

## **City of Highland Heights, Ohio 2018 State of the City Address**

Dear Residents:

Each year as I prepare my annual State of the City report, I take the opportunity to reflect upon the many accomplishments of our City and its departments over the last year, and to look forward to things to come. Within this report, I will provide a brief overview of the City's financial status, as well as information and highlights from our various departments. I am extremely honored to have served as Mayor and Safety Director for the City of Highland Heights for the past 14 years. I am proud to call this city my home for more than 50 years.

Late in 2017, Progressive Insurance announced a major expansion project at one of their Alpha Drive locations. Slated for groundbreaking in the first half of 2018, Progressive will begin construction of a new 48,000 sq. ft., two-story office building with an adjacent parking garage for a total capital investment of more than \$20M. The new structure will house up to 700 employees, with an additional payroll of roughly \$19 M. Anticipated completion of the project is 4Q 2019.

While 2017 was a great year for the City, on a sad note, we lost an esteemed former public official with the passing of Mayor Virginia K. Swanson. Virginia served the City of Highland Heights, and its residents, as an elected official for 25 years. During her time with the City, she served in every possible elected position and committee. She was elected as the first female Mayor of the City in 1988, and served in that role for eight years.

I am honored to have worked with Virginia and to have had her as a mentor. During her time as Mayor, and my time as a Council Representative and Council President, she taught me many valuable lessons, including the importance of the Mayor and Council working cohesively for the betterment of the community. Not only am I a better person for having known and worked with Virginia, the City of Highland Heights is the great City that it is today, due in large part to the incomparable dedication, compassion and determination she demonstrated in her service to the community.

### **Financial Overview**

The City of Highland Heights remains financially strong. Our 2017 revenue was \$13.66M which was down slightly from 2016, largely due to timing of receipts from the Regional Income Tax Agency. Expenditures from the General Fund for operating expenses were \$11.73M with an additional \$2.45m being transferred to the Capital Fund.

I have presented a budget to City Council with an estimated surplus of over \$110k. Our Legislative and Finance Committee has recommended the passage of the budget as presented. I expect the approval should occur in March of this year. Within this budget is \$2M in Capital Expenditures which includes approximately \$1M for road improvements. Other funds are budgeted for the purchase of three new police cruisers, as well as, updating and replacing equipment in the Fire, Police, and Service Departments. Planned improvements and

expenditures in the Community Park include a bocce ball court, improvements to the sound system for the ball fields, and the purchase of replacement chairs and back up pumps for the pool. Long overdue improvements are also planned at the Municipal Complex with the replacement of the concrete walkways and new landscaping.

## **Building Department**

The Building Department, under the direction of Building Commissioner Dale Grabfelder, is staffed with a full-time Assistant Building Commissioner, a part-time Building Inspector, and a full-time Administrative Assistant. The Building Department 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 handles the issuance of all permits for both residential and commercial construction.

In 2017, the department issued 520 residential permits (11 for new home construction) and 107 commercial permits. These permits generated total receipts of \$232,854 with an estimated construction value of \$10.2M. The final phase of new home construction in the Aberdeen area began in 2017 with the development of North Legend Court, located off of Miner Road and near the Lake County border. The eventual construction of 13 new homes by K. Hovanian will complete the development of more than 700 homes in the Aberdeen community.

The Building Department is responsible for enforcing all zoning laws, property maintenance codes, storm water management plans, including roadside ditch and rear yard swale maintenance, and the issuance of right of way permits. With the help of a part-time inspector, the department issued 194 violation notices, primarily identifying violations and enforcing of our zoning code and residential and business maintenance codes.

## **Fire Department**

The Fire Department, under the direction of Chief William Turner, continues to provide superior services to the residents and businesses of our community. Chief Turner also serves as the Emergency Coordinator for the City. In this role, Chief Turner is responsible for planning, developing, and implementing city-wide policies and programs related to emergency management to meet County, State and Federal mandates.

