

**2021 STATE OF THE CITY
CITY OF HIGHLAND HEIGHTS, OHIO**

Good evening and welcome to our 2021 State of the City Address and Meet the Mayor event. This evening I will be presenting the city affairs and information pertaining to 2021, as well as highlighting some current events taking place in our community. Before we begin, I would like to introduce the following individuals:

- Council President At Large – Ann D’Amico
- Council At-Large Member – Ed Hargate
- Council At-Large Member – Sean Milroy
- Ward 1 Council Member – Carol Ganser
- Ward 2 Council Member – Frank DiLalla
- Ward 3 Council Member – Anthony DeLisio
- Ward 4 Council Member – Ann D’Amico
- Lydia Ann Donatelli, Clerk of Council
- Police Chief Dennis Matejcic
- Lyndhurst Municipal Court Judge – Dominic Coletta
- Dr. Michael Barnes – Superintendent, Mayfield City Schools
- Fire Chief William Turner
- Finance Director – Joe Filippo
- Law Director – Michael Lograsso
- Assistant Law Director – Tim Paluf
- City Prosecutor – Michael Lograsso
- Building Commissioner – Dale Grabfelder
- City Engineer – Brian Mader
- Service Director – Brian Belfiore
- Recreation Director – David Ianiro
- Executive Assistant – Jolene Greve
- Community Center Coordinator – Sunni D’Angelo
- Receptionist and Highland Heights Seniors Coordinator – Mary Velotta
- Sunny Simon - Member of Cuyahoga County Council
- Dean Hayne - Regional External Affairs from First Energy Corp.

As the Mayor and Safety Director of the City of Highland Heights, it is my responsibility to prepare an annual State of the City report for the residents and businesses of our community. I am honored to be your Mayor and to call the City of Highland Heights my home for over 25

years. Our city is a close-knit community that is a wonderful place to live, raise a family, work, or even own a business.

Not only do we realize the unique and special qualities our city has to offer, but in 2021, Cleveland Magazine once again recognized our city as a Top 20 suburb in their annual "Rating the Suburbs" report. This rating is based on many factors including safety, the quality of school systems, walkability, and median home values, amongst other factors. In addition, the City of Highland Heights was rated as one of the Top 10 wealthiest suburbs according to Crain's Cleveland Business. We appreciate this recognition, as this type of positive PR greatly increases the desirability of our community when prospective home buyers and businesses are looking to relocate.

Recognition like this would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of all the city departments and staff, as well as each and every resident taking pride in making their community a great place to live, so that we can continue to be "The City with Pride and Promise".

As we all know, 2021 continued to be challenging on many levels. A return to normalcy was of utmost importance to me for our residents. One of the first events that returned in 2021 was our annual Memorial Day Observance Ceremony. This solemn event has been held at our Veterans Peace Memorial for the last 27 years. On Memorial Day 2021, a large crowd gathered together on a beautiful, sunny day to remember the fallen and honor them for their ultimate sacrifice. At the completion of our ceremony, I was pleased to announce the launch of our Hometown Heroes Banner Program. This program would proudly recognize our current and former residents who have served our country in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and National Guard. The banners would be displayed along Highland Road beginning in May 2022. I am pleased to announce that 26 banners were purchased and are currently displayed on Highland Road. The positive response and compliments we have received are heartwarming.

Our 2021 Summer Recreational Programs were full, and the park was full of excitement as our baseball, softball, t-ball, tennis, pickleball, day camp, and opening of our swimming pool took place.

Since we were unable to celebrate our Centennial Birthday in 2020, we were finally able to do so in 2021 upon the return of our annual Community Day and Parade event, which was held on Saturday, September 11th. This traditional community event is a full day of food, fun, entertainment, and fireworks at dusk. Our parade made its return after a 12-year hiatus, to a welcoming crowd along Wilson Mills Road. In addition, we honored our Highland Heights residents who were nurses, doctors, and first responders as our Grand Marshalls.

One of the major projects we took on in 2021 was the City Council Chamber Renovation Project. The City Council Chamber was original, dating back to 1984. Unfortunately, COVID-19 changed the way we were able to meet and conduct meetings. The full renovation took approximately 6 months to complete and includes all new lighting, audio visual technology upgrades, improved acoustics, new dais for members and Council and staff, new residential seating, carpet, and paint, and a more conducive layout. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held on December 14, 2021, in honor of the completion of the project. Please be sure to stop in and see the newly renovated Council Chamber if you have not yet had the opportunity.

