

**2022 STATE OF THE CITY
CITY OF HIGHLAND HEIGHTS, OHIO**

Good evening and welcome to our 2023 State of the City Address and Meet the Mayor event. This evening I will be presenting the city affairs and information pertaining to 2022, as well as highlighting some current events taking place in our community. Before we begin, I would like to introduce several notable individuals joining us this evening:

- 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 and Council President Pro Tem – Anthony DeLisio
- Ward 4 Council Member – Robert Goff
- 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 Ianaro
- 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
- Senator Kent Smith – 21st Senate District
- Representative Elliot Forhan – House District 21
- Tony Ramos – Relationship Manager - NOPEC

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

Our city motto, “The City with Pride and Promise” is truly how we operate, plan, budget, and make decisions that are in the best interest of our community. The promise to our residents is to always provide the highest level of services in an efficient and cost effective manner. This is achieved through a collaborative and progressive City Council and Administration. I have the privilege of working with a great staff of employees and loyal and dedicated first responders. The City of Highland Heights offers a comfortable and convenient balance of neighborhoods, green space, and business parks, all with easy access to downtown Cleveland and other regional amenities. The unique and special qualities our city possesses consistently lands our community recognition in Cleveland Magazine’s Top 20 suburbs in their annual “Rating the Suburbs” report. In 2022, we ranked #11, up 6 spots from the previous year. 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 has been rated as one of the Top 20 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.

As we emerged from the pandemic and after coming out of a very challenging year in 2021, we began 2022 cautiously optimistic, with the realization that we needed to remain conservative and stringent in our planning, while at the same time, maintaining services and programming that our residents expect from their city leaders. 2022 was a year of thoughtful planning and continuing to adapt to change, as the remote work model directly impacted the city’s revenues.

In 2022, I along with City Council began discussions regarding the deterioration of the Police and Fire Department building. As all of our municipal buildings had approached forty years of age, the Police and Fire Department building had been experiencing failures and major inefficiencies within the walls of both buildings. With very favorable interest rates, the city made the decision to take out a \$5,000,000 20-year bond for desperately needed repairs to these buildings. These improvements would include a new roof, HVAC, correction to water infiltration, and other structural improvements. These improvements will help the buildings remain structurally sound for years to come. Last spring, the city went out to bid on this project, and it was awarded to A-STAR, Inc. The project began in the summer of 2022, with sections of the roof and gutter system being installed. Masonry work also took place with the favorable weather

conditions we had last fall. The project resumed in Spring 2023 with continued work on the roof and masonry. In Spring 2023, City Council awarded interior repairs and renovations to PCS & Build to handle the HVAC, updated electrical fixtures, and renovations to the interior space. In May 2023, both Police and Fire Department staff members were displaced from the existing building and were relocated to working out of trailers, here on the Municipal grounds until the completion of the project. The Dispatch Center has remained open during this project, with the exception of a two week period where our Dispatchers were relocated to Mayfield Village to allow the contractor time to conduct work in the Dispatch Center. The project has been running on schedule and is on track with a targeted completion date of late October/early November. Once completed, we are planning to host an Open House and ribbon cutting ceremony to showcase the renovation of this building.

In 2022, our city saw several retirements and the addition of new staff members. In January 2022, Kathy Herrmann announced her retirement after 20 years of employment with the City of Highland Heights. Kathy had worked in the Finance Department as an Accounts Payable Clerk and as an Administrative Assistant in the Fire Department for eight years.

In February of 2022, Kathleen Shaughnessy joined the City of Highland Heights Finance Department to replace Kathy Herrmann. Kathleen brought many years of experience with her from another municipality. She is responsible for Accounts Payable as well as other administrative duties within the department. Her enthusiasm and work ethic made her a great addition to the staff.

In March 2022, Regina Cahill announced her retirement as Clerk of Council after being with the city for seven years. Regina did an outstanding job preparing City Council agendas, legislation, and minutes.

