

State of the City Address

On Wednesday, April 14th, I had the opportunity to present my first State of the City Address at the Community/ Senior Center. Coincidentally, this date coincided with my first 100 days in the office of Mayor. I can sum up my first three months in office in one word -- busy. Although I have spent the last 17 years as an elected official, being Mayor brings on additional duties that can be quite time consuming. Scheduling the duties of my full-time job and of part-time Mayor has been very challenging at times, but getting more manageable as time goes on. One of my first duties was to create a budget to present to Council for their approval. Working with Finance Director Germ and all of the administrators, we were able to come up with a very workable budget for 2010 that will continue to hold the line on expenses, while preserving the high level of services we have come to expect. City Council members did a tremendous job of reviewing the budget and adding many different views and opinions based on their experience. Great cooperation was shown by everyone and they should be commended for all their hard work. One of the other duties of Mayor that I never really thought about and is somewhat humbling is the opportunity to perform marriage ceremonies for the public. After just seven days in office I was asked to solemnize the marriage of Jessica Farrell and William Sickles III. I wish them the best of luck for the future.

For those who were not able to attend the State of the City Address at the community center or view it on cable channel 12, below are some of the highlights of my talk.

Finances – Recently whenever you read an article in the newspapers about the state of the economy you will inevitably read of a community facing deep budget cuts due to reduced revenue and an ongoing increase in expenses. Wickliffe is not immune to any of these recent trends. The year end results for the General Fund in 2009 finished better than anticipated but still showed that our revenue did not keep up with expenses. The net result for 2009 was an operating loss of \$445,000. The year end balance in the General Fund finished at just shy of \$4.6 million. For this year we will continue to see General Fund revenue decline but will counter the loss with a reduction in expenses. Our 2010 budget will see a 2.5% reduction in revenue and a 2.7% reduction in expenses. These are

just estimates but they are very conservative. The hope is that we will see a slight increase in income tax collections and be able to further reduce expenses by year's end. I do remain optimistic that we will out perform our projections in 2010.

2010 Capital Improvement Projects – We anticipate spending almost \$3.3 million this year from our Capital Fund. Some very long awaited projects are on schedule to be completed and/or started this year. The reconstruction of E. 290th St. south of Ridge Rd., and Larchmont Dr. and Fenwick St. will begin this spring with completion by the fall. Major concrete repairs will be performed on Robert St. west of Talmadge Ave., Harrison Dr., and Kennedy Dr. This will be the first step in repairing these streets until more extensive work can be scheduled. The total rehabbing of Jindra Park will begin immediately after baseball season this year. The project includes installing proper drainage in the fields, constructing new ball fields, tennis courts, basketball court, restrooms and soccer field. Because of the extensive work being performed, much of the rehabilitation will continue into 2011 which will cause the ball fields and soccer fields not to be in playing condition until 2012. Arrangements are being made with the various leagues being played at Jindra to re-schedule at other facilities. Also being planned is the replacement of Jindra Pool. Construction of the new six lane pool will begin this summer with completion scheduled for summer 2011. Because of this tight construction schedule for completion, Jindra Pool will not be open this season. We hope everyone bears with us over the next 18 months as we anticipate the total completion of these much needed projects.

NOPEC Energy Grant – The City of Wickliffe has been awarded \$129,000 in grant money to be used for energy efficiency projects in the City. This money comes from the Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council, the public utility aggregation group many of our residents belong to as their gas and electric supplier. This money will be used for several energy savings projects within the City, such as City Hall storm windows, new energy efficient fluorescent lighting for the service garage, new HVAC units for the police station, re-caulking of the aquatic center and replacement of much of the holiday lighting with new LED lights.

