

City of Highland Heights, Ohio 2009 State of the City Address

March 2009

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

We began 2008 with a General Fund Balance of \$2.6 million and ended the year with a balance of approximately \$3.9 million. Our expenditures in 2008 were \$10.5 million and in 2007 were \$9.6 million and in 2006, \$8.4 million. Much of the additional expenditures was for our capital improvement program.

2009 Budget Overview

In March of 2009 city council passed an ordinance for all funds in the amount of \$17,079,373 which is \$700K less than the 2008 budget. The 2009 budget provides for \$1,788,095 in Capital Improvements. (The 2008 budget was \$17,763,791.) Some of the major 2009 City of Highland Heights projects:

- Highland Road Pedestrian Path Construction
- Highland & Bishop Intersection Completion
- Ridgebury Road Resurfacing

Building Department

The Building Department is currently staffed with five individuals. Tom Jamieson is the Building Commissioner and Jim Austin is the Assistant Building Commissioner. George Wilson is our Building Inspector and Linda Rogowski is the Administrative Assistant for the department. We also have a part time Housing Inspector Michael Iliano.

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 2008, the total receipts collected by this department were \$193,075.

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

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 2008, 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. Fire Chief Ed Bencin retired in 2008 and we welcomed our new Fire Chief William Turner who was promoted from within.

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 Turner 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 2008, the Fire Department’s total receipts for ambulance service, permits and inspections were \$192,829.

Chief Turner 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.

Police Department

The Highland Heights Police Department is a suburban department that consists of forty-seven employees, twenty-four (24) of which are sworn police officers and an additional twenty-three (23) civilian and part-time employees. The Department’s organizational structure consists of an Administrative Assistant to the Chief of Police, Detective Bureau, Patrol Unit, Jail Facility, Communications Specialist, Records Unit and Communications Center. Emergency services are provided for by the police and fire departments through twenty-four (24) hour dispatching located in the Communications Center

In 2008, the Police Department had approximately 11,000 requests for service. These requests break down as follows:

Assistance Related to Criminal Events	245
Assistance Related to Citizen Conflict	268
Assistance Related to Traffic Safety	2,215
Assistance Related to Miscellaneous Emergencies	4,421
Assistance Related to General Duties	2,177
Assistance Related to Jail Activities	1,672

The Department also provides services in community relations consisting of Crime Prevention and School Safety. The crime prevention program is responsible for conducting Residential Surveys and Care Calls for senior citizens. In 2008, the DARE program, which was organized in 1992, graduated 160 students. Since its inception, the program has graduated 2,541 students. This program offers guidance and a structured course to children in the elementary school system on drug awareness. Also included in 2008 were seven (7) students at the Cuyahoga County Vocational Education Center.

The Police Department houses and manages a 12 day Jail Facility certified by the State of Ohio Bureau of Adult Detention. During 2008, 304 prisoners were incarcerated in the Jail Facility for a total of 6,899 hours. The average stay of a prisoner is 23 hours. For the calendar year 2008, the total funds for court and miscellaneous receipts collected by the Police Department were \$213,590.

Over the next five years, the police department has identified the need for capital purchases of approximately \$750,000 to \$850,000. These purchases include equipment such as defibrillators, speed enforcement equipment, communications equipment, police cruisers and renovations and upgrades to existing offices and jail facilities.

Service Department

The Highland Heights Service Department is comprised of a staff of 9 full time laborers, part time and seasonal employees, a part time secretary, the Assistant Director and Director of Public Service. Department personnel are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a 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 3,300 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.

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 for rubbish and recycling service is \$9.89 per month. This equates to an estimated annual cost of roughly \$386,000. In April of 2009, after receiving bids from three companies, the city awarded a new contract to J&J Refuse to continue collection services for an additional three years. The total cost of the three year contract is \$1,654,989.36, which equates to a per unit monthly cost of \$13.92.

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 2008.

