

City of Streetsboro

State of the City

Much can be said about 2020. Many of us were bitterly divided on the direction of our country as we chose a new President. We watched as cities across the country had riots and some burned. We even saw the unthinkable as our capital was under siege. Covid raged and took many of us far too soon, and left both health and economic scars that we will collectively deal with for years. BUT despite all of these problems, Streetsboro prospered. I am very pleased not just with our performance here at City Hall but in Streetsboro in general. I saw residents really come together during the pandemic. Neighbors helping neighbors. Our residents participating in initiatives like Boro Night In where so many of us ordered from our local restaurants to help them weather the storm. It just helps to prove our City motto. We are the gateway to progress. I think too often we think about this in either physical location respects, like how we are a gateway off 480/the turnpike, or in economic terms. But this year, in 2020, we saw how we progressed as a community. Today, I'm here to report to you, my friends and neighbors, on the progress that our gateway community has experienced in 2020.

When COVID-19 first hit, so many things were thrown at all of us with nary a chance to catch our breath. It caused us to pause and become very cautious, we had no idea what to expect. Because of this uncertainty we immediately took very defensive maneuvers to protect the city's finances. Jenny Esarey, the Finance Director recommended to Council that we make a significant adjustment in the way our income taxes are allocated. Council agreed and without knowing what to expect, we realigned the percentages of the distribution of our income tax receipts so that all monies would be funneled into our General Fund. This would allow us to continue to operate the city while still being able to allocate funding to our Capital Improvement projects. As the year progressed, we continued to remain fiscally conservative and cautious. This was the right thing to do. As proper prior planning usually results in good performance, the financial caution that we had put in place served us very well. As the year ended, we had received some very significant funding in the way of CARES money and a substantial refund from the Ohio Bureaus of Workers Compensation, these items combined with our fiscal conservativeness contributed to us ending the year in the black by a very healthy amount.

At the end of the year, even with COVID, our income tax receipts remained strong. In fact, we just \$54k less in receipts that we were in our best year on record. We all know that the national economy was booming in 2019 but here in Streetsboro we had almost

\$600k more in 2020 than we did in 2019. Kudos to Jenny Esarey and the finance department for their stellar efforts.

Speaking of the economy, we had an enormous amount of Economic Development investment in our City. Our Economic Development Department under the Direction of Patrick O'Malia has been very busy. In the industrial sector we saw the beginnings and conclusion of multiple projects that will add jobs and income to our city. First and foremost, we saw the beginnings of a \$21.8 million dollar investment by the Geis Company in the construction of a 434,000 square foot spec building. This will be the 2nd biggest building in the city. We entered into an abatement agreement with the schools. By contract, the schools will get several sources of new cash to help them with their operations and a new scholarship. The abatement contract also will guarantee 180 new jobs to our city. We also got a major win when we convinced the Bulten Company to set up their North American HQ right here in the Boro. We had to beat out several other states for this international investment. Many of our existing Industries added personnel, the new Industrial as well as the newly added employees total in excess of 600 new jobs, if you want a job, you can find it here in the city of Streetsboro.

Another major project that we helped partner on was the \$6.1 million investment by Simplay 3. They will double the size of their current facility and add 50 new manufacturing jobs to our city. Patrick and I just toured the plant and I have to commend the leadership there on running a great operation. I also want to thank our citizens for being involved. Sometimes progress doesn't come without conflict. When Simplay3 was getting their permits lined up the residents of Hickory Ridge came and expressed some very valid issues, like trucks idling at night or were worried about the buffer between the industrial and residential neighborhoods. We listened to them and did something innovative: we required the Simplay3 owners to put in a new fence and vegetative buffer to protect the residents of Hickory Ridge as part of their incentive agreement. With all of the partisan gridlock in D.C. we forget that this is exactly how the system is supposed to work. Citizens have a problem, come and ask their elected representatives to do something, and those in office listen. Things might be messed up in city halls and the corridors of power in Congress but here in the Boro we still believe in the American way.

In addition, we welcomed new construction in the service and retail sector, with an additional approximately \$38M invested. We got new services to help our residents get closer to everything they want being in the city limits. These include Dairy Queen, Aspen Dental, the Wild Eagle and of course, Buckeye Quality Meats, our new butcher. Where else but Streetsboro are they bulldozing abandoned gas stations and getting brand new, beautiful buildings?

This year 2021, looks to be another good year, with significant investment and more new jobs to be added.