In 2017, we increased our staff with the addition of one additional full-time firefighter/paramedic. This brings the department staffing to 19 full-time employees and approximately six part-time employees. Staffing includes one chief, one captain, four lieutenants and sixteen firefighters. Based upon promotional testing in 2017, Lieutenant William Bernhard was selected to replace Captain Lee Molnar upon his retirement from the force. Firefighter David Saltenis was promoted to Lieutenant to replace Lt. Bernhard.

The department operates on a 24 hour on, 48 hour off basis with a minimum of four firefighters per shift. The Department provides fire prevention services, public education, hazardous materials response and mitigation, technical rescue and preparedness, and response to both man-made and natural disasters. Our firefighters are cross-trained and provide both fire suppression and advanced emergency medical care. Our paramedics operate under the medical control of the University Hospital system; however, they will transport residents to any local hospital, under normal circumstances. In 2017, the Fire Department responded to 1,268 ambulance service calls, and 273 fire calls.

The Highland Heights Fire Department has been a member of the Hillcrest Technical Rescue Team since its inception. However, in 2017, the Hillcrest Technical Rescue Team merged with the Heights Region Technical Rescue team to form the Heights-Hillcrest Technical Rescue Team for efficiency and cost savings. This newly formed team is comprised of approximately 75 Firefighter/Paramedics from the cities of Beachwood, Cleveland Hts., Euclid, Gates Mills, Highland Heights, Lyndhurst, Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, Pepper Pike, Richmond Heights, Shaker Heights, South Euclid, University Heights, and Willoughby Hills. They are trained in specialty rescues such as Swift Water Rescue, Building Collapse, Confined Space, Ice, Dive, Trench, Rope and Tower Rescue.

In 2017, a new 2018 International/Horton ambulance was purchased for use in the Fire Department. This vehicle, which has an expected lifespan of 12-14 years, features state-of-the-art equipment and provides our paramedics with the tools needed to provide the best service possible for our community.

As a part of a community outreach effort, the Fire Department offers free CPR training and fire extinguishing training to residents and businesses within the City. In 2018, the department will begin promoting the National Safety Initiative "Stop the Bleed". Launched in Oct. 2015 by the White House, "Stop the Bleed" is intended to encourage bystanders to become trained, equipped and empowered to help in a bleeding emergency before professional help arrives. This training program is being offered to all businesses in the community at no charge. The department also continues to work with, and support, the efforts of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), Boy Scout Troop 461 and provides on-site aluminum can recycling for the Aluminum Cans for Burned Children (ACBC).

## **Police Department**

The Highland Heights Police Department is led by Chief James Cook. Chief Cook is responsible for the overall effective and efficient management of the Department. He is assisted in this role by Lieutenant Dennis Matejic, an Administrative Assistant, and a Communications Specialist. The Department consists of 46 employees, 26 of which are sworn police officers and an additional 20 civilian and part-time employees. Emergency services are provided by the Police and Fire Departments through a 24 hour dispatching center located in our Communications Center.

In November 2017, the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) awarded the Police Department, Law Enforcement Accreditation. CALEA accreditation is only awarded after an extensive, comprehensive and voluntary process focused on areas of policy, procedure, operations and management. Known as the "gold standard", less than 4 percent of the nation's police departments have earned this award. In order to achieve this accreditation, the Police Department had to demonstrate compliance with approximately 200 national standards over a three-year evaluation period. Congratulations to Chief Cook and his staff!

State Mandated Standards were implemented by the Ohio Task Force on Community Relations in 2017, by Governor Kasich. Our department follows the Ohio State Mandated Standards on Community Policing Programs, Communications Center Dispatcher Training and the Use of Body Worn Camera. The state standards were developed after a series of incidents in Ohio and around the nation.

In December, our Department in conjunction with the local Mayors and Police Departments of Lyndhurst, Mayfield Hts., and Mayfield Village, launched the Safe Passages Initiative. The program encourages opioid addicted persons to seek help through the Police Departments. Individuals can receive expedited placement into an appropriate detox or treatment program without fear of arrest. The Safe Passages Initiative is overseen by SPAN's Drug Enforcement Unit which will continue to aggressively target drug traffickers.

