

2017 STATE OF THE CITY REPORT

My name is Dennis Buckley, and I serve as Mayor of the City of Beech Grove. As required I would like to report to the City Council, Board of Public Works and Safety, and the citizens of Beech Grove, the state of our city.

In 2016, and every year since 2012, we have seen a steady improvement in the delivery of services, equipment upgrades, municipal buildings and properties improvements, and most importantly we have not had any decreases in employment.

I believe the services that we provide are second to none. In 2016, our Police Department made over 24,400 responses. Our Part 1 crime rate decreased by 32%, our Part 2 crimes increased by 6%, and our Part 3 crimes (which are drug related) increased by 19%. The Part 1 crime reduction is good news since we know there is an increase in crime all around us. We continue to fight the problems of drug abuse and overdoses, so much that our Police Officer's now carry Naloxone to try to prevent deaths attributed to opiate abuse. We are 1 year into the collection of unused or outdated medicines. In 2016 we had over 350 lbs. of medicine dropped off in the lobby of the police department, all with no questions asked.

In 2016, our Fire Department made over 4,690 ambulance responses and over 3,545 fire responses. These numbers are staggering. Our fire loss was \$180,600.00, which was very

minimal. Over 350 fire inspections were conducted and over \$1,250,000.00 was collected in ambulance billing.

In 2016, our Department of Public Works performed very well as usual. Workers collected over 4,634 tons of trash, our street sweeping program conducted by a private company collected over 362 tons of debris in a 6 month period, and we collected over 334 tons of recyclable materials. As a result, our city is becoming cleaner and friendlier from an environmental perspective.

In 2016, Citizens Energy Group treated over 50,577,266 gallons of wastewater that was generated by customers of Beech Grove Sewage Works. Some of that is attributed to ground water that is entering the sanitary sewer system.

In 2016, good programs such as leaf pick up, pothole repairs, brush removal and heavy trash pick up continued. These programs were easier for our employees to perform because new equipment has been purchased. One new program initiated in late 2016, was to charge to have mattresses and box springs picked up. We wanted to lessen employee exposure to bed bugs, and body fluid hazards. A outside vendor now comes in the city and retrieves these items and bills us accordingly. The cost of this program is passed on to the residents who have these items placed out at the curb.

In 2016, over \$100,000.00 in permit fees were collected for construction projects and over 1,850 permits were issued. As part of this process our Compliance Division conducted over 1,090 inspections. At least 8 contractors have had their license to conduct business in Beech Grove revoked for questionable work or failure to complete projects.

The Compliance Division has become a resource to work on environmental matters in

our city and this same division has started tagging vehicles that are found to be inoperative in alley's and roadway's. The working conditions between the Police Department and Compliance Division are going very well and I can see more good work being done in 2017.

In 2016, our Senior Citizens Center continued to do well. A new Director was appointed due to a retirement. This appointment in turn caused the assistants position to be changed as well. We transported over 1,895 seniors to the store, doctor's appointments and provided other transportation opportunities. Our center now provides transportation for seniors to Community Health Network on Emerson Avenue, and to the Altenhiem on Hanna Avenue. This is a good service for our city as senior citizens make up a large percentage of our population.

In 2016 many improvements took place at the Hornet Park Community Center and throughout the park system. We finally completed a \$237,500.00 HUD Grant for an "At Risk Youth" program. This allowed the city to make upgrades to the HVAC System, purchase new exercise equipment, remove mold and redo a outside wall, install new flooring, paint walls, install ADA compliant front entry door openers, install a new camera system for security, purchase a copy machine, provide a computer / tutoring room for area children, purchase telephone and IPOD charging stations, install exterior lighting, and we developed a game room for children. A new full time position of Event Coordinator, was created due to the number of new programs offered to the public and the number of citizens who visit the Community Center.

