

Good evening and welcome to a special presentation on the State of the City for 2015.

My name is Dennis Buckley and it is my honor to serve as Mayor of the City of Beech Grove. Tonight, I want to take you back through 2014 and present to you my plans for 2015.

I must say that 2014 was as good of a year as I've seen for our city in a long time. So much was accomplished as a city and some wonderful companies invested and even re-located to our city.

We have said goodbye to some local businesses, but we also have become home to almost 50 new businesses since we began our administration in 2012, and those numbers will increase as we continue to move the city forward.

I'm very thankful for the good work that has been done by our department heads, employees, members of the board of public works and safety, elected officials, and those who have served on other boards and commissions. Without all of these folks, our city would not function the way it does.

Just as we moved our city forward with new investment and economic development, 2014 was also an outstanding year legislatively.

Our Common Council approved ordinances and resolutions addressing environmental nuisances, animals, drug free workplace, motel licensing, fair housing ordinance, park capital improvements, zoning fees, ambulance billing for out of city responses, sexual harassment, military leave, law enforcement training, heavy trash fees, brush fees, heavy trash pick up, criminal investigation fund, storm water policies, public safety tax fees, Amtrak and fees for a storm water utility.

Our Common Council also approved a budget for 2015 that is fully funded, balanced and calls for cost of living adjustments for all full time employees of 2%. Retired employees will also receive a cost of living adjustment of 2% for the second time in three years since our administration has been in office and insurance premiums for current full time employees did not increase from 2014.

This marks the third budget that our legislative body has approved with the same result -- they are balanced and fully funded. We are spending less than we are taking in, and that's a big deal.

In 2014 we continued with our commitment to invest and fix our aging infrastructure. Our fourth paving project concluded in late November with the repair of the road base on Cleveland Street. Royal Road was completely redone and the drainage

issues that have plagued the road for years have been corrected. It is truly a beautiful road to drive on.

With the fourth round of paving complete, we have invested approximately 1.4 million dollars in local road paving since our administration took office (not including Main Street).

Round five of paving will occur in the spring of 2015 with the reconstruction of Bellefontaine from Emerson Avenue west to 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the repaving of Cleveland Street from Churchman Avenue east to 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, repairs to the parking lot at the Hornet Park Community Center, repairs to the parking lot at the Senior Citizens Center, and the installation of storm sewers and reconstruction of the parking lot at the little league diamonds.

Many of you have asked when your local street will be paved, and I ask for your patience. We have so many roads that are in

poor shape that it's going to take time to get to them. We will need at least five more paving cycles to get our local streets where they need to be and then we can place all of our local streets on an inspection cycle for grading on when to schedule for re-paving.

For too long, very little was done to re-pave streets and I refuse to apply band-aid solutions to a problem that would only get worse without proper attention. We are going to properly fix our local streets correctly and that includes the base of the road so they will last for years.

In 2014 we continued to maintain and update sanitary sewers. One of the projects completed was the replacement of sanitary sewer lines at 9<sup>th</sup> and Bellefontaine. This has been a chronic problem for years and an engineer's report shows that it was recommended to be replaced in 2005, has finally been

resolved. Another major project was the installation of new pipe at 9<sup>th</sup> and Fletcher.

In 2015 it is our intent to conduct some lining of sewer lines that have plagued us for years in Park Grove, along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue at Bellefontaine, in the alley south of Albany between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, Cherry Street, 8<sup>th</sup> and Bellefontaine and with the new development of the senior community by the NRP Group, the installation of a new sanitary sewer line leaving the Amtrak facility will go a long way in reducing overflows affecting the people who reside west of Emerson Avenue and south of Alton.

In 2014 we established fees to address storm water drainage issues throughout our city. As you may know, in 2006 our city withdrew from the Marion County Storm Water District and established our own storm water utility, but until 2014 the city did not collect any fees to offset drainage issues.

