

City of Highland Heights, Ohio 2011 State of the City Address

April 2011

Dear Residents:

Our city charter requires that I submit an annual State of the City Report. I have chosen again this year to give a brief overview of the city's financial position and budget for the calendar year 2011, 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.

In 2010, Highland Heights welcomed more businesses to the Shoppes at Alpha Place including Discount Drug Mart, Hibachi Japanese Steak House, Shuttler's Uniform Store and Kano & Siegler Eye Care. The razing of the old church property on Highland Road was completed and possible uses for that space are currently being considered.

Financial Overview

We began 2010 with a General Fund Balance of \$4.23M and ended the year with a balance of \$5.22M. This increase in the General Fund during these tough economic times accents our commitment to spending within our means. This is the 4th year in which the General Fund grew. Our expenditures within the General Fund in 2010 were \$10.61M which was a less than 1% increase over 2009 spending. For the 7th straight year, we did not incur any additional interest bearing debt while reducing the total outstanding debt of the City by over \$6M during the same period.

Our 2011 budget has been passed and it calls for a 1.6% increase over our final 2010 budget in the General Fund and 2.3% overall. We are again hopeful of a surplus within the General Fund while continuing a responsible capital improvements program. Within the budget, over \$1M of capital expenses are planned including new vehicles, equipment and road repairs.

We will continue to provide and improve on the services that residents have come to expect.

Building Department

The Building Department is currently staffed by Building Commissioner Dale Grabfelder, Building Inspector George Wilson, an administrative assistant and a part time inspector. This department and its personnel are fully certified by the State of Ohio Board of Building Standards to enforce the Ohio Building Code and Residential Code of Ohio for the safety of all residents and businesses. The department is also responsible for enforcing all zoning laws of the City.

In 2010, the department issued a record number of 1,351 residential permits and 108 commercial permits which generated total receipts of \$159,517. The majority of residential permits were issued for residential roofs that needed to be replaced due to a storm.

Fire Department

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. Fire Chief William Turner and Fire Captain Lee Molnar have each been with the city for over 20 years. I receive many letters from residents complimenting the firefighter/paramedics for their excellent and caring service.

In 2010, the Fire Department was awarded the “2010 Emergency Medical Service Provider of the Year” by the Ohio Department of Public Safety. The department received this award in part due to the excellent service they provide, their continued involvement within the community and their desire to continue to improve services to the residents of Highland Heights.

The Highland Heights Fire Department is a charter member of the Tri Community CERT Team. Their mission is to provide assistance to the Public Safety departments in our area and be prepared to deploy to other communities when needed. They work together as volunteer teams that will train, inform and educate our volunteers on disaster preparedness. They work towards being ready to support our emergency personnel in doing the “greatest good for the greatest number of people” while upholding the CERT protocol.

The Fire Department provides many services to our residents in addition to squad calls, fire calls, utility issues, hazmat, technical rescue, fire prevention and fire safety speeches. They provide services such as community CPR and basic first aid training, assist with basic aid training with Millridge Elementary School and CPR training for the 10th graders at the high school, install smoke detectors in homes for senior citizens, provide blood pressure checks for seniors, sponsor Boy Scout Troop 461 and have an on-site aluminum can recycling program for the Aluminum Cans for Burned Children which aids children with severe burns.

Chief Turner applied for and received a FEMA grant for regional training totaling \$179,000 to be used for a computer based training system.

In 2010, our Fire Department responded to 766 ambulance calls, 256 fire calls and 316 calls for service. Probably the most important other services they provide are through the Fire Prevention Bureau which 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 10 part-time employees. This includes one chief, one captain, four lieutenants and fifteen firefighters. The department operates on a 24 hour on, 48 hour off basis with a minimum of four firefighters 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 2010, the Fire Department’s total receipts for ambulance service, permits and inspections were \$215,628.00.

The Highland Heights Fire Department is also a member of the Hillcrest Technical Rescue Team which is comprised of 32 Firefighter/Paramedics from the cities of Beachwood, Gates Mills, Highland Heights, Lyndhurst, Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, Pepper Pike, Richmond Heights, and Willoughby Hills that are trained in specialty rescue.

