

State of the City Address for 2012

My name is Dennis Buckley and I am the Mayor of Beech Grove

I want to welcome you to the State of the City Address for 2012.

On November 8th, the Citizens of Beech Grove spoke and by no uncertain terms, desired a different direction for our city. If I wasn't a candidate for public office, I too, would have voted for change, as the past eight years has been terrible for this city. I don't have to tell you this, as you already know it. Over the past several weeks, we have worked diligently to move our city forward.

I understand how the transition of government should work because I witnessed it in the past, and one of the reasons I ran for Mayor was because I felt the condition of our City was bad. But, I never dreamed that our city would be as bad as it is.

In order to fix what is wrong with our city, we must first explain what is wrong and be completely honest with all of you. I want to pass on to you what I have found while doing assessments of our individual departments. Lets start with;

The Department of Public Works:

No Capital Assets Inventory

Roof Leaks

Ceiling has water damage

Trash trucks (4) 2006, 200. 1995, 1991

Jet Machine

Leaf Vacuums (2) 1994

Dump trucks (3) beds are rusted out

Pick up trucks for snow plowing

Outside lighting

No sewer Rehab

No inspections

No sewer rates

No policies on trash totes

Outdated ordinances on trash (1964)

Picking up hazardous waste (2008)

Picking up businesses trash for free

A letter was supposed to be sent out in 2009, 2010, and 2011 to stop these practices, but has not been done.

Fire Department:

2 firefighters short
Laid off 6 civilian employees and hired 3 new ones?
Station 101 roof leaks
Station 102 roof leaks
Station 102 HVAC needs replaced
Lentils are bad at Station 101
2 staff vehicles are 9 years old
Engine 103 is 25 years old
Engine 102 has been wrecked and is 15 years old
Engine 101 is 10 years old
Medic 102 had been wrecked 2 times
Medic 101 is 12 years old
Heart monitors purchased in 1999 and are outdated.
Lifepak 500 is obsolete and can no longer be services

Parks Department

No Capital Assets inventory
Rated as below average by park board
Skateboard Park is outdated with a recommendation to remove by our liability carrier
Creek side shelter roofs and wood are weathered
Restroom set on fire 11/16/11 and was not reported to our insurance carrier until 12/20/11
Maintenance building roof leaks
Creek wall is washing away by the ball diamond
Dump Truck is 27 years old
Off road vehicle has the motor blown
Non compliant for ADA on playground equipment
Non compliant for ADA at Hartman Field

City Hall:

No Capital Assets inventory
West roof leaks above 806 Main
Foundation leaks
No AC or coil at 802 Main first floor
Floor deteriorated by the kitchen
Outside lighting broken and non-functional
Drainage is poor
Marion County Health Department reports are on line show mold throughout the building until 2010.

Senior Citizens Center:

No Capital Asset inventory
Bus is 9 years old and in having mechanical problems
The canopy needs repair on the west end

Lack of part time help minimizes services

Police Department

2 officers short

Large investment in new cars for 2013 and 2014 with no preparation

Behind on Grants that have been awarded

Dispatch center was closed in 2010

There is no 24 hour front lobby person

May lose our reporting through the City of Lawrence

Shooting range ventilation system needs updated

Men's locker room needs remediation

This is just scratching the surface. Our employee's personnel manual, code of ordinances, city policies and record keeping are absolutely terrible. As a matter of fact, we cannot find some records dating back before 2008. We are also having problems locating records pursuant to the first two years of the RDC. This is questionable at best, and we have asked for help. We have also come across 71 storage box lids in our storage area without boxes attached. You are welcome to view these items as they are sitting off to the side in the storage area. On our very first day, we asked for an audit of the Sewage Works Account, Corporation Account, General Fund Account, RDC, Main Street Revolving Loan Program and the City Court.

Now for the good news:

We have had several meetings since the election with individuals, companies, and with elected officials. We have met with;

Amtrak Officials

Congressman Carson (4 times)

Senator Lugar's office (2 times)

Mayor Ballard

Mayor Ballard's Liaison (3 times)

City Council at Large Representatives

Crossroads engineers (2 times)

Simms Entertainment (2 times)

Chocola Representatives

Franciscan Alliance (3 times)

Community Health Network (2 times)

Army Corp of Engineers

Chamber of Commerce

Quench

City Securities

CITE

We have had 2 department head meetings

2 Department of Public Works meetings
Walker and Associates
Moorehouse Body Shop
BG Firearms
Stellar Communities
Tiger Grant
Cops Grant
Safer Act
DHS Grant
Safe Neighborhoods
Community Block Grant
Safe Route to School
Our Town
Neighborhood Assistance
Eckstein Shoes
Lifebridge Community
Best Equipment
United Consulting Engineers

All of these meetings were to help move our city forward.

I want to mention our Departments. We have some very dedicated department heads who are anxious to serve each one of you. During our recent department head meetings, we have instilled into each department head how our job is to serve the general public and that message has been passed on to the employees of our city. No better example of that is to look at the recent ice and snow events and our city streets.

But, the far bigger change is in how our city conducts business. We no longer hire people, give raises or promotions, unless the Board of Works approves them. We no longer pay Corporation claims until the Board of Works approves them. Our Board of Works members ask questions, and that is how it should be.

We have become very open and accessible. Our new website www.beechgrove.com is very well done. We now have a Mayors Call Center that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can download minutes of meetings and review claims as early as the next day after they are approved. You only have to wait one day to watch a replay of a meeting. We are beginning to televise more and more meetings for your viewing so you can track what is happening in our city. This is a far cry from the previous 8 years and everyone knows it. This is how it should have been all along.