To go along with our Economic Development, we added more than 120 new homes to the city, with a total investment of over \$21,000,000. To put that in perspective, in a year plagued by a pandemic, the city of Streetsboro still managed to garner more than \$60,000,000 in new investment in the city!

This is a perfect segue into our Building Department. Under the direction of Dan D'Agostino, the building department had perhaps one of their busiest years ever. All the folks in the building department are to be commended for their efforts. This year alone as stated above, we issued over 120 building permits for new homes. Of particular note, not one of these homes was built without having an owner; that says a lot about how many people want to move here and be part of our community. We also had unprecedented demand in home improvement permits, of particular note, in 2019 we had only 8 permits issued for pool installation, in 2020 we had 108! We also entered the digital age in regards to obtaining permits for projects, many of these can now be applied for online and contractor registration is also offered online, this is huge convenience for those that do business within the city.

We could not do many of our projects without the stellar efforts of our Planning and Zoning Department under the direction of John Czewskowski. Planning and Zoning is usually a behind the scenes kind of department but virtually nothing we can do in regards to Building and Economic Development could happen without Planning and Zoning. They do an excellent job in their preparation to ensure the Planning and Zoning commission has all the information required to make intelligent decisions in regards to what is built in the city. The Planning and Zoning Department issued more than 1 new permit a day in 2020 and there is a very significant amount of background and research that goes in to every one of those.

I also want to thank John for his efforts to help revitalize Market Square. That plaza has been a blight on our city for too long. We love the businesses that are in there but feel that the absentee landlords in Texas will never do even the minor maintenance to be at the Streetsboro standard. Just look at the parking lot. John is looking at some creative solutions on how to use planning tools to help us unlock some possibilities there. It may still be a long way out before we see it but he's planning for the future.

Our Service Department under the direction of Bill Miller continues to perform at an exemplary level. There is virtually nothing that is asked of them that they cannot accomplish. I'm very happy that we could finally start construction on a badly needed additional Service Garage that will go far in relieving much of the overcrowding at the current service garage. At the beginning of this speech, I talked about our fiscal caution. We don't spend a nickel here at City Hall without being sure that there is a return on investment. Not only will this new garage lead to a lot of operational efficiencies but it allows us to store equipment inside out of the elements that will lead to a much longer life on our equipment. I'd rather spend money on this

expensive equipment and actually take care of it instead of letting the brutal NEOH winters strip them of years of life.

Because of COVID our Parks and Rec Department took a serious hit this year in the form of what we could offer our residents in the form of programs. Under the direction of Greg Mytinger, they still moved forward and were still able to improve our park system. The Parks and rec department primary purpose is to offer programs and facilities that add to the city's quality of life. One of the more significant projects undertaken was the creation of the Hometown Heroes Banner Program wherein residents can pay tribute to their family members that are active service members, veterans and those that have made the ultimate sacrifice while serving. They also created the Commemorative Tree and Bench Program where groups or individuals may purchase trees and benches to be placed in a scenic location to honor or commemorate their loved ones. They continue to focus their efforts to improve the quality of life in the city. This year, the Parks were able to significantly improve the drainage from our baseball fields that will definitely enhance the playability and many less "rain outs" of our baseball season. They also installed Solar lights at Thomas Heritage Park that now allows our much-utilized dog park to be available in the evening hours. They added Trail Markers to Thomas Heritage to highlight the trail options within the park. They increased the size of our fishing pond by clearing out trees and brush. And, we began making enhancements to the park restrooms with touchless faucets, touchless flushing and touchless water fountains. What is really amazing about all of this is that they do it all on a shoe string budget.

I want to quickly point out that we are also fostering an environment of collaboration here in City Hall. Most city halls have silos where one department doesn't know what the other is doing. That isn't how it works here in Streetsboro. For example, our Economic Development Director, Patrick, worked with Greg, the Parks and Rec Director, to secure some new parkland as part of our deal with the Geis Company and we secured an annual donation from the Geis Companies to help fund the Parks. Thank you to one of our best local companies, the Geis Companies, for not only your generosity but calling Streetsboro home for generations. Mr. Mytinger also worked with the County Parks Department to open up a new 128-acre park, the Trail Lake Park. We are always thinking of how to stretch our limited resources and partner to deliver the best possible outcomes for our residents.