An initiative that I felt worthy of exploring for our community was the possibility of adding walking trails in our community park. In September of 2021, the city hosted a Town Hall meeting to conduct a Park Connectivity Study which provided an opportunity for our residents share their input and feedback on this potential project. With nearly 50 acres of newly preserved areas connected to the Highland Heights Community Park, we have new opportunities to connect to and through the park. Park access for the community is important as we evaluate connections that balance natural resource protection and park access. The meeting was productive, and we received some very good feedback. An online survey was also available to the residents who were unable to attend the meeting. This past spring, the city applied for a recreational trail grant. I am pleased to share that we were recently awarded \$200K (\$100K from State Capital Improvement Fund and \$100K from the Cuyahoga County ARPA Funds Grant Program) towards this project. The West Creek Conservancy and Friends of Euclid Creek were extremely helpful during this process.

In 2021, our city welcomed several new staff members. Sunni D'Angelo joined my Administrative Team as the Community Center Coordinator. Sunni handles all Community Center bookings and events, as well as Music at the Gazebo, and leads our city in planning the annual Memorial Day and Observance Ceremony.

In addition, Michael Lograsso was appointed as our new Prosecutor. Michael's work ethic, loyalty, and reputation made him an excellent choice for this position.

2021 was also an election year for the city's At-Large Council Representatives. Councilman Ed Hargate and Sean Milroy were re-elected to another 4-year term. Ann D'Amico, having served as the city's Ward 4 representative for the last eight years, ran for an At-Large position and was elected to a four-year term. At the end of 2021, Council President, and At-Large Representative Lisa Marie Stickan stepped down from City Council after serving our community for twelve years.

Financial Overview

The City of Highland Heights remained financially strong in 2021 with a General Fund balance of just over \$8.3M. Our local city taxes were up approximately \$185K or 1.7%. The city received \$438,000 in ARPA funding, in which we used \$105,000 for technology upgrades and new seating in our Council Chamber.

We were pleased to welcome Metropolitan Veterinary Hospital to the City of Highland Heights. Metropolitan Veterinary Hospital, which has their main location in Copley, near Akron. Metropolitan completely renovated and moved into the former Lancer Insurance building on Alpha Drive late last summer. The City of Highland Heights entered into a CRA agreement with Metropolitan Veterinary Hospital, with plans to bring in over 65 employees by 2025.

In January 2021, Lake Business Products moved their headquarters to Highland Heights. The city entered into a grant agreement with Lake Business Products, which is located on Miner Road in the former Alloy Bellows building. Lake Business Products plans to bring 70+ employees to our community.

With the pandemic in full swing and people working from home, and the uncertainty of income tax collections, we took a conservative approach to our spending. Our expenditures for 2021 were about \$1,000,000 less than 2020. Our 2021 revenues were up about \$550,000 over 2020. Revenues exceeded our expenditures by \$767,000.

With our credit rating being Aa2 and the interest rates being as low as they have ever been, we took out a \$7.9M 15-year bond at a 1.48% interest cost. This was used to pay off our one year note and use \$6.2 million for a three-year capital program.

The \$6.2M allocation was divided up amongst the administration as well as all of the departments within the municipality. I requested that each department provide an estimated projection of their needs over this 3-year program. In addition to the department's needs, we also identified necessary road work that required attention during this timeframe. To date, we are currently on schedule to not exceed any of the requested needs. I would like to thank our Department Heads, Administration, and City Council for their cooperation throughout this in-depth process.

Building Department

The Building Department, under the direction of Building Commissioner Dale Grabfelder, has a full-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 2021, the department issued 734 residential permits (6 for new home construction) and 134 commercial permits. These permits generated total receipts of \$471,463 with an estimated construction value of \$9.2M.

In 2020, a Residential Rental Program was implemented. From the information obtained through the county for 2021, we had a total of 73 rental properties within the city or 2.0% of the total properties in Highland Heights. Of the 73 rental properties, we were able to register 48. Of the 48 registered rental properties, 48 inspections/re-inspections were performed. The goal for 2021 was to make sure all rental properties were registered with the city.