Now, after establishing a funding source, we have the ability as a city to begin to address these matters. Again as I stated earlier I want to thank the Common Council for stepping up to the plate and making good decisions concerning storm water fees that will help our city for years to come.

In 2014 we addressed storm water issues at Ticen and Main, 25<sup>th</sup> at Royal Road, Royal Road in it's entirety, 18<sup>th</sup> and Buffalo, 1500 Block of Cleveland, and work is currently being done at 9<sup>th</sup> and Buffalo to correct a very serious drainage issue that has caused some of the access road to wash away.

In 2015 this project should be completed and we will focus on other serious drainage issues at Hartman Field and on Grovewood Drive. We will do what the Common Council has instructed us to do and that is every penny collected concerning storm water fees will be spent on projects to

minimize storm water issues and drainage problems that affect our city.

In 2014 we once again were very fortunate to receive funding opportunities through INDOT to make continued upgrades to our infrastructure. I'm proud of our work with state and federal government to maximize investment in our city.

Last month, our city was awarded \$791,120.00 in funding from the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization (IMPO) to install sidewalks on Churchman Avenue from Emerson Avenue east to Arlington Avenue. This is set to begin in early 2018. Adding to that was the completion of another IMPO grant and that was for "Safe Routes to School". You may have noticed sidewalks being installed across from South Grove Intermediate School, 9<sup>th</sup> and Redfern, at Beech Grove High School and at Beech Grove Middle School. We were awarded

\$508,000.00 in funding from the IMPO to add new sidewalks, and soon we will see the installation of new street and traffic signs throughout our city as yet another grant we were awarded begins. Last year the city was awarded \$775,000.00 in funding from the IMPO to conduct a ‘Sign Inventory and Replacement’ program, which means every sign in our city and the posts will be replaced. This is a result of new federal guidelines for reflectivity and is recommended to be complied with by the end of 2015.

In June of 2015 it is our intent to submit an application for funding through the IMPO for a “Cultural Trail” or Greenway that will connect important properties throughout our city together. These properties include our schools, library, parks system, Main Street, Churchman Avenue, the former hospital property and the Monastery. We have to offer options as a city including bicycles and the need to promote exercise and

fitness, plus we should be working with the City of Indianapolis to interconnect trails.

In 2015 we will also apply for funding through the IMPO to fund a “Complete Street” project on Arlington Avenue from the railroad tracks south to the intersection of Arlington and Churchman Bypass. This funding is to redo the street and intersection to accommodate the increased volume of tankers and semi’s as a result of larger investments and economic development in that area. We are asking that these large trucks stay off of Churchman Avenue as we are transforming Churchman Avenue to accommodate walkers, joggers and bicyclist.

As you can begin to see, the city will continue to transform into a walkable, livable community as all of these funding projects take shape and come online.

In 2014 the City instituted a “Compliance Division” to address environmental issues that are detrimental to having a clean city. Properties shouldn’t be allowed to be trash heaps, we shouldn’t have to tolerate cars parked in front yards or up on blocks, and people who keep their homes nice and presentable should not have to look at properties that are unkept. I would like to report that from April 1<sup>st</sup> to the end of 2014, over 1,670 inspections were conducted with a 85% compliance rate for properties cited, yes tickets were issued through our city court and some citizens were very offended and mad but as a result of this effort, our city is showing a drastic clean up from years past.

In 2015 we will continue these efforts and add an additional ordinance to further restrict public nuisances from occurring. I would be remiss if I didn’t stop and thank the Beech Grove City schools for their establishment of the “Community Clean

Up Day” in late fall. What an outstanding program and we look forward to another clean up day this spring.

In 2014 our Redevelopment Commission did some excellent work. As has happened over the past couple of years, the RDC paved roads and made infrastructure improvements in our city parks. In 2014 the RDC transferred the “Rockpile” property over to the NRP Group and a 9 Million Dollar senior community is being constructed. In 2014 the RDC dismantled any remnence of “Digital City” by removing all receivers and telephone poles associated with this failed project. In 2014 the RDC successfully withdrew from an agreement with Indianapolis Power and Light concerning ‘Digital City” which will save the city a considerable amount of money. In 2014 the RDC began the process to update the Comprehensive Redevelopment Plan for the next five years and in 2014 the Common Council for the first time approved the budget for the RDC.