Much can be determined about a city by their parks. I believe that we simply have the nicest parks around. We don't have large indoor facilities or swimming pools but just from the presentation of each park, we know they are well received. Much work has been done to plant trees and other foliage and to keep the parks clean. The dog park continues to be popular and it seems that shelter rentals continue to be in demand. In this past paving cycle, the main drive in Sarah T. Bolton Park was completely repaved as was the maintenance building parking lot, and the drive to the Hilltop Shelter. Speed humps were also added into the project. In 2016 the Parks Board submitted their 2016-2020 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources for review. In 2016 the park system generated over \$45,000.00 in revenues to offset the cost of providing services and programs and recently the Parks Board has adjusted certain fees for programs offered at the Hornet Park Community Center and in the parks systems itself.

In 2016, we took great leaps in becoming better environmentally. We completely changed how gas and diesel fuel is dispensed throughout our city concerning municipal vehicles. The gasoline tank in the city park, the diesel fuel tank at the fire department and both the above ground gasoline and diesel fuel tanks at the Department of Public Works were removed. Underground gasoline tanks at the Police Department and at the Department of Public Works have also been removed. The tank at the Police Department had a very bad exposure, to the point that at least 10 monitoring wells had to be installed to monitor and test ground water. This was very costly to do. But, we no longer have to worry about ground contamination as the situation has been mitigated. Now the Department of Public

Works is the only location in the city that vehicles can fuel up other than going to a gas station. Our Fire Department now uses the Department of Public Works to fuel the fire engines.

Another environmental program that was introduced in early 2016 was free shredding to area residents. We conducted 3 different events in 2016, and the last event we offered free appliance drop off. This program has been very well received and is a requirement as part of the CLEAN Community designation we have received from IDEM and the State of Indiana. I want to remind all of you that the City of Beech Grove is one of only 18 cities and towns in the State of Indiana that have been designated as a CLEAN Community with the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLES

I want to spend some time with you talking about the equipment and vehicle upgrades that we made in 2016. In 2016, the Fire Department took delivery of a new fire engine (\$397,000.00). This was the second new fire engine purchased since 2012. The Fire Department also had a new chassis placed on Ambulance 57. The cost of this was approximately \$78,000.00, which saved the tax payers almost \$80,000.00 dollars. The Fire Department was also the recipient of a \$19,000.00 grant from Firehouse Subs of which a brand new Kubota off road vehicle equipped with new EMS gear and cot was delivered.

Our Department of Public Works Department purchased 4 new pick up trucks and our Parks Department purchased 2 new pick up trucks. All of these trucks came equipped with new snow plowing equipment enhancing our snow removal capabilities.

In 2016 the Police Department ordered new body armor for each police officer and new shields to provide a safer approach to doors of businesses and homes. In 2016, the Police Department continued to purchase new vehicles from the Assets Forfeiture Fund. The Police Department installed a new ADA door opener on the front lobby entrance door and also installed a new bullet proof front lobby door. New perimeter fencing and electronic gates were installed around the building to provide personal safety for each Police Officer. Bullet proof window covers for the building have also been ordered. It is very unfortunate but the demeanor of society causes us to take extra measures to protect our police officers.

In 2016, our Fire Department ordered over 20 sets of new structural firefighting turn out gear with the remaining gear to be ordered in 2017. The Fire Department also ordered Thermal Imaging Camera's that have recently arrived and have been installed.

The best part of all of this is that with the exception of the 6 pick up trucks for the Parks Department and the Department of Public Works, everything listed above that was purchased in 2016 was paid for by check without the issuance of debt.