In April 2022, the City of Highland Heights welcomed Lydia Donatelli as our new Clerk of Council. Lydia's strong organizational skills and motivation to learn have been an asset to our staff.

In June 2022, our long-time Law Director, Tim Paluf, retired after dutifully serving our city for thirty years. Tim began serving our city in 1988 when he was appointed to serve on the Civil Service Commission. Tim was appointed Law Director in 1992 under former Mayor Virginia Swanson and served in his position under four Mayors.

Also in June 2022, Michael Lograsso was appointed as our new Law Director. Michael currently serves the City of Highland Heights as our Prosecutor. His work ethic, loyalty, and reputation made him an excellent choice for this position.

2022 also marked a year of significant movement within the Highland Heights Police Department. I will share this information a little later in tonight's presentation.

Financial/Business Overview

The City of Highland Heights remained financially strong in 2022 with a General Fund balance of just over \$8.0M. Our local city taxes were slightly down \$557,000 or 4.82%. The city received \$530,000 in County ARPA funds, which included the following:

- Baseball Field Renovations - \$130,000
- Park Trail Connectivity Project - \$100,000
- Municipal Technology Upgrade Project - \$50,000
- Community Center Remodel/Upgrade Project - \$20,000
- Emergency Generator - \$250,000

We also received \$20,000 from the Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission for upgrades to the Highland Heights Veterans Peace Memorial. As our Veterans Peace Memorial grounds have surpassed 25 years, improvements are being made to upgrade the landscaping as well as new signage and lighting.

Metropolitan Veterinary Hospital, which became part of the City of Highland Heights in fall of 2021, continues to grow with the expansion of their operations to now include the Metropolitan Veterinary Academy. This program is only offered at their Highland Heights location and offers students a 10-month Veterinary Assistant diploma. This program allows students the opportunity to apply their knowledge from the classroom immediately into the 24-hour facility, assisting Veterinary Technicians and Veterinarians with emergency cases in a state-of-the-art hospital.

With people working from home, and the uncertainty of income tax collections, we continued to take a conservative approach to our spending. Our expenditures for 2022 were about \$1,161,000 less than budgeted. Our 2022 revenues were up about \$298,000 over estimate. Expenses exceeded our revenue by \$431,000.

I would be remiss if I did not address the current situation with Progressive Insurance and how the building vacancies financially impact the City of Highland Heights.

Progressive Insurance withholding was down \$1,744,000 in 2022 compared to 2021 and down \$2,196,000 from 2020 which was before the work from home model began.

Employer withholding from employers in the city was 82% in 2020 and is now only 71%. We have seen an increase from resident collections go from 12% in 2020 to 14% currently. The resident collections still have not equaled out to the lost revenue from people not working in the city.

To provide clarification, 92.5% of income tax collected goes into the General Fund and 7.5% goes into the Debt Service Fund.

2022 also marked the year for our City Charter to be reviewed. This process takes place once every five years. The Charter Review Committee is comprised of 9 volunteer residents. This process takes several months to complete. A Charter Review Public Submittal Form is available to any resident who would like to submit an amendment or suggest a change to the City Charter. Upon completion of this process, the Charter Review Committee may propose amendments to the City Charter to be enacted. If this is the case, and it was, in 2022, the recommendation to place a revision to the City Charter would need to be placed on the ballot in the November General Election.

As a result of this process, last fall, a Millage Proposal was placed on the November 8, 2022 Ballot as it pertained to the millage that is collected for police and fire pensions. The Charter Review Committee recognized this issue as a burden on the General Fund, and, had it been approved by the voters, it would have given City Council the ability to raise the current millage of .6 up to 2.0 mills, if and when necessary. This would help defray the expense from the General Fund. To reiterate, this would have only been raised if necessary and could be changed annually. These funds would strictly go to the police and fire pension funds and not used for general operating expenses.