In 2015 the RDC will continue to make improvements in the infrastructure of our city and the RDC will once again make improvements in our city parks. In 2015 the RDC will pay for the first year of design work on the Churchman Avenue sidewalk project, and in June of 2015 the RDC will join with the city to apply for funding for a 'Cultural Trail" or Greenway that will run through our city.

I want to sincerely thank Don Webb, Ron Mote, Cathy Chappell, Mac Bellner, Jannis King and Tammy Storey, all of whom have served over the past three years should be publicly commended for bringing dignity and accomplishment back to the Redevelopment Commission. Since our administration has been in office, the RDC has not incurred any new debt and is paying down the debt they assumed when they began their service.

In 2014 we finally had movement in our Assess Valuation (AV). Assess Valuation (AV) is the total worth of all properties and ground located in the City of Beech Grove. This is great news for our city. The only way that we are going to be able to continue to provide the services that the citizens desire and to make improvements is to grow as a city. I'm very pleased to report that our net worth is moving upwards and by the end of 2015, our Assess Valuation (AV) should be approximately \$412,700,000.00. In other words your property value is increasing and that hasn't always been the case.

Beginning in 2004 and continuing through 2013, our property values have moved downward, but now we are back on track.

This is great news for the civil city of Beech Grove, Beech Grove City Schools and our Beech Grove Public Library as all of these governmental units will be able to make investments as a result of increased Assess Valuation.

As I mentioned early in this speech, for me 2014 has been one of the best years for our city that I can remember. One of the accomplishments I'm most proud of is the new economic development investment and interest in Beech Grove.

In 2014 Kinetrex Energy, ADM Milling, and the NRP Group alone accounted for over 62 million dollars in new investments in our city and work continues with the three entities. In 2014 Community Health Network announced plans to place a medical pavilion in our city, and we are getting ready to put together some RFP's for the CSX property. Recently the folks at Kinetrex Energy positioned themselves to purchase the old Refined Metals property for redevelopment, and maybe the sale of the former St. Francis property will finally take place in 2015. It's very hard to believe that almost all this happened in 2014, and I can't wait to see what this year brings!

In 2014 our Common Council approved a budget for 2015 that held the line on property taxes. You may ask how that is possible with all of the new improvements that will take place. This is yet another reason why I believe that we are back on track as a city. In 2015 we are going to be able to make some significant improvements in our delivery of services as we are going to purchase 25 new lap top computers for police vehicles, purchase 6 more police vehicles, purchase a new ambulance, purchase a new vehicle for the senior citizens center, purchase a new 25 passenger bus for the Senior Citizens Center, purchase a second leaf machine for the Department of Public Works, and purchase a “Hot Patch” machine for the Department of Public Works to recycle milled pavement to address pot holes.

In 2014 we once again did not have a reduction in our work force for each department. We hired replacement employees

in the Fire Department, we hired a new part time employee within the Police Department for IDACS, we hired a new part time employee for the sanitation office, we hired 4 part time people for the Department of Public Works, we hired 2 people for the compliance division and we hired 1 crossing guard. As we continue to move the city forward we will see an increase in applicants who desire to work for the city and that is another significant indication that we are back on track.

I want to speak to you about the services that we provide. In 2014, as was the case in 2012 and 2013, our city services are second to none.

In 2015 our fire department is set to go through re-accreditation for EMS services as we provide simply the best pre-hospital care that you can receive. Soon we will run 2 ambulances 24 hours per day which will be an added plus

for the citizens of our city. Do to the increase in the Public Safety Tax we will purchase another new fire engine by years end which will be the second new engine purchased since I became Mayor. The fire department will also take delivery of a new ambulance in 2015, which will be the third ambulance purchased since I became Mayor as well. Along with that between 2016 and 2017 we will hire an additional 2 firefighters which is the first increase in staffing for over 10 years. As with the Police Department, we will begin the process to look into replacing Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), thermal imaging cameras, turn out gear and communication equipment beginning in mid 2016.