Thom Evans and his department have projected the capital needs for their department to be \$741,000 for vehicles and equipment and \$611,000 for building and grounds improvements

Highland Road Pedestrian Path

Update: The project has been awarded to the C A Agresta Company of South Euclid Ohio. The project will be completed in two phases. Phase one, which was constructed between the Richmond Heights border and Bishop Road was completed in the fall/winter of 2008. Phase two, which will begin as soon as weather permits, will include the rest of the project from Bishop Road to the freeway. It is anticipated that a majority of this work will be completed in time for use this summer.

Highland Bishop Intersection Improvement

Update: This project is nearing completion. The contractor is currently working to finish up miscellaneous sidewalk concrete work and electrical work associated with the traffic signal system. They also need to complete restoration to all of the tree lawn areas. We anticipate all work to be completed shortly.

Ridgebury Resurfacing

This project will involve milling, base repairs, and resurfacing in the cities of Highland Heights, Lyndhurst, Mayfield Village and Mayfield Heights. This is a county project being administered through the office of the County Engineer Robert C. Klaiber Jr. Work will be performed in two phases. The first phase of the project will be from Richmond Road to Lander Road. The second phase of the project will complete the re-surfacing to SOM Center Road. The project which began in April was awarded to Burton Scot Contractors at a total cost of \$2,345,000.00. Highland Heights will contribute approximately \$65,000.00 toward the project.

Street Repairs

Due to budgetary concerns, the city has not performed a side street resurfacing program in the past five years. In an effort to address a growing list of infrastructure needs, \$400,000.00 has been appropriated in the 2009 capital budget for resurfacing and concrete repairs. In the future, we hope to be able to budget more money for resurfacing and repairs but, in these tough economic times, as we must with our own personal budgets, the city too must work to budget within our means. Our Capital Plan and Master Improvement Plan Report, has identified more than 10 million dollars in long range infrastructure needs. As with the Ridgebury Project scheduled for this year, the recently completed Colony Area Relief Sewer and other projects in which we have been successful in acquiring funding from outside agencies, we will continue to seek out partnerships with County, State, and Federal Agencies to leverage local dollars.

Whiteford Park

In 2008, at the request and with the assistance of residents in the Highland Woods development, a new playground was erected at Whiteford Park. The new playground which includes swings a slide and jungle gym was erected at a cost of \$24,790.00. The service department's role in the project involved demolition and removal of the old playground equipment. Demolition was

completed in 2008. Restoration of the area which was begun in the fall will be completed in the spring of 2009.

Salt Dome

In October 2008, the service department took ownership of a new salt storage building. The facility, an 82 foot wide dome with a 10 foot high concrete wall located behind the service garage, was constructed by Seitz Builders Inc. of Broadview Heights, OH at a cost of \$236,053.00

An anticipated shortage in road salt drove many communities in Northeast Ohio to adopt policies and procedures to reduce their use of road salt. Although Highland Heights has always made every attempt to be frugal with our salt supply for reasons relating to supply, stockpiling, cost, and environmental impact, the department intensified its efforts over this most recent winter season.

De-icing on most side streets is usually limited to intersections, curves and hills at night and during extended storm periods. Once a storm has passed, side streets are salted more thoroughly as needed.

The winter of 2008-2009 was moderate in terms of temperature, snow-fall, and de-icing. The department applied approximately 3,000 tons of road salt for the season; down from the 5,800 tons used the previous season. Over a tracking period of the previous six years, the city has averaged using approximately 4,000 tons of salt per season.

Community Center

The Community Center is maintained by a part-time Coordinator and three part-time custodians. Coordinator Judy Dick is responsible for booking all events that occur at the Community Center. Rental of the Center is available to the residents of Highland Heights. Community civic groups hold meetings and events at the Center. You will also find several exercise groups rent rooms to hold their classes. In 2008, we began an interior renovation project at the Community Center. Repairs were done. The entire interior of the building was painted and window treatments were replaced. The exterior of the building was tuck-pointed. Landscaping and water-proofing was also done. Please feel free to stop by and see the rejuvenated Community Center.

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