The Police Department continues to provide ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate) training to businesses and schools within our community. The ALICE program is designed to provide specialized, proactive, option-based strategies to students, teachers and officials in response to any violent intruder. In 2017, two active threat scenario training sessions were held at St. Paschal Baylon for our police officers and fire personnel.

The Police Department also continues to provide Drug Awareness Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) to students at Millridge Elementary and St. Paschal Baylon Elementary Schools. The program offers guidance to children on drug awareness and self-esteem issues. Since its inception in 1992, the program has graduated 4,510 students. The Department also continues to provide community service programs such as the Community Policing Initiative program; whereby, officers on patrol leave a bright orange card for residents if they observe a situation that could present the opportunity for crime, such as unlocked vehicles, open garage doors, or valuables left outside. A new program added in 2017 was Coffee with a Cop. Once a month, an officer stops by the Aberdeen Crossing Assisted Living facility to visit with residents. This program has been successfully received by both residents and staff.

Special recognition was received by Officer Mark Stefanac in 2017. He received the Award of Excellence from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) for OVI enforcement. In addition, for more than 10 years, the Police Department has been awarded the AAA East Central Community Traffic Safety (Gold) Award. This award is presented to communities for their efforts toward making their streets safer through reduced traffic and pedestrian accidents, safety promotions and educating the public on safety. Congratulations Mark!

In 2017, there was a reduction in crime within the City. There were seven reported residential burglaries and two breaking and entering situations. The Police Department had approximately 18,940 requests for service in 2017. The total breakdown of service requests is as follows:

Assistance Related to Criminal Events	745
Assistance Related to Citizen Conflict	277
Assistance Related to Traffic Safety	6,387
Assistance Related to Miscellaneous Emergencies	4,031
Assistance Related to General Duties	5,629
Assistance Related to Jail Activities	1,291

In addition, the Police Department operates and manages a twelve-day Jail Facility certified by the State of Ohio Bureau of Adult Detention. During 2017, 338 inmates were incarcerated in the Jail Facility for a total of 9,980 hours.

### **Service Department**

The Highland Heights Department of Public Service serves a growing community of more than 8,400 residents, with more than 3,400 homes, and approximately 200 businesses. The department is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of the publicly owned

infrastructure and land, including more than 90 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 nine full-time laborers, part-time and seasonal employees, an administrative assistant, and the Assistant Director, under the leadership of the Director of Public Service, Thom Evans. Department personnel are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year, to respond to the emergency needs of the community.

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 service in 2017. Additionally, the Service Department conducted residential drop-off and collection programs at various times throughout the year for brush, computer, hazardous waste, and shredding.

The City's curbside solid waste and recycling program is contracted through Kimble Recycling and Disposal Inc. Kimble has provided service to our City since 2004. In 2015, the City entered into a new contract with Kimble for the collection of solid waste and recyclables via a two cart, automated collection system. Current analysis of the program shows a 40% increase in recycling within the community. Since there is a charge for the disposal of solid waste and no charge for the processing of recyclables, any increase in recycling results in a decrease in waste collection costs. The City pays a per unit monthly cost for \$6.41 for solid waste collection, and \$3.16 for recycling collection, and \$40.37 per ton for the disposal of solid waste. There is no disposal charge for recycling collected. The total program cost in 2017 was \$545,789.92

A two-year project to replace the water main on Highland Road was completed in 2017. The project included the removal and replacement of the water main which services homes and businesses along Highland Road as well as adjacent subdivisions. The contractor will return in the spring to re-address restored areas and any miscellaneous outstanding work. This project was funded in large part by a grant and interest free loan the city received.

The 2017 Road Program included the resurfacing of Locklie and Lynden Drives, concrete repairs, catch basin repairs, and crack sealing on Aberdeen Blvd., Alpha Dr., Wilson Mills Rd., and Bishop Rd., as well as miscellaneous repairs throughout the City. The road project was awarded to Catts Construction at a bid price of \$574,303.00.