Our Police Department is functioning at a high level, yet the increase in Part 1 crimes has virtually stayed the same over the past year. Just within the past week, it was reported by a national news source that the City of Indianapolis has the 9<sup>th</sup>

highest murder rate in the nation. Yet our dedicated officers are holding the line on crime in our city. This is very good news compared to what we are witnessing to the north and northeast of us. We are continuing to replace police vehicles and last year the city purchased 35 trauma kits that were distributed to each police vehicle. I have been advised that 2 of the kits were placed in service since the distribution. As mentioned earlier in this speech, within the next month or so we should take delivery of 6 new police vehicles and 25 lap top computers for police vehicles that are assigned to road duty and in 2016 we will order an additional 5 police cars.

In 2015 it is our intent to install a security fence around the prisoner access lot behind the police station to provide personal safety for the police officer while transferring prisoners back and forth. Also in 2015 we will replace the front lobby door to the police station and replace with a high

security bullet proof door for added protection for police officers and employees who work in the front lobby area.

Also in the last quarter of 2015 we will begin the process of hiring part time employees to work in the front lobby of the police station from 4PM to Midnight. This is the first step to reclaiming non emergency services for our city.

In the last quarter of 2015 we will add an additional police officer to the force and we will add 2 additional police officers in 2017, marking the first additional staffing in at least 15 years. In 2004, 3 police officers retired and were not replaced so we feel incredibly good about bringing the level of sworn officers up within our Police Department.

We have to continue to protect the men and women who protect us, so as with the fire department, in mid 2016 we will begin the process of looking into replacing portable radios,

body armor and other personal safety equipment and as we speak the Police Chief is accessing body cameras to potentially place in service over the next year or so. All this is good but we have to keep up with the safety and communication improvements as they present themselves.

I need to publicly thank the Department of Public Works and Director Brad Meriwether. I think all of us realize that we simply have the best Public Works Department in Central Indiana. Our trash pick up is second to none, our tote program is monitored properly, snow removal and salt purchasing is excellent as well, brush pick up and heavy trash removal goes beyond what most municipalities would even consider handling, and our leaf pick up program has been excellent as well. The city has made major investments in equipment and grounds to make our Department of Public Works so much better and we have actually saved money and become much more efficient in our service delivery.

But there's more to come.

In 2015 we are looking to purchase a hot patch machine so we can begin to recycle road millings so filling potholes once reported can be filled within a 48 hour time frame, and a second leaf machine should be purchased in 2015 to complete our overhaul of that very popular program. In 2015 we will sub contract street sweeping. We will save on wages and employee benefits, save over \$210,000.00 on the purchase of a new street sweeper and we will drastically reduce our requirements within the MS-4 reporting program for waste management disposal of items collected during normal street sweeping operations.

Now I want to tell you about something I'm really excited we'll be doing this year.

In 2015, we will begin the process of becoming compliant with IDEM concerning the “Clean Community” challenge. As part of this program we will introduce curb side recycling to single and double family dwellings, municipal buildings, parks and recreation and to special events that run throughout our city.

Our city needs to be a better steward of the environment, and we have to change the way we approach trash. We are delivering way too much trash to Covanta and the landfill that can be recycled, so in August of this year we will embark on a much anticipated program to provide recycling as an option to all of you. This is yet another excellent program that will benefit all of us and the cost to provide recycling to you will be absorbed by the Sewage Works Department.

In 2014 our city parks continued to flourish and more and more people are visiting our park system, and I can't say that I blame them.

I'm told that Challis Park is the second most popular park in Marion County, and I can certainly see why. Soccer, baseball, flag football, volleyball, basketball, fireworks, family reunions, birthday parties, wedding ceremonies, summer concert series, park programs concerning nature and the dog park are common attractions when you visit our park system. Special thanks goes to Tom Hannon who works tirelessly to maintain and upgrade our city parks, and to being sensitive to nature and the environment.