Economic Development – The Wickliffe Reserve project, aka Ponderosa property, continues to move forward. The developers have gone before the Board of Zoning

Appeals and the Planning Commission for approvals for construction. Financing details are being finalized by the developers with construction to begin this summer. Several years ago a portion of Euclid Ave. from Lincoln Rd. to Bellview St. was part of a project that included replacing sidewalks and curbs along with new planters and brickwork. This project was funded through the Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency. Since that time we have applied to continue the same type of work for the area from Bellview St. to Worden Rd. Grant money for this type of project has been temporarily put on hold, but we are hoping to meet with NOACA in the near future to complete Euclid Ave. We have also submitted a grant for Community Development Block Grant Funds to begin a Euclid Ave. Storefront Renovation Program. This program will enable business owners and landlords to make an investment in their properties with matching funds provided through the grant. We should be notified this fall of the approval.

Green Ridge Golf Course – The purchase of Greed Ridge Golf Course continues to be a win-win for the City. The ability to preserve a large tract of green space in the City for a public purpose along with being a profitable operation benefits the City all around.

Improvements have been made to provide new ADA restroom facilities on the first floor of the clubhouse through the help of a Nature Works grant. Additional plans have been made for the remodeling of the clubhouse that includes upgrades to the electrical, creating a more comfortable dining area and relocating the clubhouse entrance and exit. As additional revenue is generated the improvements will be phased in. The Green Ridge House is back on the market with a realtor. The slowed housing market has had an affect on the sale. All proceeds from the sale of the house will go to the Green Ridge Golf Course Fund to cover expenditures.

Building Department – In 2009, eight new houses were built in the City. These occurred on scattered single lots within the City. The building department continues to monitor all property maintenance throughout the City. Foreclosed and bank-owned properties are viewed weekly by the department to assure these are being maintained per City code. Council will be reviewing a new Residential Rental Inspection Program proposal for their consideration. This program is meant to assure that landlords are maintaining the property in a safe manner.

Fire and Police Departments – Both of our safety forces continue to work to provide the City with the safest environment possible. Annually we spend nearly \$300,000 in updating various pieces of equipment for the departments. Generally this equipment proves to be the most costly to purchase. We have developed a program to set-aside funds annually to provide for these purchases when they become due. Presently we are setting aside monies to fund the purchase of new radio equipment for both departments that will be required at the end of 2011. We are also setting aside funds for the purchase of a new squad and utility vehicle for the Fire Department. All set asides are funded through the Capital Improvement Fund. This year the Police Department's Neighborhood Watch Program will be promoted very heavily. This program, once call Block Watch, is led by Patrolman Randy Veri. The program informs and educates residents and businesses about protecting themselves and their property. The residents of the City are the eyes and ears of the police in reporting suspicious activity. Please plan to attend one of these meetings through-out the year.

Community/Senior Center – The Center continues to grow in attendance daily. During the day hours the Center houses one of the largest of the nutrition sites and meals on wheels distribution site. Many new activities have begun with the exercise room becoming the most popular. In the evenings the exercise room is open to any adult Wickliffe resident with a \$10 annual membership card. Even though the Center is three years old improvements continue to be made to its operation and appearance. In the interior of the building handrails and automatic toilet facilities have been added by our service department. On the exterior of the property special attention will be focused on the landscaping and making the center more visually welcoming to everyone in the community, young and old.

Community Collaboration – One of the new buzz words you may be hearing now is regionalism. In one respect or another everyone can benefit in some way if government entities would share ideas and resources to save time and money for the tax payers. The Lake County Mayors and Managers Association meets monthly to discuss just these issues. Identifying opportunities that we all have in common and sitting down to discuss what it would take to make it happen is the first step. Presently, Wickliffe participates in several cost-sharing programs with other governments groups. The purchase of rock salt

for our roads was made through an agreement with the Ohio Department of Transportation. Health insurance for City employees is provided by a plan from the Lake County Commissioners. Grant money is used from the Lake County Solid Waste Department to subsidize our recycling program. In the future it is hoped that services like trash hauling, sharing of IT personnel and the purchase of major pieces of fire equipment may be part of a collaborative plan.

The intent of this report was to give everyone an idea of the progress from the past year and my vision of future projects planned for the coming year and beyond.

As always if you have any questions or concerns that I may be able to help you with please feel free to give me a call at 943-7103 or email at wmargalis@Cityofwickcliffe.com. Have a safe and happy summer!