EMPLOYMENT, STAFFING AND WAGES

As in the past 3 years, in 2016 the Common Council provided full time employees a 2% COLA in the salary ordinance for 2017. The Common Council adjusted the third year

base salary rate (pension base) for the Fire Department so they are now equal to the third year salary (pension base) of the Police Department. The Common Council increased the CDL pay, certification pay, bailiff pay, and the Common Council increased the pay for the Deputy Clerk, and added a full time Event Coordinator at the Hornet Park Community Center. The Common Council also amended the salary ordinance for 2017 and added a full time IDACS Coordinator for the Police Department, as we are changing our IDACS control to IMPD,. The Common Council also increased the hourly rate for part time employees so that no part time employee makes less that \$9.00 per hour. The Board of Public Works and Safety has continually backfilled vacant positions at the Department of Public Works and has moved forward with filling any open position throughout the city very quickly. We have been very good about paying retirement benefits to those deserving and have paid sick time buy back to those who have recently retired. COLA has also been added to retirement checks of those who are the responsibility of the city. We certainly hope to continue this trend into 2018.

In 2016, we added 1 new Firefighter and 1 new Police Officer to the ranks.

In 2017, we have added 1 additional Firefighter to the ranks and we are in the process of adding 2 additional Police Officers to the Police Department. When this is complete, this will make the staffing levels for both departments at 34, which is the highest staffing levels since 2004 for the Police Department and 2009 for the Fire Department. Based on available revenue, we hope to be able to add 1 additional Police Officer in 2018.

Also in 2016, the Common Council approved salary increases for the office of Mayor, Clerk Treasurer, City Judge, and for the Council. This rate increase was the first adjustment in pay for any elected official in at least 6 years, probably longer.

LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

I want to express my appreciation to the Common Council, the Board of Public Works and Safety, the Redevelopment Commission, and the Clerk Treasurer's Office for their accomplishments in 2016. Much has been done to move the city forward. I have often told people that these groups over the last 5 years have been the driving force in the improvement of our city.

In 2016, the Common Council passed a budget for 2017 that is balanced and fully funded. This has been the trend over the last 4 years. In 2016 the Common Council approved a new Personnel Manual updating the old manual that has been in place since 1995.

The Common Council approved over 20 new ordinances in 2016 that will move the city forward and secure further funding opportunities for our city. New rules are in place for licensing of food vehicles, therapeutic massage businesses, handling of second hand goods, pawn shops, and the discontinuing of door to door solicitation and the sale of foods from a vehicle. The Common Council also adjusted fees for permits which generated thousands of dollars in new revenue causing fewer burdens on taxpayers' dollars. Another piece of legislation the Common Council approved was to close out the Main Street Loan Program. This program cost the taxpayers thousands of dollars as a

result of unpaid loans. Under the control of the Clerk Treasurer and the Common Council, the program has been stopped and the remaining funds were placed in the Rainy Day Fund to be used for special needs. The Common Council in 2016 also approved the use of Rainy Day Funds to implement a HUD grant at the Hornet Park Community Center in the amount of \$237,500.00, which has been completed and the reimbursement funds were returned to the Rainy Day Fund. A final act at years end allowed claims to be paid pursuant to closing out our health insurance account while we transferred to a new insurance program. These governing bodies performed very well in 2016 and should be recognized for their actions.

INFRASTRUCTURE

2016 was yet another good year concerning improvements in our infrastructure. Almost \$650,000.00 was spent on local road and street improvements. With these latest investments, we have invested over \$3,000,000.00 in local roads and streets through MVH and LR & S budgets since 2012. In both 2015 and 2016, we spent over \$30,000.00 each year to repair and replace sidewalks, and in 2016 almost \$100,000.00 was spent on storm water management programs and improvements. In 2016, we spent almost \$100,000.00 in sanitary sewer upgrades and to treat tree roots that have entered the sanitary sewer system.

We have been very fortunate to have an excellent working relationship with the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and as a result, we have

received over \$10,000,000.00 in grant funding for local roads and sidewalk improvements since 2012.

We have also been very fortunate to have a good working relationship with INDOT. In 2016, we received over \$625,000.00 in funding from the State of Indiana for local road improvements of which 75% of the funds were dedicated towards paving projects. We also were fortunate to receive a Community Crossing Grant from the State of Indiana for \$392,350.00, which has been deposited in our account and will be used towards paving projects in 2017.