This ballot issue failed 68% to 32%. 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.

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

The reason this appeared on last year's ballot is because 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. While I remain optimistic that our state legislators understand how crucial this issue could be if passed, we need to continue to be proactive as we prepare for the future. I plan to revisit this topic with city council shortly into my next term.

In 2022, the City of Highland Heights welcomed several new businesses which included Boost Wellness located at 6327 Wilson Mills Road (next to Burgers2Beer). Boost Wellness provides the latest in health, wellness, and beauty services. These services include aesthetics, weight management, hydration and more.

Although they did not open until late Spring 2023, the City of Highland Heights welcomed, after much anticipation, the opening of Tijuana Street Tacos Mexican Restaurant (next to DiStefano's). Major renovations and remodeling began in 2021 in the former Don Nacho's restaurant. The owners were faced with some very challenging times due to the pandemic, with a shortage of contractors and difficulty getting construction supplies. We officially welcomed them with a ribbon cutting ceremony in June of this year.

The spring of 2022 marked the beginning of two new programs for the City of Highland Heights.

The inaugural launch of our Hometown Heroes Banner Program began last May. This program proudly recognizes our current and former residents who have served our country in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and National Guard. Twenty-six banners were displayed along Highland Road beginning on Memorial Day and remained hung until Veterans Day. I am pleased to share that this program added another 20 banners in 2023 making our Hometown Heroes Banner Program that much more impactful. The positive response and compliments we have received are heartwarming. On my daily drive into City Hall, I apologize to anyone who is driving behind me, as my speed limit does not exceed 20 MPH. As I gaze at each individual banner displayed on Highland and now Miner Road, I can't help but feel proud and am filled with gratitude to these individuals as we respectfully recognize them for their commitment to serve and protect our country.

We also implemented our first ever Community Clean Up Day to coincide with Earth Day. In partnership with the Highland Heights Green Task Force, we invited our residents, their families, and friends to help us clean up our sidewalks, open spaces, and the park. We had approximately 40 volunteers, with over 300 lbs. of trash collected. We divided up into groups to cover various areas of the city that were most in need of being cleaned up. While we couldn't get to all areas, we are very proud of our efforts in helping to keep Highland Heights beautiful.

Another initiative that I felt worthy of exploration in 2021 was the addition of walking trails in the Community Park. This has been a lengthy process, which began with hosting a Town Hall in September 2021 to conduct a Park Connectivity Study. This provided an opportunity for our residents to share their input and feedback on this potential project. That meeting was productive, and we received some very good feedback. An online survey was also made available to the residents who were unable to attend the meeting. In 2022, the City of Highland Heights was 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. I am happy to report that this project is currently underway, and we hope to have this completed by the end of fall.

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 2022, the department issued 625 residential permits (12 for new home construction) and 109 commercial permits. These permits generated total receipts of \$338,203 with an estimated construction value of \$9.2M.

Beginning in November 2022, the first permits were issued for the newest housing development in Highland Heights called Grappa Farms. Grappa Farms, located within the Maypine Farms development, will feature 21 new luxury home sites, with construction by ProBuilt Homes and JEMM Construction. Several homes are under construction with approximately 7 lots remaining.

In 2020, a Residential Rental Program was implemented. From the information obtained through the County for 2022, we had a total of 78 rental properties within the city or 2.0% of the total properties in Highland Heights. Of the 78 rental properties, we were able to register 51. Of the 51 registered rental properties, 51 inspections/re-inspections were performed. The goal for 2022 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 2022, the Building Department received one foreclosure notification. As of the end of 2022, the home had not been resold.

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 105 violation notices, primarily identifying violations, and enforcement of our zoning, residential, and business maintenance codes. As in year's past, high grass, property exterior maintenance, and commercial vehicles parked in residential driveways remain 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 11 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 35 years, the last 15 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 third year in a row, the department has received the Mission Lifeline Gold Plus 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).