The team specializes in Swift Water Rescue, Building Collapse, Confined Space, Ice, Dive, Trench, Rope and Tower Rescue.

Police Department

Police Chief Jim Cook has been the Chief of Police with the Highland Heights Police Department for the last 20 years. Like all our department heads, Chief Cook is a very dedicated public servant, and provides the leadership to his department which is essential to ensure the high level of service we have come to expect from the police department.

In 2010, the Department earned the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement (C.A.L.E.A.) Recognition Award, the first police department in Cuyahoga County to achieve this national award. This 3 year process addressed the Department's procedures on life, health, safety issues, critical legal issues and conditions that reduce risk and high liability exposure. This C.A.L.E.A. Recognition Award assures residents, businesses and employees that the Police Department meets all professional standards.

Also in March of 2010, our police department was successful in a major homicide investigation involving the prosecution and conviction of Doctor Yazeed Essa. The conviction was the result of a five year investigation, involving the FBI, Gates Mills Police Department, County Prosecutors Office, FBI and Interpol. Essa fled the country weeks after his wife's death on February 24, 2005, and led officials on an international manhunt that ended in Cyprus 18 months later. Our detectives played a major role in seizing the calcium pills laced with cyanide, and the apprehension and return of Essa from Cyprus to stand trial. What started as a minor traffic accident in February 2005, on Wilson Mills Road, turned into a tragic murder. This case brought national media attention to our City, and professional and thorough investigations by the Police Department provided for a successful outcome.

The Highland Heights Police Department consists of forty-seven employees, twenty-five of which are sworn police officers and an additional twenty-two 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, Communications Center and School Crossing Guards. Emergency services are provided for by the police and fire departments through twenty-four hour dispatching located in the Communications Center. In 2010, the Police Department had approximately 10,684 requests for service. These requests break down as follows:

Assistance Related to Criminal Events	222
Assistance Related to Citizen Conflict	381
Assistance Related to Traffic Safety	2,118
Assistance Related to Miscellaneous Emergencies	2,901
Assistance Related to General Duties	3,884
Assistance Related to Jail Activities	1,178

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 2010, the DARE program, which was organized in 1992, graduated 137 students. Since its inception, the program has graduated 2,858 students. This program offers guidance and a structured course to children in the elementary school system on drug awareness. Also included in 2010 were 12 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 2010, 186 prisoners were incarcerated in the Jail Facility for a total of 4,572 hours. The average stay of a prisoner is 25 hours. For the calendar year 2010, the total funds for court and miscellaneous receipts collected by the Police Department were \$208,175.06.

Service Department

The Highland Heights Department of Public Service serves a growing community of more than 8,200 residents, 3,300 homes and over 200 businesses. The department is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of publicly owned infrastructure and public land, including more than 92 lane miles of roadway, 52 miles of storm sewer drainage and 112 acres of public property. The department interacts with the city's safety forces and other departments as well as county, state and federal agencies to coordinate a wide range of services in the community.

The Department is comprised of a staff of 9 full time and 4 part time laborers, 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.

In 2010, programmed activities were performed in areas involving road patching, crack sealing, street sweeping, catch basin cleaning, brush and leaf collection, drainage projects, recycling programs, snow plowing, and maintenance of public properties. In addition, the department responded to hundreds of miscellaneous requests for service in a multitude of areas. Projects of significance over the past year have included: the resurfacing of Millridge Rd., miscellaneous concrete repairs; continued sanitary sewer investigations in two neighborhoods, and a detailed engineering study of the Highland Road water main.

The city's curbside solid waste and recycling program is contracted to J & J Refuse Company of Dover, Ohio. The current contract, which is for three years with the possibility of two one year extensions, began in June 2009. With few exceptions, the service provides for unlimited curbside collection of rubbish, yard waste and recyclables. The new contract serves an estimated 3,301 homes. In 2010 the city expended \$567,353 for the service, which averaged out to approximately \$14.32 per home, per month.

