

City of Highland Heights, Ohio 2010 State of the City Address

March 2010

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 2010, 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.

However, before I share that information with you, let me first say our city is proud that in 2009, we were once again honored by Money Magazine as one of the best places to live in the country. The magazine ranks the top 100 small communities and Highland Heights placed 18th on that list, up from number 75 two years ago. The rankings are made based on public data. The City was not interviewed nor were we asked to provide any data. According to Money Magazine, "A recently refurbished community pool, a smattering of playgrounds and a low crime rate make this Cleveland suburb a popular place to raise a family". I couldn't agree more.

In 2009, Highland Heights welcomed the Shoppes at Alpha Place to our business community. This plaza includes the Verizon Store, Key Bank, Panera Bread, Naya Bistro Lounge, Malley's Chocolates, and Qdoba Mexican Grill. .

Financial Overview

We began 2009 with a General Fund Balance of \$3,900,853 and ended the year with a balance of approximately \$4,234,817. This increase in the general fund balance during these tough economic times accents our commitment to spending within our means. Our expenditures in 2009 were \$10,512,852 and in 2008 were \$10,490,179.

2010 Budget Overview

In March 2010, city council passed an ordinance for all funds in the amount of \$15,160,184 which is \$1,157,048 less than the 2009 budget which was \$16,317,232. The 2010 budget provides for \$946,400 in Capital Improvements which is \$657,299 less than the 2009 Capital Improvements budget which was \$1,603,699.

Building Department

The Building Department is currently staffed with a Building Commissioner, Building Inspector and an Administrative Assistant for the department. In early 2010, we were pleased to welcome Dale Grabfelder as our new Building Commissioner. Dale brings many years of valuable experience to the city. Dale also served as a part time patrolman in Highland Heights for the past 23 years. 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 2009, the total receipts collected by this department were \$118,530.

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 200 businesses.

In 2009, our Fire Department responded to 800 ambulance calls, 137 fire calls and over 900 calls for service. This department is headed by Fire Chief Bill Turner who provides extraordinary leadership while his staff provides a variety of services to the community that extends beyond fighting fires and providing paramedic services. Probably the most important other services they provide is through the Fire Prevention Bureau. This 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, four lieutenants and fifteen fire fighters. The department operates on a 24 hour on, 48 hour off basis with a minimum of four fire fighters 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 2009, the Fire Department’s total receipts for ambulance service, permits and inspections were \$ 241,084.43

Police Department

Our Police Department is led by our longtime Police Chief, Jim Cook. Jim has been a dedicated servant to our community and residents for many years. Jim takes pride in his highly motivated and trained staff to “Protect and Serve” all Highland Heights residents. The Highland Heights Police Department 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 2009, the Police Department had approximately 10,362 requests for service. These requests break down as follows:

Assistance Related to Criminal Events:	219
Assistance Related to Citizen Conflict:	274
Assistance Related to Traffic Safety:	2,305
Assistance Related to Miscellaneous Emergencies:	2,730
Assistance Related to General Duties:	3,952
Assistance Related to Jail Activities:	882

The Police Department also provides community relations services consisting of Crime Prevention and School Safety. The crime prevention program conducts Residential Surveys and Care Calls for senior citizens. In 2009, the DARE program, which was organized in 1992, graduated 168 students. Since its inception, the program has graduated 2,709 students. This program offers guidance and a structured course on drug awareness to children in the elementary school system. In 2009, 25 students at the Cuyahoga County Vocational Education Center were also included.

The Police Department houses and manages a 12 day Jail Facility certified by the State of Ohio Bureau of Adult Detention. During 2009, 203 prisoners were incarcerated in the Jail Facility for a total of 3,203 hours. The average stay of a prisoner is 16 hours. For the calendar year 2009, the total funds for court and miscellaneous receipts collected by the Police Department were \$229,121.68.

Service Department

The Service 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. Thom Evans is our service director and like the other department heads leads by example. This 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. Responsibilities include providing services to more than 3,300 homes and 200 businesses. A 30% increase in population and infrastructure in recent decades 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 and many additional miles of roadway. In addition to programmed activities such as road patching, crack sealing, street sweeping, catch basin cleaning, property maintenance, leaf collection, snow plowing, etc., the department responded to hundreds of miscellaneous requests for services in 2009.

Last year, the city entered into a new contract for rubbish collection and recycling services. J & J Refuse Company of Dover, Ohio, who provided this service under the previous contract, was awarded a new contract. As low bidder, J & J began a new three year contract with two additional one year options in June of 2009. With few exceptions, 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 \$14.05 per month. This equates to an estimated annual cost of roughly \$557,000. Additionally, the Service Department provides residential collections and drop-offs at various times throughout the year for brush, computers, and household hazardous waste. Please check our newsletters and our web-site for information about upcoming programs.

The Highland Road Pedestrian Path was completed in the second quarter of 2009. It provides an east west corridor for pedestrians through the middle of the city. It allows our residents, walking access to City Hall, the Police and Fire Stations, the Community Center and Service Department. The Highland Bishop Intersection work that was completed in 2009 improved the area in terms of both safety and aesthetics. A new traffic signal system allows motorists to move through the intersection more efficiently, and with fewer delays, while the inclusion of new sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian signals have allowed for safer pedestrian crossings.

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 conduct meetings and events at the Center. Several exercise groups also rent rooms to hold their classes. An interior renovation project at the Community Center started in 2008 and was completed in 2009. The entire interior of the building was painted and window treatments were replaced. The exterior of the building was tuck-pointed and landscaping and water-proofing were also done.

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