The Building Department by ordinance tracks and permits foreclosure filings within the city. This information is shared with the Highland Heights Fire and Police Departments. In 2021, the Building Department received four foreclosure notifications. Of the four notifications received, only one of homes had sold.

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. Last year, the department issued 136 violation notices, primarily identifying violations, and enforcement of our zoning, residential, and business maintenance codes. As in year's past, high grass and commercial vehicles parked in residential driveways were the most common violations.

Finance Department

The city's Finance Department, under the direction of Finance Director Joseph Filippo, CPA, is established under the City Charter Article VI and as such oversees all fiscal matters of the City of Highland Heights. The Finance Department is responsible for the following:

- Administration of employee benefits
- All payroll functions

- Collection of revenues and timely payment of city liabilities
- Investment of city funds
- Management of debt

The Finance Department is comprised of four full-time staff members which include the Finance Director, Payroll Administrator, Accounts Receivable Clerk, and Accounts Payable Clerk. Our staff generates annual financial statements and assists the outside certified public accounting firm to prepare their annual audit. The Finance Department has consistently received the Ohio Auditor of State Award for excellence in financial reporting according to the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). Less than 10% of municipalities receive this award. Mr. Filippo has been a Finance Director for over 18 years, and has been with Highland Heights for 10 years.

Fire Department

The Fire Department, under the direction of Chief William Turner continues to provide superior services to the residents of our community. Chief Turner has served our community for over 33 years, the last 14 years as Chief. In addition, Chief Turner is also the Emergency Coordinator for the City. As emergency coordinator, Chief Turner is responsible for planning, developing, and implementing city-wide policies and programs related to emergency management in order to meet County, State and Federal mandates.

The Fire Department has a Public Protection Classification rating of 2, with a rating of 1 being the highest, as issued by ISO. Less than 75 departments in the state are rated a 1 or 2. I am happy to report that for the second year in a row, the department has received the “Mission Lifeline” Gold standard award from the American Heart Association for pre-hospital cardiac and stroke care provided to our residents.

Our fire fighters are cross-trained and provide both fire suppression and advanced emergency medical care. Our paramedics operate under the medical control of University Hospitals, but they will transport residents to any local hospital, under normal circumstances. The department also provides fire prevention, public education, hazardous materials response and mitigation, technical rescue and preparedness and response to both man made and natural disasters.

In addition to providing fire suppression and emergency medical services, the department is also a member of the Heights-Hillcrest Technical Rescue Team. The team comprised of approximately 75 Firefighter/Paramedics from the cities of Beachwood, Cleveland Heights, Euclid, Gates Mills, Highland Heights, Lyndhurst, Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, Pepper Pike, Richmond Heights, Shaker Heights, South Euclid, University 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.

The Fire Department continually receives praise from residents and hospital staff for their outstanding pre-hospital care. As part of a community outreach effort, Highland Heights Fire Department provides no cost CPR/AED, First Aid, Stop the Bleed and Fire Extinguishing training to both residents and businesses within the city. The department continues to work with and support the efforts of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). The Fire Department also sponsors Boy Scout Troop 461 and provides on-site aluminum can recycling for the Aluminum Cans for Burned Children (ACBC).

The current compliment of the department is twenty (20) full-time members and four (4) part time members. This includes the Chief, Assistant Chief, Administrative Assistant, four Lieutenants and thirteen firefighters. The department operates on a 24 hour on, 48 hours off basis with a minimum of four firefighters per shift.

Police Department

In 2021, the Highland Heights Police Department was headed by Chief James Cook, who was responsible for the overall effective and efficient management of the Department. He was assisted by the Lieutenant, Administrative Assistant, and Communications Specialist.

On May 16, 2021, Chief Cook announced his retirement after serving our great city for fifty-two years as a member of the Highland Heights Police Department and thirty-two years as the Chief of Police. Chief Cook lead his department as a distinguished leader, mentor, role model, and exemplary public servant to the City of Highland. Chief Cook remained on board throughout all of 2021 until he officially retired on June 3, 2022.

On June 3, 2022, I had the privilege of swearing in Dennis Matejcic as the new Police Chief. Dennis had served as Police Lieutenant since 2014 and has been with the Highland Heights Police Department since 1995. Chief Matejcic's primary responsibilities include all administrative functions and responsibilities, such as recruitment and selection, developing community relations programs and services, and overseeing all training and recruitment of sworn in officers and civilian personnel.