Our Commission and Boards have also changed political agendas and are no longer welcome. The only criteria to serve on any Commission or Board is to do what is in the best interest of our city. Doing what is best for the political party is one of the reasons we are in the mess we are in. Our Commissions and Boards in the future will have more of a say. I have asked our Greenscape commission to take on more of a role concerning our environment, creeks and streams, Emerson Avenue and at the roundabout.

Our Parks Board will be allowed to present it's own budget. This hasn't been done in 8 years or longer. Our Parks Board has already been invited to sit in on discussions concerning Medical Care Clinics at the Hornet Park Community Center. That would not have happened over the last 8 years and everyone here knows it.

But, probably the biggest change is with the RDC. As off of us know, the RDC was probably the biggest failure this city has seen in along time. Over 6 years of out of control spending without budgets and without oversight. We have 2 Bond Issues that will not be paid off until 2023 and 2025. We have borrowed 6.3 million dollars against these bonds and we have absolutely nothing to show for it.

No more. The people responsible for this should be held accountable for their actions.

Over the next couple of months, we will be disclosing for your viewing receipts and invoices that we have uncovered concerning the RDC that are absolutely unbelievable.

We are going to advertise meetings. The meetings are going to be held at City Hall in the Council Chambers and will be taped for viewing. The RDC will work off of a budget. They will submit minutes to the clerk treasurer for posting, and they will get back to what an RDC should be doing, redeveloping our neighborhoods and to attract businesses to our city.

I'm not going to wait for the legislature to make laws concerning local RDC's. The Beech Grove RDC will present ideas to the City Council and their invoices will be forwarded to the Board of Works for further review and payment. If and when the State Legislature passes bills pursuant to local RDC's then we will follow the State Statutes as written.

The people responsible for government over the last six years should be ashamed of themselves for allowing this to happen.

Our police department has begun community policing. We have received several comments about the increased police presence in our neighborhoods and around our city. We have taken delivery of 5 new police cars and soon are ordering 4 more vehicles. The vehicles constitute a change in the types of vehicles that will be seen in our city. We will be utilizing Chevy Tahoes. These are SUV's. Our City is in the process of implementing a victim's advocate that can help people who are victims of crimes, and soon we will be announcing a joint venture between the city of Beech Grove and the Beech Grove School Corporation. Soon we will be utilizing Grants to purchase additional in car cameras, license plate readers and possible security cameras along Emerson Avenue and in the City Park.

Our Police Department will be patrolling alleys looking for junk vehicles, trailers and boats for tagging and removal. Our Police Department will be checking up on people, especially those who are required to register as we begin to clean up our city this spring.

Over the next couple of months, we will move forward and recommend replacing Engine 103, which is 25 years old. We will also move forward and recommend replacing both ambulances and making much needed repairs to both of our fire stations. Soon, you will be seeing new command vehicles purchased for our Fire Department Command Staff. Our Community Firefighting efforts will begin this spring as our fire department will focus on children's programs and services for senior citizens.

Over the next couple of months, we will begin the process to restructure our trash program. Ordinances will be updated to reflect our current conditions. We will recommend to invest in 2 new trash trucks. A different approach to trash collection will be set out as our professional department of public works employees, come forward to explain their needs and requests. The DPW building roof will be replaced and much needed investments in our DPW are just around the corner.

In 2012, we have finally gone back to having a Parks Director. We need to get back to having good, clean and safe parks. New programs should be added so we can do as much as we can for children. New roofs will be installed on the parks maintenance building and all of the shingled roof shelters. We are going to address the continued deterioration of the creek bank by recommending rift raft be installed for stability. We will begin to make our parks compatible for the disabled.

When the weather breaks, we will begin the process of conducting Preventative Maintenance on our Sanitary Sewer System and will begin the process of making much needed repairs. This is long overdue. It will be expensive and very time consuming. But, it is something we have to do. Our local roads are in the same condition. We will have approximately \$150,000.00 to work with initially to make these repairs. This again, is something we have to do.

Several roads throughout our city need immediate attention. Here are some of our roads that are in terrible condition:

Garstang
Yazoo Drive
Andrea Drive
Oakmont Court
Woodmont Court
St. John's Court North and South
Whitewood Court
Andrea Court
Angela Court
Bellfountaine
North and South 7th Avenue
South 8th Avenue
13th Avenue
Detroit Street
Buffalo from 13th Avenue to 17th Avenue

Cleveland Street
Royal Road
23rd Avenue

Finally, we will begin the process of redoing Main Street. Hopefully, by this fall, we will begin this much needed improvement to our city. As all of you know, a Federal Grant was awarded to Beech Grove for 4.6 million dollars, leaving us a 1.2 million dollar match. Amtrak paid the city \$750,000.00 as a settlement for a storm drainage matter. This leaves us \$450,000.00 short. I will only add an additional \$250,000.00 to the match as we still have to pay an additional engineering fee of \$150,000.00 to complete this project.

Over the next several months, we will continue to make changes to our code of ordinances. We will introduce new city policies. We will negotiate new labor agreements. We will continue to invest in our employees, infrastructure and our equipment. But most of all, we will keep you in the loop on what is happening on a daily basis. I will report back to you around the first of March regarding the serious matter concerning the soon to be closed emergency room and the potential cost that it may pay for the citizens of our city. So until then, I thank you for the opportunity to serve each one of you. May God Bless You and May God Bless our City.

Thank you very much.