. Sanitary relief sewers were installed along portions of Colony and Eastlawn Drives to provide additional sewer capacity to the area. This project is mostly complete at a cost of \$751,000.

Wilson Mills Resurfacing

This project involved milling, base repairs, and resurfacing on Wilson Mills from Lander Road to the west, ending at Richmond Road in Richmond Heights. This project was completed on time with a total cost of over \$2.7 million. Our share of the cost was \$275,000 with the balance being paid by the County.

Thanks again 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.

Heading into 2008, there are several projects to be undertaken. They include:

- Highland Road Pedestrian Path
- Highland/Bishop Intersection Improvement
- Community Center Improvements

Highland Road Pedestrian Path

Funding has been secured for the construction of a pedestrian path on Highland Road. While originally scheduled for construction in 2007, we are confident that after several regulatory reviews, this project will be underway in 2008. 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. The estimated cost is approximately \$750,000.

Highland/Bishop Intersection Improvement

We received State Issue I Financial Assistance for the Highland Bishop Road Intersection Improvement project. Another project originally slated for 2007, it will be completed in 2008. 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. The cost of the project is \$925,000 with the City portion's being about \$226,000.

Community Center Improvements

Our Community Center is a gathering place for all of our residents and is used quite extensively each year for a variety of programs including our senior programs with the Tri-City Consortium on Aging. The Center, while still functional, is in need of several improvements both inside and out. Improvements that will be addressed include waterproofing, concrete replacement, interior renovations and equipment purchases. It is our hope that these improvements will be made with minimal disruption to existing functions at the Center. We estimate these improvements to cost \$300,000.

2008 Budget Overview

In March of 2008, city council passed an ordinance for expenses in the amount of \$18,250,590 which includes \$2,213,425 in Capital Improvements.

Police Department

In 2007, the Police Department had approximately 12,000 requests for service. These requests break down as follows:

Assistance Related to Criminal Events	293
Assistance Related to Citizen Conflict	279
Assistance Related to Traffic Safety	2,368
Assistance Related to Miscellaneous Emergencies	4,385
Assistance Related to General Duties	2,236
Assistance Related to Jail Activities	2,318/10,900

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 addition, the department operates a 12-day Jail Facility that houses approximately 400 prisoners annually. The figure above of 10,900 includes prisoner checks that the officers have to complete according to state requirements. Our police officers also act as jailers for all prisoners taken into our facility.

In 2007, the DARE program was operated by Officer Pat Hopkins and graduated a total of 198 students. Since its inception, the program has graduated a total of 2,369 students. This program offers guidance and a structured course to children in the elementary school system on drug awareness and education.

For the calendar year 2007, the total funds for court and miscellaneous receipts collected by the Police Department were \$224,247.

Over the next five years, the police department has identified the need for capital purchases of slightly over \$750,000. These purchases include equipment such as police vehicles communications equipment, jail renovations and upgrades to existing offices and radio systems.

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 8,200 residents and approximately 160 different businesses.

In 2007, our fire department responded to over 773 ambulance calls and 167 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, fire alarm and fire suppression 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, 11 part-time employees and a part time secretary. 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.

The Fire Department has identified capital needs of approximately \$507,000 over the next five years which includes, among other things, a new ambulance, air exhaust system, building repairs and protective clothing. Approximately \$40,500 was spent on capital needs during 2007.

Building Department

The Building Department is currently staffed with five individuals. Tom Jamieson is the Building Commissioner. Jim Austin is the Assistant Building Commissioner. George Wilson is the Building Inspector. Linda Rogowski is the Administrative Assistant and Mickey Iliano is a part time building inspector who was recently added to assist with identifying violations pertaining to ordinances that deal with noxious weeds and commercial vehicles.

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 2007, the total receipts collected by this department were \$216,755

Fortunately, the capital needs of this department are not that significant. The Building Department estimates the 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 2007.

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.

The following list includes some of the city's department's accomplishments.

- Developing new website
- New software for Finance Department
- Reduction of audit costs by going to bi-annual audits
- Reduced staffing by providing administrative support in Fire Department (A Finance Clerk now splits time between Finance Department and Fire Department.)
- Finance Department does Economic Development tasks in conjunction with Mayor's office.
- Reduced workers compensation costs by becoming group rating eligible.
- Purchased an AED with grant from State of Ohio.
- Purchased a used 75' aerial truck from Mayfield Village Fire Department.
- Purchased a new computer server and seven workstation/desktop computers and printers.
- Purchased a thermal imaging camera, two 800 MARC radios and radio headsets for ladder 821.
- Purchased Holmatro Jaws of Life for engine 812.
- Painted the bay area of the fire station.
- Installed new lighting gear lockers and air evacuation system in the fire department
- Implemented a Code Red Emergency Notification System, a high speed emergency notification service, allowing officials to quickly relay urgent messages to residents and businesses by phone.
- Upgraded the Positron Lifeline 100 Controller system to an Enhanced 911 system with the ability to receive mobile callers and identify their location and emergency.
- Created Special Needs Program for residents with a disability, illness, hearing difficulty or who require special medical equipment.
- Upgraded MDT Mobile Data Terminal systems in all patrol cars including software that was purchased with the help of federal grants amounting to approximately \$24,000.
- Upgraded CAD Computer Aided Dispatch system with direct access to LEADS line for officer safety and a more cost-efficient system to obtain information on criminal background checks and timely identification of suspects.
- Purchased non-lethal Bean Bag Shotguns and Taser X-26 non-lethal stun guns for use in patrol vehicles and officers.
- Purchased and replaced 27 table radios for each officer at a cost of \$21,600 with a grant paying for 83% (\$18,000) of the purchase.
- Purchased bulletproof vests on a rotation basis with total cost deferred by a 50% reimbursement federal grant
- Purchased 4 Automated Emergency Defibrillators (AED) units for patrol cars and 1 for the jail facility.
- Installed Video Conferencing Equipment in the jail facility that enables our department to have direct hearings with Lyndhurst Municipal Court.
- Provided Free Gun Locks to residents in conjunction with the Project Child Safe Program and the State of Ohio.

Here are some things you may not know the city provides:

- Blood pressure checks at the fire station upon request.
- House lock-outs.
- Block party fire safety speeches, fire prevention hand outs and equipment demonstrations.
- Fire station tours
- Visits to schools, civic groups and businesses to provide fire safety speeches with hand outs
- Live fire training with fire extinguishers to businesses upon request
- CPR training for residents and businesses.
- Heart Saver first aid training for child care providers (babysitters)
- Training for students at Mayfield Schools in basic aid upon request from the volunteer coordinator
- AED training for residents and businesses
- Installation of smoke detectors and CO alarms in resident's homes upon request and changing of batteries.
- Usage of fire hose and hydrant fittings to fill swimming pools in accordance with codified city ordinance #1501.173 for a fee.
- Drop off site for ACBC aluminum cans for Metro Burn Unit.
- Hosts fire station open house in conjunction with city's annual Halloween party for children.
- Cleaning the driveway aprons of snow for seniors and our disabled residents.
- Providing bicycle helmet fittings to ensure safety of our children and young adults.

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 E. Coleman
Mayor