In 2015 there is much more to come. It is our intent to repair the parking lot at the Hornet Park Community Center, replace the water lines at the creek side shelter in the main park, replace the water line at Hartman Field, remove the asphalt from the old tennis courts in the main park, install additional playground equipment at Challis Park, install a new restroom

facility at the hilltop shelter in the main park, and reconstruct the parking lot at Hartman Field, which is home to Beech Grove Little league.

In 2014 our Senior Citizens Center continued to thrive and become even busier as a place for seniors to congregate.

Within the past year or so, one of the senior centers downtown closed so we are now home to more visitors. Senior services our vital to the aging and programs concerning theft, fraud, financial management, wellness, health are even more critical that we present. In 2014 the folks at the Senior Citizens Center established computer work stations so seniors can have access to the internet for there needs. In 2014 the Senior Citizens Center partnered with the John Boner Community Center and the United Way and became a location that citizens of all ages can come to for heating assistance in the winter months. What a wonderful service that is being provided at our Senior Citizens Center.

In 2015, we will continue to make it better. Soon the transportation vehicle will be replaced and as we make this presentation work is being done to purchase a new 25 passenger bus for transportation purposes. As with each department, I'm very grateful for the work that has been done concerning our senior citizens and I have a strong desire for that to continue.

For the last three years we have been continually updating all of our departments and it is showing. We are positioning ourselves to take the lead in city services. I don't want to be in the middle of the pack, I want to be out front. The citizens of Beech Grove are very fortunate to have these services provided to them and as with all of our departments and dedicated employees, we must also continue to make it safer and we must continue to offer advances in wages and benefits. It's the right thing to do.

In closing I want to recap my vision for Beech Grove over the next five years.

In 2015 we will introduce recycling and begin the quest to comply with IDEM'S "Clean Community Challenge".

We will begin the design phase of the Churchman Avenue sidewalk installation program. These new sidewalks will be installed in the summer of 2018.

Work will be completed on the "Safe Routes to School" program and the "Sign Inventory and Replacement Program.

In 2015 the City and the RDC will come together to apply for funding through INDOT and the IMPO for a "cultural trail' or Greenway throughout our city. Should we be successful we will begin the design phase and hold public meetings for citizen input. This project would be under construction in 2019.

In 2015 the City will apply for funding to do a “Complete Street” project through INDOT and the IMPO for Arlington Avenue. This will be in conjunction with Kinetrex Energy and the large amount of economic development that is taking place in our Industrial Park. Should this project be awarded, design work will begin immediately This project would also be under construction in 2019.

In 2016 the new senior community “Beech Grove Station” should have its grand opening and the City should be announcing another development by the NRP Group elsewhere in our city.

In mid 2016 we will begin the process to replace firefighting structural turn out gear, self contained breathing apparatus, thermal imaging cameras, portable radios for both police and fire, body armor and possibly purchase body cameras as well.

In 2017 our city should apply through OCRA to become a “Stellar Community” . Its alright for the city and RDC to join together for the betterment of our city and begin the process to re-invest in our neighborhoods. Upon until now we did not qualify to apply for funding because we did not have adequate ordinances in place concerning fair housing, drug free work place, and sexual harrassment. These ordinances are now in place that will allow us to proceed.

In 2020 the City and our Parks Board must work together with Beech Grove City Schools to develop and construct a new Community Center. This center would allow residents of Beech Grove to play basketball, volleyball, soccer, exercise, swim, hold meetings, banquets and conduct Early Childhood Development programs.

As you can see, much has been done over the past three years but we have a long way to go as a city. We are back on track and we are getting ready to move to the front of the pack. As my term as your Mayor concludes at years end, I want to pass on to you that it has been an honor serving in this position and your trust in me is very humbling.

I thank you and God bless each one of us and God bless our beautiful city.