Last year, a major maintenance project was undertaken in Glen Eden Detention Basin 19. In the fall, the sewer district hired contractors to remove trees, debris, and silt buildup in the channel. The project helped return the basin to its original intended design capacity.

And finally, the 2017 street tree program included the installation of 62 trees at various locations throughout the City.

### **Storm Water Management**

Storm Water Management includes many aspects, but the main purpose is to reduce or minimize the discharge of pollutants to rivers and streams. Our Storm Water Manager Chuck Zibbel works with various regional groups such as the Euclid Creek Watershed Council, Cuyahoga County Soil and Water District and the NEORSD Watershed Advisory Committee to comply with the Storm Water Management Plan and the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan.

There were minimal sanitary sewer backups in 2017 mainly due to smaller rain events during the year, both in intensity and duration. As a result, storm and sanitary sewers were not overloaded which can cause sewer backups. The City continues to work with the County to investigate and identify sources of I/I and making corrective repairs which is important in reducing the potential for backups when a large rain event occurs.

## **Community Park**

Along with the Park and Recreation Committee, Recreation Director David Ianiro is responsible for planning and coordinating all the recreation events within the City. With the help of program managers, directors, commissioners, seasonal employees and volunteer coaches, the Recreation Department offers a wide range of quality recreational programs and entertainment for all to enjoy.

Along with the regular summertime park activities of baseball, softball, tennis, swimming and day camp, the Recreation Department also offers special events each year such as Family Fun Nights at the Pool, the Neighborhood Bicycle Ride, and Family Movie Night at the Park. The Community Park is also the site of the annual Highland Heights Community Day. This one-day event is sponsored by the City of Highland Heights and includes food, fun and entertainment for all. The event concludes with a fantastic firework display to cap off the day of activities.

The community pool, located within the park, is open to Highland Heights and Mayfield School District residents and their guests. The zero-entry pool is approximately 10,000 square feet. Please refer to the 2018 Summer Sizzler for information on pool passes, swimming lessons, tennis lessons, and day camp, as well as other summer activities.

In 2017, three capital improvement projects were undertaken at the pool. The first project was the successful replacement of much of the pool's underground piping which was found to be leaking. Next, was the restoration of the waterslide. The original slide structure was refurbished and painted, and a new finish was applied to the slide. The third project, which is currently underway, involves upgrades and replacement of equipment in the mechanical room.

Registration for our summer recreation programs is currently underway. Residents may register in person at City Hall or by using the online registration link on our website at [www.highlandhts.com](http://www.highlandhts.com). We are fortunate that our City offers such a wide range of quality programs and activities for children and adults of all ages to enjoy.

## **City Hall/Municipal Complex**

As I read previous "State of the City" reports that I have issued, I have been negligent to mention my staff at City Hall. Our City Hall Receptionist, Mary Velotta, has served in this capacity since 1980 which has been my entire tenure as well as under the administrations of Mayors Hogg, Swanson and Hughes. Mary also works closely with our seniors, assisting with many functions through the Community Partnership on Aging and the 50 Plus Club. Mary has been a resident of Highland Heights since 1961.

For the past six years, I have had the distinct privilege of working with Marlene Kole. Marlene is my Executive Assistant, but she is much more than that. It may sound cliché, but Marlene is the glue that holds the office together and the oil that keeps it running smoothly. In addition to her duties of assisting me, Marlene also coordinates, publishes and writes most of the information in our city newsletter. She has turned this publication into a wealth of information for residents and

businesses. She is also responsible for most of the content and pictures on our website. Marlene is a long-time resident of the city and volunteers at many city functions as well as many charitable organizations. I feel very fortunate to have Marlene as part of the City Hall staff.

The Community Center is available for rental by residents and businesses of Highland Heights. Community Center Coordinator Gina Bissell is responsible for booking all events and activities at the Center. Information about the amenities and rental costs of the Community Center are available on our website at [www.highlandhts.com](http://www.highlandhts.com).