In 2022, the compliment of the department was twenty (20) full-time members and four (4) part time members. This includes the Chief, Assistant Chief, Administrative Assistant, four Lieutenants and fourteen firefighters. The department operates on a 24 hour on, 48 hours off basis with a minimum of four firefighters per shift.

Police Department

As I briefly mentioned earlier, during the course of 2022, retirements and promotions created significant change in the Highland Heights Police Department leadership and staff. June 1, 2022, marked the end of an era for the City of Highland Heights and the Highland Heights Police Department. Police Chief James Cook retired 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 began his career as a Patrolman in 1970, as was promoted through the ranks, until being named Police Chief in 1990. Chief Cook led his department as a distinguished leader, mentor, role model, and exemplary public servant to the City of Highland Heights and our residents.

On June 3, 2022, I had the privilege of swearing in our new Police Chief, Dennis Matejcic. Dennis had served the City of Highland Heights as Police Lieutenant since 2014 and had been with the Police Department since 1995. Chief Matejcic is responsible for the overall effective and efficient management of the Department. 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. He was assisted by the Lieutenant, Administrative Assistant, and Communications Specialist.

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

since 1998. In addition, Tony Setlock and Matthew Evers were promoted to Sergeant. Two full-time patrol officers were also hired in 2022.

With increased movement in the Police Department, the goal moving forward is to provide the new leaders with advanced training to allow them to perform their jobs. New Sergeants have and will attend PELC (Police Executive Leadership College) in Columbus to further enhance their skills. During 2023, Lieutenant Brian Dassatti will attend the CLEE (Certified Law Enforcement Executive) Program. The CLEE Program offers law enforcement leaders the opportunity to embark on a fourteen-month professional journey that will enhance their knowledge, provide them with specialized tools to increase their effectiveness, and challenge them to identify their vision, guiding principles, and core values in service to their communities.

The Department consists of 48 employees, 29 are sworn police officers and an additional 19 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 2022 and was found to be fully in compliance by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. In 2022, there were 122 inmates incarcerated in the Facility for a total of 1,757 hours during the year.

Late last year, the city completed its fourth year of 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. An infrared study was completed last fall, which provided us with an update on the number of deer in our city. While the subject remains sensitive, we safely and successfully culled 151 deer in 2022, which was similar to the previous year. Residential safety continues to be a priority for our community. Our neighboring communities share these same concerns, as they are also taking part in culling programs. 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 (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, Mellissa Kelly, will be teaching our elementary students at Millridge and St. Paschal's elementary schools for the 2023-2024 school year.

In 2021, the Police Department had approximately 14,656 requests for service. These requests break down as follows:

Assistance to Criminal Events	432
Assistance to Citizen Conflict	261
Assistance to Traffic Safety	4,483
Assistance to Emergencies	3,935
Assistance to General Duties	5,195
Assistance to Jail Activities	350

Service Department

In 2022, 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 in an efficient, cost-effective manner.

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 ten full-time servicemen, one part-time serviceman, 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 has taken 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 2022. 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 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 2022, the department's operating budget exceeded \$2.5M and we assisted with the planning and management of \$1.8M in capital infrastructure improvements. Projects of significance over the past year included:

- Full depth concrete repairs and an asphalt overlay on Sandhurst Drive

- The widening and reconstruction of Lander Road and replacement sidewalk between Wilson Mills Road and Blakley Drive. The project incorporated stormwater improvements which the City received a reimbursement through the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District's Community Cost Share Program.
- Concrete repairs in Highland Woods West, sidewalk extension on E. Legend Court to the mailboxes, and the sidewalk extension along Alpha Drive connecting to Highland Road. These repairs were scheduled to be completed by C.A. Agresta in early 2023.