On June 6, 2022, Brian Dassatti was sworn in as the new Police Lieutenant. Brian had served as Police Sergeant since 2014 and has also been with the Highland Heights Police Department since 1998.

The Department consists of 49 employees, 29 are sworn police officers and an additional 20 are civilian and part-time employees. The Department's organizational structure consists of an Administrative Assistant to the Chief, Detective Bureau, Patrol Unit, Jail Facility,

Communications Specialist, Records Unit, Communications Center, and School Crossing Guards. Emergency services are provided by the Police and Fire Departments through a 24-hour dispatching center located in our Communications Center.

In November 2021, the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) awarded our department its second National Law Enforcement Accreditation Award. Known as the “gold standard”, less than 4% of the country’s police departments have earned this award. To remain compliant, an annual remote and site-based assessment is conducted by CALEA to review standards that show proof and documentation of compliance, reviewing our policies, personnel, the procedures, and activities of our officers while on duty in the community, and other critical measures of compliance with the applicable standards, and living the spirit of those standards in order to continue its CALEA Law Enforcement Accreditation status.

The Department is annually assessed by a team of law enforcement executives who inspect facilities, policies, and procedures. Currently the Department completed in July (2021) its four-year major assessment. It consisted of a detailed review again of all facility security, policies, procedures and interviews with officers and community members concerning the delivery of services to the community. The assessment focused on Use of Force, Communications, Internal Affairs, Evidence and Property and Community Involvement Programs. The department was found in compliance and received recommendation for National Accreditation. The Accreditation award by the Commission for Law Enforcement will continue for a four-year period to 2025 with annual web-based reviews.

Our Jail Facility passed all 104 inspection points in 2021 and was found to be fully in compliance by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. In 2021, there were 184 inmates incarcerated in the Facility for a total of 2,700 hours during the year.

The City continued its inclusion in a Deer Management Plan with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife and a permit was issued to harvest white-tailed deer to safely and humanely manage a biologically and socially acceptable deer population. While the subject remains sensitive, we safely and successfully culled 150 deer in 2021. For the third straight year, the deer population in our community remains the #1 complaint call I receive in my office. With that being said, we will continue to assess the deer population annually.

The Highland Heights Police Department continued its Community Relations initiatives which include the Crime Prevention Program, providing a School Resource Officer to Millridge Elementary, and the School Safety Program. The D.A.R.E. Program returned for the 2021-2022 school year, after being suspended for the 2020-2021 school year due to COVID-19 concerns.

The D.A.R.E. Program (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) is a police officer-led series of classroom lessons that teaches children from kindergarten through 12th grade how to resist peer pressure and live drug and violence-free lives. Our dedicated Police Officer will be teaching our elementary students at Millridge and St. Paschal's elementary schools for the 2022-2023 school year.

In 2021, the Police Department had approximately 15,909 requests for service. These requests break down as follows:

Assistance to Criminal Events	544
Assistance to Citizen Conflict	237
Assistance to Traffic Safety	4,727
Assistance to Emergencies	4,004
Assistance to General Duties	5,887
Assistance to Jail Activities	510

Service Department

In 2021, the City of Highland Heights Service Department, under the direction of Service Director Brian Belfiore, was able to continue and fulfill its objective of delivering superior services to residents, businesses, and the public despite the continued challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Highland Heights Department of Public Service serves a growing community of more than 8,700 residents, with more than 3,500 homes, and over 200 businesses. The department is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of the publicly owned infrastructure and public land, including more than 92 lane miles of roadway, and 112 acres of public property. The department interacts with the city's safety forces and other departments as well as county, state, federal, and other public agencies to coordinate a wide range of services in the community.

The Highland Heights Service Department is comprised of a staff of nine full-time servicemen, four part-time servicemen, seasonal employees, an Administrative Assistant, Assistant Director, and the Director of Public Service. The department provides routine and emergency public works services to residents, businesses, and visitors of our city. 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. Under the leadership of Service Director Brian Belfiore, the Service Department is taking on a more active role of providing in-house services such as road repairs, park maintenance, fleet vehicle and equipment maintenance, sidewalk repair and replacement, year-round brush collection and tree trimming within the city's right of way. The Service

Department continues to maintain a strong focus on providing exceptional services to our residents and businesses, while utilizing the most cost-effective measures.

