

2021 State of the City Address

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

Despite a worldwide pandemic, government mandated shutdowns, school closings, social and political unrest, endless admonitions to wash your hands, wear masks and social distance, the city of Oakwood has adapted and persevered. Accordingly, and 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. The State of our City is Oakwood Strong.

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. All our traditions and community events were affected by the pandemic. 2020 will forever be defined as before March 8, 2020 and after March 8, 2020. Cancelled or altered events included our new resident breakfast, Care Walk, That Day in May, the Tree City USA awards program, Oakwood Community Center programs, weddings and blanket concerts at Smith Gardens, Oakwood High School graduation, the ice cream social, the family fall festival and the holiday of lights. Restaurants and small businesses closed, and the Oakwood Life magazine that started in 2011 is no longer published. Even *The Oakwood Register* ceased publication for about 10 weeks.

Nonetheless, our city adapted and persevered. We displayed American flags on Far Hills Avenue as a sign of unity. City Council proclaimed the Oakwood Neighborly Salute where citizens would greet their neighbors each evening at 6:00pm during the shutdown.

We adapted and created new traditions including a motorcade parade honoring the 2020 Oakwood High School senior class along with pictures of our graduating seniors on Shafor Blvd. We also organized drive by events for our popular ice cream social and the holiday of lights.

City Services

While I believe all business is an essential service, there is no question police, fire and EMS services are essential, as is our refuse program, water and sewer services and other governmental and infrastructure services. We determined immediately these services could not be delivered to our citizens remotely. We established procedures to continue to provide essential public services and to protect our outstanding city employees. We did this with limited visibility of the effects the pandemic would have on our finances. More about this later.

I am proud to report we met the challenge. On behalf of all citizens of Oakwood, we commend our outstanding City of Oakwood employees for their service to our community. To quote City

Manager Norbert Klopsch in his year-end memorandum to our employees “We have dealt with the challenges of the year, each in our own way. Yet, we also rallied together, recognizing that the work we do is essential to the health, welfare and safety of the citizens and businesses we serve in our community; and that our work directly impacts the everyday lives of the people we serve.”

We will issue our 2020 Annual Report to every household soon. 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.

Neighborhoods

We have outstanding diversity in housing choices. Although most of our housing stock is over 75 years old, our homes and properties are better maintained than any other city around and our home values prove it. In 2020, 88% of Oakwood home sales were higher than the County appraised value. Oakwood property values increased by \$39 million dollars in the past year based on the 2020 Montgomery County reappraisal. This is not solely due to macro-economic conditions. It is because of our good governance, excellent public schools, responsive city services and community ambience.

Financial Stewardship

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. In April 2020 we were faced with a 10% to 20% revenue loss due to the pandemic. We immediately reduced capital and other expenditures until we had more visibility on our revenue streams. Thankfully, our income tax receipts rebounded in the second half of 2020. We were also thankful for revenue from federal CARES Act funding and Ohio Bureau of Workers’ Compensation rebates. Accordingly, our revenues exceeded our expenses in 2020 and we anticipate this will also occur in 2021.

Well Governed, Well Managed and Financially Strong

As I begin my 18th year on Oakwood City Council and my 12th year as your Mayor, I am also honored to serve with my fellow members of Council. Steve Byington begins his 14th year as a member of Oakwood City Council and his 12th year as our Vice Mayor. Council members Rob Stephens and Anne Hilton begin their 12th year on City Council. Former Council member Chris Epley served seven years on City Council and we congratulate him on his election to the Second District Court of Appeals. He will be an outstanding judge. We welcome Leigh Turben to complete Mr. Epley’s unexpired term. Council member Turben’s previous Oakwood community service includes the Wright Memorial Library Advisory Council, the Oakwood Budget Review Committee and the Oakwood Historical Society Board of Directors. She will be an outstanding member of Oakwood 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.

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.