The 2022 Road Program included three separately bid projects:

- The Lander Road Extension Widening and Sidewalk Project
- Concrete Program
- Street Striping Program

The Lander Road Extension Project was one of the most significant street upgrades completed in the city. This complete roadway reconstruction project widened Lander Road between Wilson Mills and Blakley Drive. Work included removal of the existing asphalt portion of roadway and installing new concrete pavement and curbing. This project also included the replacement of the asphalt sidewalk, between Wilson Mills Road and Blakley Drive, with concrete. The project incorporated stormwater improvements in which the city received a reimbursement of \$454,951.50 through the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District's Community Cost Share Program. The project was completed by Fabrizi Trucking & Paving Company, Inc. of Cleveland at a total cost of \$1,156,341.75.

The Concrete Program included full depth concrete repairs, catch basin repairs, curb and gutter repairs, and other miscellaneous work in the following locations: Sandhurst Drive, Highland Woods West, sidewalk extension along Alpha Drive connecting to Highland Road, E. Legend sidewalk extension, and work performed at other miscellaneous locations. This project also incorporated an asphalt overlay on Sandhurst Drive and upgrades and enhancements to the Highland Road and Alpha Drive intersection's signalization controls and infrastructure to accommodate pedestrian crossing. The project was completed by C.A. Agresta Construction of South Euclid, Ohio at a cost of \$632,437.00.

The 2022 Street Striping Program was contracted to Pat Flowers Incorporated of Mentor, Ohio at a cost of \$52,352.45. This also included striping in the Community Park.

The Service Department's in-house road repair program included miscellaneous road repairs, curb repairs, and catch basin repairs. The department poured approximately 130 yd³ in 2022. These areas of repair included:

- Sidewalk block replacement on the following streets – Tourelle, Longspur, Medway, Coldstream, Leverett, Davidson, Blakley, Miner, Gloucester, Rutland, Golfview, Bishop, Augustus, Stirling, Muirfield, W. Glengary, North and South Stonehaven, E. Legend, E. Edinburgh, Burwick, and Sutherland
- Curb replacement took place on Lander, W. Inverness, Diana Court, and Gloucester
- Utility openings on West Mill and Oakview
- Roadway replacement on Dina Court, Millridge, and Gloucester
- Full depth asphalt repairs were completed on Millridge, Lander, Gloucester, and the Community Park
- In-house crack sealing was performed on Strumbly Drive, Diana Court, and at other locations where miscellaneous curb and gutter, pavement, and catch basin repairs were handled by the department.

For the first time, the City of Highland Heights earned recognition as a Tree City USA in 2022. Tree City USA is one of the Arbor Day Foundation's oldest programs. On June 9, 2022, I had the privilege of attending a Tree City USA recognition event with our Service Director, Brian Belfiore at the Village of Richfield. To qualify as a Tree City USA community, we were required to meet four standards set by the Arbor Day Foundation and National Association of State Foresters. These include:

- A Tree Board or Department
- A Tree Care Ordinance
- A Community Forestry Program
- An Arbor Day Observance and Proclamation
- I am incredibly proud of this recognition and for the excellent work our Service Department provides in helping to beautify our community and for improving and preserving the tree canopy in our city. Tree City USA signs are currently displayed on Wilson Mills and Highland Roads.

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/Recreation

Along with the Park and Recreation Committee, Recreation Director, David Ianaro 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.

Community events sponsored by the Park and Recreation Commission in 2022 included the Easter Bunny Egg Trail, Woodstick Open, Movie Night at the Park, Craft Days in the Park (co-sponsored with the Highland Heights Garden Club), Neighborhood Community Bike Ride, Live Music and Family Fun Nights at the Pool, and the Community Holiday Lighting and Children's Party.

The 2022 summer recreation programs offered included baseball, softball, t-ball, tennis, pickleball, swim lessons, and Day Camp. The Highland Heights Community Pool is also home to the Highland Heights Hurricane's Swim Team. Last month, Highland Heights proudly hosted the 2023 Suburban Swim League Championships, where several hundred swimmers from neighboring communities competed. This event welcomed several thousand visitors and spectators to our pool and community.