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 2021. Additionally, the Service Department provides residential collection programs at various times throughout the year for brush, computers, household 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. The contract serves approximately 3,500 homes. In June 2021, the city opted to an extension of its existing contract with Kimble. In June of 2022, the city went through the bidding process for the lowest and best bid for our refuse contract. Kimble Recycling and Disposal, Inc. was awarded the new contract based on meeting the criteria as the lowest and best bidder. The length of the contract is for 5 years with a 2- year option to extend services. In the best interest of the city, Highland Heights partnered with Mayfield Village in order to obtain the best possible quotes.

In 2021, the department's operating budget exceeded \$2.5M and we assisted with the planning and management of \$1.6M in capital infrastructure improvements. Projects of significance over the past year included:

- Full depth concrete repairs and an asphalt overlay of all streets within the Canterbury Subdivision.
- The widening of Bishop Road at the Wilson Mills Road intersection, which includes pavement replacement and the lengthening of the left turn lane of Bishop Road at Wilson Mills. Upgrades/enhancements to the intersection's signalization controls and infrastructure are also encompassed.
- Concrete repairs, including the relocation of the catch basin and manhole in front of the city's Community Park entrance.

The 2021 Road Program included four separately bid projects:

- The Asphalt Program
- Concrete Program
- Bishop Road / Wilson Mills intersection widening and signalization improvements
- Community Park entrance catch basin relocation

The Asphalt Program included full depth concrete repairs and asphalt resurfacing on Clinton, Canterbury, and DeWitt. The project was completed by NES Corp. of Cleveland, Ohio at a cost of \$405,310.10.

The Concrete Program included full depth concrete repairs, catch basin repairs, curb and gutter repairs, and other miscellaneous work on Bishop Road at the Aberdeen Drive intersection, Bishop Road at Airport Greens, and other miscellaneous locations.

The Bishop Road / Wilson Mills Road project lengthened the left turn lane on Bishop Road, approaching Wilson Mills Road and replaced the pavement at the intersection. Upgrades and enhancements to the intersection's signalization and traffic control equipment was also performed. The project incorporated stormwater improvements which the city received a reimbursement of \$46,000 through NEORSD's Community Cost Share Program. Additionally, the work qualified for and was awarded \$225,000 through Cuyahoga County's 50/50 County Road Funding Program. The project was completed by Liberta Construction of Akron, Ohio at a total cost of \$531,827.28.

As part of the improvement to the Community Park's entrance, the catch basin and manhole in front was relocated. The sidewalk was extended, the overall entrance was widened, and new asphalt was installed at the entrance. The project was completed by Terrace Construction of Cleveland, Ohio at a total cost of approximately \$50K.

The department's in-house road repair program included miscellaneous road repairs, curb repairs, and catch basin repairs. Hot mix asphalt was used for patching and sealing of road surfaces in the summer and cold mix asphalt during cold weather months. The Service Department has also assumed taking on full depth concrete road repairs. In all, the Service Department poured approximately 115 cubic yards of concrete in 2021. This is twice as much as last year. These areas included the following:

Sidewalk Block Replacement – Dunbar, Colony, Medway, Ford, Sandhurst, Davidson, Jefferson, and Stanwell

Curb Replacement – Stanwell, Lander, Cheriton, Muirfield, Blakely and Gloucester

Utility Openings – Rutland

Asphalt Repairs – full depth asphalt repairs were completed at the intersections of Blakely, Gloucester, Stanwell, and Lander.

Crack Sealing – in-house crack sealing was completed on Whiteford, Sandhurst, and Castlehill.

The Service Department maintains an on-call staff available around the clock to handle snow plowing, deicing, and any other emergencies which may arise. During non-business hours, the Service Department relies upon the Police Department to advise when there is a need for service. The staff of ten full-time and two to four part-time drivers maintain approximately 92 lane miles of roadway and 23 lane miles of sidewalk throughout the city, as well as all parking lots and walkways on the municipal complex property. During evening and overnight hours, manpower is reduced by one-half as the work force splits into two work groups to maintain around the clock service.

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.