Much work has been done to meet with legislators and discuss the continuation of the Community Crossing Grant program, and also to increase funding for local roads and streets. It appears that the Community Crossing Grant program will continue to be funded and we hope that other funding opportunities be allowed other than through the Rainy Day Fund. With the Legislature looking to adequately fund local roads and streets, this could mean as much as a 40% increase in MVH and LRS budgets for infrastructure improvements, which would be outstanding.

Work continues on the round-a-bout project at Arlington and Churchman (2019 / 2020) as well as the greenway project (2020 / 2021). This spring, bids should be awarded by INDOT for the construction of sidewalks on the south side of Churchman Avenue from the Cambridge Square Apartments to Arlington Avenue. This is a \$1,200,000.00 sidewalk project that will provide improved safety for those who walk on this street.

We certainly look forward to 2017 as we will conduct the largest infrastructure improvement project that we have undertaken since we began in 2012. It is our intent to

move forward with quotes at the Board of Public Works and Safety meeting in February to conduct \$75,000.00 worth of improvements to the sanitary sewer system by lining more sanitary sewers, and to award at least \$750,000.00 in bids for paving local roads and streets. This by far is the largest paving project that we have undertaken as work will be done in all 5 council districts. With all of this, over \$2,000,000.00 will be spent on infrastructure improvements in our city this year.

WHAT'S AHEAD IN 2017?

In 2017, we continue to look for ways to improve the services we provide. We must continue to focus on the safety of our citizens, people who pass through our city, and the personal safety of our employees. Secondly, we must continue to invest in the infrastructure of our city and continue to apply for funding to further improve our city.

We should look to increase the size of our Police Department and we should continue to strive to remain competitive with other departments in the surrounding area.

We should move forward to replace Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) for the Fire Department and we should begin thinking about other options for a Police and Fire Department building as we are bulging at the seams. Work must also begin on replacing communication equipment for the Police and Fire Departments.

What is being done at the St. Francis hospital property is critical for our future as a city. Great improvements have been made to the Alverno Building and the former MAB Building, and work is being done to properly dismantle and restore the property to its original origin. I have been very happy with the progress that has been made over the last

year with the property as over 350 jobs have returned to our city, and I suspect more may come at a later date.

Work needs to continue to update our Code of Ordinances as much work has already been completed.

Unfortunately, we have to respond to the rising cost of conducting business. Recently, we have all seen a rise in our water bills, light bills and sewer bills have increased for those who live all around us. Citizens Energy Group has applied to the IURC to increase the rates to treat wastewater in the municipalities of Beech Grove, Greenwood, Lawrence and the Ben Davis Conservatory District from .73 per 1,000 gallons of waste water to 3.0592 per 1,000 gallons of waste water. Should the IURC approve the rate increase requested as I believe they may, we will have to substantially increase our rates to Beech Grove Sewage Works customers to remain solvent. This will cause extreme hardship to many people including those who are on a fixed income.

We have to continue our good relationships with our neighbors and work together to address social issues and environmental concerns that are constantly in front of us.

And finally we need to continue to grow. We have done well over the past 5 years with ADM, Kinetrex Energy, Alro Steel, Beech Grove Station, and Community Health Network, but in order to provide better programs and to develop more as a city, we need to continue to reach out to groups such as OCRA, ICHDA, and both local the Indy chamber's for funding and growth opportunities.

There's nothing wrong with being fiscally prudent and living within our means. The days of depending on tax dollars has to end because it's just not there anymore. There's

nothing like living in a small, safe, clean community that has a good school district and offers their own amenities, yet being within 15 minutes of the downtown of a major city. In closing I thank all of you who take the time out of your busy schedule to serve on boards and commissions and volunteer for the good of our city. The results are evident.

Respectfully,

Dennis B. Buckley

Mayor

City of Beech Grove