The Highland Heights 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 Highland Heights Community Park is also home to the Annual Community Day and Parade.

City Hall/Municipal Complex

The City of Highland Heights was awarded a NOPEC Energy Savings Grant, in the amount of \$23,879.00. Funds received are to be used for energy related projects. In 2022, the conversion to LED lighting in all of City Hall took place. In addition, the replacement of all lights in the Municipal Complex parking lot were converted to LED lighting. This year's projects will include replacement of all lights in the Community Center and their conversion to LED lighting.

Communications

The City of Highland increased its means of communication with our residents in 2022 with the implementation of an E-Newsletter entitled “Mayor Brunello’s Monthly Message”. The E-Newsletter format allows us to briefly communicate updates in between our regular newsletter distribution, which includes city events, construction updates, road work notifications, and reminders. The first edition began in December of 2022, with monthly editions sent at the end of each month.

In August 2022, the City completed a full website refresh. My Executive Assistant, Jolene Greve, spearheaded this initiative, which took over one year to complete. The refresh went live mid-August 2022. The objectives of the website refresh were to improve ease of use, and create a consistent, organized layout. Our menus, links, and buttons were reconfigured and enhanced to be organized in such a way that they are clearly delineated from one another and are easily navigated throughout the entire site. Our update also included all new images to create a fresh look and improve the overall visual aesthetic.

The most noteworthy new feature on our website is that we are now fully ADA Compliant. The ADA icon, located at the bottom right side of the screen, indicates our ADA compliancy, which is now being continuously monitored on our website. This feature allows all visitors to our city website an optimal experience, regardless of their individual abilities and makes the digital content more accessible for people with disabilities.

In the spring of 2022, a new digital marquee sign was installed at the entrance to the Community Park. The new marquee sign has provided a more vibrant way for the city to advertise and communicate upcoming events.

This past spring, we expanded our social media outlets to include Instagram and YouTube. While our current Facebook page remains the main social media page for the city, Instagram was added to give us an opportunity to showcase and highlight our community events in a fun, light-hearted way. Our You Tube channel allows us to share our annual Memorial Day Observance ceremonies, virtual tours of the Community Center and rooms available for rental, and other relevant footage. Tonight’s State of the City Address will be added to our You Tube channel for residents who were unable to attend this evening’s address.

City Council

As the former Council President, and Representative at Large, I can truly appreciate the hard work and dedication of each and every Council Representative currently in office. As Mayor, I look forward to continuing the good work with Council, and toward our common goal of serving the needs of the residents and businesses in this community in the best possible way.

I and City Council are both excited to share that we have moved forward with many new projects in 2023. They are as follows:

- Veterans Peace Memorial upgrades – which includes new signage and improvements to the landscaping and lighting
- Community Center upgrades - which includes updated landscaping and conversion to LED lighting
- Complete renovation and resurfacing of all eight tennis courts

As we look forward to 2024, I've given consideration to several new initiatives:

- Reinstitution of the City Sidewalk Program
- Capital Levy

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.

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.

Thank you. At this time, if anyone has questions for Council, our Department Heads, or me, we will take them at this time.

Sincerely Yours,

Chuck Brunello, Jr.
Mayor/Safety Director

Below is a list of our City Council members and the committees on which they serve:

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Robert Goff, Ward 4
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Edwin V. Hargate, At Large
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Sean Milroy, At Large
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President Ann D'Amico, At Large
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Lydia Ann Donatelli, Clerk of Council
ldonatelli@highlandhts.com... 440-461-2440

Legislative and Finance Committee:
Frank DiLalla, Chairman
Ann D'Amico
Ed Hargate

Safety and Service Committee:
Carol Ganser, Chairperson
Anthony DeLisio
Robert Goff

Drainage Committee:
Robert Goff, Chairperson
Frank DiLalla
Sean Milroy