Due to the COVID-19 challenges, our Park & Recreation Commission continued to host our annual children's holiday parties, utilizing our Community Park for these events, which were formerly held in the Highland Heights Community Center. Our annual Community Holiday Lighting and Children's Party was also moved outside to the Gazebo for visits with Santa, Mrs. Claus, Rudolph, and Frosty the Snowman.

To coincide with the regular summertime park activities of baseball, softball, tennis, pickleball, 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 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. Residents receive our annual Summer Sizzler newsletter each Spring, which provides pertinent information on pool passes, swimming lessons, tennis lessons, Day Camp, and other summer activities. Residents may register in person at City Hall or by using the online registration link on our website at 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.

The Community Park also serves as home to the Highland Heights Hurricane's Swim Team and the annual Community Day and Parade.

City Hall/Municipal Complex

Sean Milroy, At Large smilroy@highlandhts.com	216-212-4936
President Ann D'Amico, At Large adamico@highlandhts.com	216-315-3070
Lydia Ann Donatelli, Clerk of Council ldonatelli@highlandhts.com	440-461-2440
<u>Legislative and Finance Committee:</u>	Frank DiLalla, Chairman Ann D'Amico Ed Hargate
<u>Safety and Service Committee:</u>	Carol Ganser, Chairperson Anthony DeLisio Robert Goff
<u>Drainage Committee:</u>	Robert Goff, Chairperson Frank DiLalla Sean Milroy

2022 Updates

Millage Proposal on Ballot – Fall 2022

This fall, residents will see a ballot issue that pertains to the millage that is collected for police and fire pensions.

The city uses millage to collect taxes from residents to help pay for the police and fire pension liabilities that the city must pay.

Millage is calculated by the value of your property by taking the property's market value x 35% divided by 1000 x the millage rate.

The current rate of .6 mills was voted on by the residents in 1966 and went into effect in 1967 and has remained the same ever since.

Currently, a \$250,000 house would only pay \$52.50 per year ($\$250,000 \times .35 / 1,000 \times .6$)

The city's pension liability in 2022 is about \$1,022,000. The city will collect \$266,000 from residents leaving the city to pay \$756,000 from the General Fund, which is the fund for operating expenses of the city.

The State Legislature has a proposal on the table to raise the municipality's contribution rates over the next five years, increasing the city's portion by \$47,000 the first year, \$97,000 the second year, \$150,000 the third year, \$206,000 the fourth year, and \$265,000 for the fifth year.

The Charter Review committee, made up of nine residents, recognized this issue as a burden on the General Fund, and, if approved by the voters, this will give City Council the ability to raise the current millage of .6 up to 2.0 mills, if and when necessary. This will help defray the expense from the General Fund. To reiterate, this will only be raised if necessary and can be changed annually.

For example, a \$250,000 home would pay \$140.00 per year, ($\$250,000 \times .35 / 1,000 \times 2.0$), which is an increase of \$87.50. Even at the full 2 mills, the city would only collect about \$900,000, which is still less than the liability the city has to pay for the police and fire pension.

These funds will strictly go to the police and fire pension funds and will not be used for general operating expenses.

Highland Heights City Council, through guidance from the Finance Director, would set the millage for the pension liability on a yearly basis, depending on the needs of the General Fund. It would not necessarily be the 2 mills every year. Again, this millage has not changed since its inception in 1967.

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 Vice 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: 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. And finally, 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.

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.

I and City Council are both excited to share that we have moved forward with many new projects in 2022. They are as follows:

- Baseball Fields Regrading Project
- Lander Extension Reconstruction and Widening Project
- Fire and Police Building Renovation (which includes a new roof, HVAC system, and correction to the water infiltration system at a cost of \$4.2M)
- Implementation of a new E-Newsletter, the Mayors Monthly Message, will begin later this Fall
- Refresh of our city website, now with full ADA Accessibility
- A new marquee sign at the park on Wilson Mills Road and upgrades to the City Park entrance
- Enhancements to all 6 ball diamonds
- Concrete patio extension off the back of the Community Center for residents to utilize during their gatherings

As your Mayor, I remain invested in the continued success of our city, and I give you my word that we will continue to remain financially strong by remaining fiscally responsible during these ever-changing and challenging times. My focus will always be to provide the very best services to the residents and businesses of our community.

Sincerely Yours,

Chuck Brunello, Jr.
Mayor/Safety Director