Each year, I am honored to participate in our annual Memorial Day ceremony held at the Peace Memorial where we honor veterans, current military personnel and their families for their service to our country. In addition, "Music at the Gazebo" events were held during the summer and a special lighting and musical display was broadcast from the Gazebo once again this year during the holidays. I would like to thank the Highland Heights Garden Club for the beautification of the Municipal Complex grounds each year with the planting of flowers throughout the area. They are also responsible for the rental of the plots within the Community Garden which enables residents to grow produce for their own consumption or to donate to charitable groups.

In 2017, plans were developed and bids were submitted for the outside renovation of the Municipal Complex. The project which is planned for 2018, will include the replacement of concrete sidewalks and landscaping around the buildings within the complex.

### City Council

I am privileged to have the opportunity to work with seven dedicated public servants who serve as City Council representatives. Council and I have a strong working relationship and we collectively work together toward the mutual goal of meeting the needs of the residents of Highland Heights. Below is a list of our City Council members and the committees on which they serve:

Cathy S. Murphy, Ward 1	440-442-0377	<a href="mailto:cmurphy@highlandhts.com">cmurphy@highlandhts.com</a>
Leo R. Lombardo, Ward 2	440-449-2881	<a href="mailto:llombardo@highlandhts.com">llombardo@highlandhts.com</a>
Robert Mastrangelo, Ward 3	440-442-2854	<a href="mailto:rmastrangelo@highlandhts.com">rmastrangelo@highlandhts.com</a>
Ann D'Amico, Ward 4	440-461-4224	<a href="mailto:adamico@highlandhts.com">adamico@highlandhts.com</a>
President Chuck Brunello, Jr., At Large	440-567-7771	<a href="mailto:cbrunello@highlandhts.com">cbrunello@highlandhts.com</a>
Edwin V. Hargate, At Large	440-473-5476	<a href="mailto:ehargate@highlandhts.com">ehargate@highlandhts.com</a>
Lisa Marie Stickan, At Large	440-759-1106	<a href="mailto:lstickan@highlandhts.com">lstickan@highlandhts.com</a>
Regina Cahill, Clerk of Council	440-461-2440	<a href="mailto:rcahill@highlandhts.com">rcahill@highlandhts.com</a>

Legislative and Finance: Ed Hargate, Chairman  
Chuck Brunello  
Cathy Murphy

Safety and Service: Lisa Stickan, Chairperson  
Ed Hargate  
Bob Mastrangelo

Drainage: Cathy Murphy, Chairperson  
Ann D'Amico  
Leo Lombardo

## **Conclusion**

In addition to serving as Mayor, I also serve as the Safety Director for the City. Many cities, similar in size, have mayors that also serve in this dual capacity role. Within the community, I currently serve as President of the Suburban Police Anticrime Network (SPAN) Eastern Suburban Regional Council of Government. SPAN is a unit comprised of members from the following Hillcrest Police Departments: Gates Mills, Highland Heights, Lyndhurst, Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, and Richmond Heights. SPAN members are highly trained and skilled in special weapons and tactics, bomb squad procedures, hostage negotiation, accident investigation, and drug enforcement.

Within our school community, it is my pleasure to serve as a member of the Excel TECC Advisory Council, as well as the Advisory Council on Instructional Innovation. And finally, I also serve on the Council of Government for the Community Partnership on Aging (CPA). CPA is an organization that was established in 1978 (formerly the Tri-City Consortium on Aging) and was organized to meet the needs of senior adults, their caregivers, and families.

It is truly an honor to serve as the Mayor of Highland Heights, which was once again recognized by Cleveland Magazine in 2017 as one of the top ten suburbs in the Cleveland area. This achievement is the result of the dedication and hard work by all the city departments and staff to provide every resident and business within the City with the very best service available in a fiscally responsible manner. We take great pride in our City, and we promise to continue to make this City a place that everyone can be proud to call home.

Most Sincerely,

Scott E. Coleman