Our Police department, under the direction of our new Police Chief Trish Wain continues to provide unparalleled service to our city. They actively participate in so many different community related projects while they continue to protect and serve our citizens. One of the major goals of the new Traffic Signal system was to reduce crashes at our intersections, I am happy to report that we are making headway on that goal. Although they have only been in operation since October, we have seen a decrease in not only accidents but serious accidents also. I am very pleased to report that we had no traffic fatalities in the city in 2020.

Our Fire Department under the Direction of Chief Bob Reinholz continues to provide excellent service to our citizens. In 2020, they responded to 2,371 calls for service, the

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overwhelming majority of the calls were EMS at 1862, while fire related calls were at 508. The biggest news for our FD was the construction of our new 25,000 square foot Fire Station that is nearing completion. This much needed and long overdue project was made possible by the citizens of Streetsboro when they overwhelmingly supported a 0.8 mil levy to fund the construction. Thank you for trusting us to spend your tax dollars wisely.

Of course, many things could not be accomplished without the support and hard work of the folks that work closest to me. Melissa Procop, is the Executive Assistant to the Mayor and she handles so many different duties. This year perhaps her most important duty was to be the go-to person during the construction of the new Fire Station. Every week, week after week Missy coordinated all the efforts of the construction company, the designers and the Fire Department, she has done a stellar job. This has been a monumental task and all the while she has managed her myriad of other duties and done them well. She is normally the first point of contact when folks reach out with issues and usually resolves many of the issues before they reach me. The list of her responsibilities is very long and she does them all very well.

Shawna Lockhart-Reese is our Director of Human Resources, this has been a very busy year for her. Managing our response to the Covid crisis consumes a lot of her time. But that is just the tip of the iceberg of her duties. She takes care of all of our Health Insurance needs, all the updates to our personnel, she is a very integral part of our contract negotiations. Most of our expenses, just like the private sector, are on the labor side of the coin. She helps us get the best deals for benefits package and union contracts that attracts and retains the best and brightest to serve Streetsboro. One of the things that makes Shawna's job so hard is that Streetsboro is very understaffed compared to other cities. That is intentional. We don't have any fat around here and we need to constantly hire the best. That couldn't happen without Shawna.

Frank Beni and Sara Fagnilli are our legal staff to the city's law department. They have had a very busy year. They are the team that we turn to keep us on track. Their vast and lengthy experience in Municipal Law serves us well. From authoring legislation to advising us on all of our legal matters they serve the city well.

As you can tell, I'm very proud of our entire team. I think our whole city should be too.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge and thank the members of City Council. I am very happy to say that this group of Councilpersons are some of the best that I have worked with. This group of folks that are always working for the betterment of the city. It has been a pleasure working with them. I don't always agree with every piece of legislation, like allowing golf carts on our streets, but we can manage to disagree with respect. Most of the other ideas that we have implemented have been great for the city. The cross section of talent on Council has served our citizens well. Many thoughts and ideas are brought forth by them and their advice and consent on many things have served to contribute greatly to our city moving forward. They have been involved and integral to the success of the city. In addition to their

Council duties, they are an important part of the Fire Station and Service Garage projects, the redesign and updating of our website, the core concept plan for the redevelopment of the Market Square area, bringing online payment and billing for our Water Department and the list goes on and on. It is truly refreshing to work with a talented group of individuals like them. They have been very responsive to our citizens and our city business.

In conclusion, 2020, was an unprecedented year. Thankfully, most of the news for Streetsboro is decidedly positive. If we could survive the fires of 2020, I'm cautiously optimistic for 2021, it looks as though it is going to be another successful year for the City. The Fire Station and Service Garage will be complete. The traffic signal project will have worked out all of its kinks. This spring will begin one of the two biggest infrastructure projects in the city in many years, that will not only make the major roads of our city much safer but will have a profound effect on the visual aesthetics of one of our main roads. Beginning soon the state route 14 project will get underway. This will encompass the addition of a third lane to facilitate left turns and hopefully dramatically contributing to the decrease of accidents along our most heavily travelled roadways. We will also install sidewalks from Portage Pointe Drive to Diagonal road contributing to making our community more walkable. It will also rid us of the roadside ditches and replace that with storm water drains as well giving the road more of a boulevard look instead of looking like just another rural road.

I want to thank all of the citizens of the City of Streetsboro for their trust and support. As I said in the Simplay3 / Hickory Ridge example, we practice the ideal of citizen engagement as this leads to trust and understanding. Everything we do at City Hall we do for our citizens and, we are going to continue to make the city a better place to live, work and play!

May God Bless all of you and may God continue to bless the City of Streetsboro. Thank you.