Many residents take part in two drop-off collection programs for household hazardous waste conducted in cooperation with the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District. In the months of May and September, the service department accepted oil based paint, herbicides and pesticides, used motor oil and anti-freeze and hazardous household chemicals from residents for collection at the service department. The service department delivered the material to a central location point where the county accepted the material for proper disposal. The program generated more than 6,000 pounds of materials. Two collections are scheduled in 2011.

Many residents also participated in computer round-ups during the months of April and August. The program, which is run in cooperation with the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District, recycles computer components for both re-use and proper disposal. Like the household hazardous waste collection, residents brought their old computers and components to the service department where they were packaged and taken to the county's central drop-off site. The program generated 17,400 pounds of materials. The program will be repeated in 2011.

In addition to brush disposal with their regular rubbish collection, many residents took part in the Spring Brush Collection Round-up. This program offers residents the opportunity to dispose of small brush without having to tie and bundle items for disposal by the city's rubbish contractor. The program ran from mid-April through mid-June. Brush collection is one of the department's most popular services with our residents. In 2010 the department responded to 1,363 calls for collection.

In January each year, the service department collects Christmas trees that are chipped into mulch and recycled. In all, more than 375 yards of recycled wood chips were generated by the program. Some of the recycled product was used in various landscaping features throughout the city.

Leaf collection in 2010 began on October 11th. The service department deployed three leaf crews utilizing tow-behind vacuum leaf trailers for collection. Crews circuit the city street by street until all streets, more than 90 miles of tree lawn and ditches, have been serviced and then the process is repeated. Crews began working late hours and Saturdays early in the season to speed up the collection pace. In all, 2,967 man hours were expended on the program, including 190 overtime hours. Approximately 6,900 yards of leaves were collected.

The service department is responsible for maintenance and repair of approximately 92 lane miles of roadway. Department responsibilities include street-by-street patching, crack sealing, storm system maintenance, catch basin cleaning and repair, installation and maintenance of traffic signs, street trees, street sweeping, and snow and ice control. In the past twenty-five years the number of city streets has grown by more than 37%.

In the spring and throughout the year, the service department provides assistance in the way of additional equipment and manpower as needed to augment the work of the community park maintenance staff.

Community Park

David Ianiro serves as our Park and Recreation Director. David has served the city in this capacity for the past 7 years. David is responsible for coordinating all the recreation events for the city as well as managing the many sports and recreation offerings we have. Each year a Summer Sizzler is issued with details about the many programs and activities to be offered through our park system.

The City of Highland Heights takes great pride in providing residents with a safe, serene and beautiful place to call home. Our Parks and Recreation Department works year-round to ensure that residents and families have the opportunity to take full advantage of the fun and beauty we have to offer in our community park. Pavilions may be reserved by residents, businesses and schools located in the City of Highland Heights.

The community pool is open to Highland Heights and Mayfield school district residents and their guests. The zero-entry pool is approximately 10,000 square feet. Refer to the 2011 Summer Sizzler for information on pool passes, swimming lessons, pool parties and the Highland Heights Hurricanes Swim Team.

Our summer day camp offers an opportunity for children entering kindergarten through seventh grade to enjoy weekly field trips, lunch treats, sports, games and arts and crafts to develop their skills and interests, enhance self-esteem and encourage respect for themselves and others.

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. Despite the economy, the Center was rented most weekends of 2010. Community civic groups conduct meetings and events at the Center. Several exercise groups also rent rooms to hold their classes. The custodians and the service department continue to upgrade and maintain the building. In 2010, the City purchased and installed a flat screen television for each of the party rooms and 20 round tables were replaced by new, lighter weight tables.

Conclusion

I am pleased to report that the city is fortunate to be on solid financial ground due to the hard work and due diligence of our Finance Director, City Council and myself. We have ended the last few years with a surplus in the general fund and have every reason to believe we will have a surplus in the general fund at the end of 2011.

As I have said before, 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 to do everything possible to continue to provide our residents with the services they deserve and expect.

Sincerely,

Scott E. Coleman
Mayor