

2020 State of the City Address

Members of City Council, honored guests, City staff and citizens of Oakwood:

On behalf of Oakwood City Council, it is my honor to proclaim that Oakwood continues to be the premier residential community in the Dayton region.

We have this distinction because of our beautiful neighborhoods, our excellent public schools and library, unmatched city services, including public safety, public works, recreation and leisure, and most of all because of our citizens.

Community Ambience

Community ambience is the character and atmosphere of a place. It begins with our new resident breakfast in March, attended annually by over 100 new residents to our city. City staff prepares breakfast for our new neighbors moving to Oakwood from the Miami Valley, other states and foreign countries. Officials from the city, Oakwood City Schools, Wright Memorial Library, and the Oakwood Municipal Court describe to our new residents what makes Oakwood special.

In May, several hundred people participated in the 18th annual Care Walk to fight breast cancer. The event raised over \$16,500 this year and over \$250,000 since its inception.

That Day in May community event continued its tradition of the pancake breakfast, 5k and 10k runs, parade, car show, dog costume contest, displays, games, rides and food.

In August, the 20th annual Giving Strings concert, with 120 musicians of various ages, raised over \$3,500 for the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

In October, more than 2,000 walkers participated in the 6th annual Out of the Darkness Walk to Stop Suicide. Suicide is at an 18 year high in Ohio among youth aged 8 to 19. In December, Oakwood Public Safety Captain Mike Jones and Detective Kasey Ballinger received a report of a student three hours away who was contemplating suicide. Their extraordinary above and beyond efforts resulted in the saving of a young life. I refer you to the *Oakwood Register* January 8, 2020 issue for a complete report of this event. Thank you Captain Jones and Detective Ballinger.

City Staff and Volunteers

We will issue our 2019 Annual Report to every household in the near future. This report provides an abundance of information about our city and the services we provide to our citizens. Accordingly, I will not repeat tonight the good news found in the report. Please read this interesting report at your leisure.

We have an outstanding city staff led by City Manager Norbert Klopsch. He begins his 18th year as our City Manager and is recognized throughout the region for his leadership skills.

Under the leadership of Chief Alan Hill, our Public Safety Director, we added experienced Public Safety Officers Chris Slone and Kyle Sewert, and promoted Damien Baggett to Lieutenant.

Lt. Chuck Balaj was recognized for his work on the Dayton/Cincinnati Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) where he played a critical role in arresting and convicting Laith Alebbini for attempting to conspire and provide material support and resources to ISIS. This was the first ever conviction on an international terrorism case in the Southern District of Ohio.

Detective Jeff Yount, Jr. received the Tactical Crime Suppression Unit (TCSU) *Agent of the Year* award. This recognition was for his cumulative body of work over the course of the year.

We offered our second Citizen Police Academy in 2019. This 10 week program is designed to educate citizens about the functions of our Public Safety Department and the challenges of modern day policing matters.

We also implemented a new program entitled Assisting and Contributing to Oakwood Resident Needs (ACORN).

We continually receive notes and comments from citizens complementing our Public Works Department for their courteous and outstanding service. Our employees assisted the City of Dayton with debris cleanup after the May tornadoes. We welcomed Doug Spitler, P.E. in January 2020 as our Director of Engineering and Public Works.

Carol Collins, our leisure services director, and her staff are directly responsible for our beautiful city parks, our designation as a Tree City USA for the 37th year, the 45th anniversary of Smith Gardens and for operating our Oakwood Community Center and all the excellent recreation programs available to our citizens of all ages.

Our finance director, Cindy Stafford, CPA, received another Auditor of State Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting. Less than 10% of the jurisdictions in the state of Ohio receive this award. She and her staff continue our tradition of transparency in all financial respects.

Rob Jacques continues to serve as our law director consistently providing sound and timely legal counsel and advice to the city manager, staff and City Council.

Jennifer Wilder, our director of personnel and properties, has continued our strong enforcement of our property maintenance standards and managed the favorable extension of all our collective bargaining agreements with city employees.

We have outstanding employees. Steve Alston, Steve Kunz and Shawn Huffman celebrated 30 years of service with our Public Works Department. Lieutenant Jeff Yount, Sr. celebrated 30 years of service with our Public Safety Department. Because we generally hire experienced

employees from other jurisdictions, Lieutenant Yount's years of public safety service to Oakwood may never be surpassed.

Public Works employee, Chris North and former PSO and current dispatcher Leslie Zengel celebrated 35 years of service with the city.

And Director of Leisure Services, Carol Collins, celebrated 45 years of service to our fine city.

We are also blessed to have over 100 citizen volunteers who serve on our Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Board of Health, Property Maintenance Board, Budget Review Committee, Beautification and other committees.

Oakwood Schools and Wright Memorial Library

Everyone knows Oakwood has great schools but did you know *US News and World Report* ranked Oakwood High School seventh best of the 736 Ohio public schools ranked.

The OHS Academic Decathlon team won the Division III National Championship for the eighth year in a row. They earned the highest team score ever in Division III history and finished second overall out of 73 competing teams.

How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice! Well, Oakwood Junior High student Alex Zhang performed at Carnegie Hall last April as part of American Protégé International Piano and Strings Competition. Congratulations Alex.

In 2019, Wright Memorial Public Library celebrated its 80th anniversary. Under the leadership of Director Kristi Hale, they received their second four-star rating from Library Journal's 2019 Star Libraries report. The index measures circulation, visits, program attendance and public internet use. Wright Library ranked in the top 1.5% of libraries under \$4.9 million in expenditures. Their beautiful building is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Neighborhoods

We have outstanding diversity in housing choices. Although most of our housing stock is over 70 years old, our homes and properties are better maintained than any other city around and our home values prove it. In 2019, 78% of Oakwood home sales were higher than the County appraised value.

New home construction continues on the remaining lots in Pointe Oakwood. The 84 unit luxury condominium project known as Element Oakwood is essentially complete and new residents began moving in last month. We are excited about these additional housing choices for our citizens.

Because Oakwood is essentially one large neighborhood, we take traffic enforcement very seriously. As a result of the 2017 Shroyer *Road Diet* project, speeds on this one mile stretch of

roadway have dropped between 4 and 11 miles per hour. In 2016, we issued 236 speeding tickets on Shroyer Road. In 2018, we issued only 36 speeding tickets.

Financial Stewardship

The eight years of the Governor Kasich administration were difficult for counties, cities and villages as the State of Ohio broke its 75 year partnership between state and local governments.

Instead of us working together as partners, and recognizing the enormously important role that local government plays in providing services to the citizens of Ohio, the State chose to treat us as an expenditure to be reduced. I am happy to report that Governor DeWine recognizes the value of the partnership between state and local governments. His policies and tone have been a welcomed change for local governments.

Under the leadership of City Council, our outstanding city staff and the advice and counsel of our 35 member citizen Budget Review Committee, we met the challenges to our financial stability. We reduced expenses each year between 2009 and 2014. We had modest increases in spending in the last few years but those included major capital expenditures to redesign Shroyer Road, to replace our 65 year old tennis courts at the Oakwood Community Center, and to pay off our Ohio Police & Fire Pension liability.

Our revenue exceeded our expenses in 2019 and we believe this will also be the case in 2020. We now offer a 90% credit for city taxes paid to other jurisdictions. This important action reduced our continuing loss of revenue when surrounding cities raise their tax rates and ensures that all Oakwood residents with taxable income pay at least 0.25% to Oakwood.

Well Governed, Well Managed and Financially Strong

As I begin my 17th year on Oakwood City Council and my 11th year as Mayor, I am humbled to follow in the footsteps of former Mayor Jeff Ireland, Mayor Gretchen Bullock, and my mentor, Mayor Judy Cook. I am also honored to serve with my fellow members of Council. Steve Byington begins his 13th year as a member of Oakwood City Council and his 11th year as our Vice Mayor. Council members Rob Stephens and Anne Hilton begin their 11th year on City Council and Council member Chris Epley begins his seventh year on City Council.

This Council, like those that preceded it, operates in a collegial style and everyone believes in doing the right thing for the citizens of Oakwood. We listen to one another, no one has hidden agendas, and we believe in community service. Our representatives in Washington DC should follow our example.

When I joined City Council in 2003, it was my belief that Oakwood was well governed, well managed and financially strong. I still hold that belief and will continue this tradition.

With the help of City Council, city staff and the citizens of Oakwood, we will continue to be well governed, well managed and financially strong.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve you.