

State of the City & Budget Address

Mayor Diane E. Whalen

Tuesday, June 13, 2017

Eighteen years ago, you gave me the honor of serving as Mayor of the City I love. Each year, I present my State of the City and Budget Address to provide perspective to our residents on the City's progress and our plans for the future. I pledged at that time to listen, to learn, and to lead as we are bonded together with one goal in mind – to provide a safe, thriving environment for all our residents. It is with pleasure tonight that I once again present to you my 19th State of the City and Budget Address.

Another year has passed and the City has diligently worked toward meeting our goals. Playing on the big screen is a slide show of some of our events and accomplishments from last year.

Video or slide

As you can see by this video and as you will learn through our time tonight, we continue to focus on the city and providing the best possible services to our residents and business community. We also focus on our successful financial and economic development which has established our City as a center of commerce in the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky region. We continue to push forward to achieve our goals of providing a safe, prosperous and service oriented community.

Our efforts are paying dividends, and we are experiencing successes from large to small, all of which are very important to our community. These efforts provide an increased and sustainable source of revenue that allow us to provide the best in public safety personnel and equipment, as well as maintain and improve our city infrastructure through the efforts of the Public Services employees. The fiscal plan and management are in place to make sure that we not only meet those obligations this year, but for many years to come.

Our staff members in the Administrative and Finance offices perform responsibly by providing general management and coordination of city operations, support in billing and collections, business licensing, human resources, and risk management.

The general fund budget totals \$34.2 million. This budget figure includes operating and capital expenditures including transfers to other city funds. The operating expenditures are \$25.4 million; an overall 4.5% increase over those budgeted for fiscal year 2017. The city also has planned expenditures for capital items of \$9.9 million.

Our Finance Department continues to be recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association for excellence in financial reporting, the highest recognition awarded for financial reporting for a municipality. In addition, the city received its third consecutive GFOA “Distinguished Budget Presentation” award.

The Police Department remained busy this year with over 55,000 officer calls (9% increase) resulting in 79,443 units dispatched (11% increase). These calls include everything from traffic enforcement, to accident investigations, to responding to 911 calls, and assisting residents, businesses, and visitors with their request for service.

The Department successfully secured federal and state grants for equipment and traffic enforcement programs. A federal grant was obtained and used to purchase body-worn cameras for patrol officers. In addition, the department received state grants in the amount of \$49,000 for enhanced traffic enforcement.

The Community Resource Unit continues to be active with events throughout the City. This year, the unit graduated 550 DARE students, conducted 2 Citizen’s Academy classes (spring and fall sessions), seven career and job fairs, five school assembly programs, three bike rodeos, the City’s celebrations for Easter, Halloween, Fourth of July, Martin Luther King Day and Christmas. In addition, the unit provided drug and crime prevention training to local businesses. The Unit also



provided special training and assistance to many other community and public service agencies along with youth groups throughout Northern Kentucky, including various Heroin based presentations.

2016 was a very busy year for the Florence Fire/EMS Department.

The ambulances of the department responded to 7,310 EMS incidents (up 7.1% over 2015) including 102 Cardiac Arrests (15% decrease) and 272 overdoses (5.5% increase). The Fire Department responded to 2,692 (10% increase) fire incidents including 175 fires (7.1% decrease) and 613 motor vehicle accidents (17% increase).

A total value of \$112,814,515 of property was saved this year in fires that occurred in 2016. We completed a total of 2,611 life safety inspections (increased 7.5%) and 8,627 hours of training (25% increase) were taught or completed by members of the department.

As many of you know, our country has experienced the challenges and devastation that has been created by the heroin epidemic. Overdoses are now the leading cause of death of Americans under the age of 50. According to preliminary data compiled by the New York Times, deaths last year topped 59,000, a more than 19% increase over the year before. Northern Kentucky and our community are struggling with it as well. We are working with many different stakeholders and

agencies in trying to find a way to curtail the overdoses and deaths. The numbers are staggering and the families impacted know no socio-economic boundaries. Our staff participates or has participated in some of the boards and teams that have been created such as Hope for Boone County; we conducted a Heroin Town Hall meeting in 2016 and plan to hold another one in 2017. Our Police Department and our Fire/EMS Department deal daily with the impacts of drug abuse in our community. We are continuously involved in conversations with St. Elizabeth Medical Center and the Health Department regarding solutions. The search for help and answers is ongoing as we try to address both the legal issue and the social issues.

It is no exaggeration to say that every hour of every day our Public Services Department stands ready to provide the essential services needed to ensure that our public infrastructure is designed, built, maintained and repaired to support the high quality of life Florence residents, businesses, and visitors expect and deserve.

Every resident and property owner of Florence relies on Public Services each day for some type of service. This includes managing and maintaining streets, sidewalks, buildings, grounds, fleet services, water, sanitary sewer, storm water,



capital improvements, GIS services, urban forestry, code enforcement, and the citizen inquiry program.

The Public Services Department's mission is to enhance the quality of life in our community by serving others. This objective is accomplished in many ways recapped briefly as follows:

Our transportation infrastructure improvements are now complete or nearly complete on 93 streets. These improvements include complete replacements, mill and overlays and crack sealing. Various sidewalk and bike path improvements were also completed throughout the City.

During the past year, the Department coordinated water main replacement along Locust Avenue and the Ockerman School Campus, in addition to repairing 38 main breaks (25% increase) and 119 service leaks (5% decrease). The Department also relined approximately 5,800 feet of sanitary sewer pipe (27% increase).

Park improvements include the replacement of the Lincoln Woods tennis courts and the installation of a backdrop feature and additional improvements near the existing clock tower at the Main Street/Turfway Road Point Property. The Florence Nature Park was evaluated and master planned as a proactive measure based on aging infrastructure and high usage. Based on the recommendations and the Master Plan, City Council has approved improvements to the existing Evelyn

Kalb Nature Park House as well as the construction of an additional building on the Nature Park property which will be available for rental for larger groups and gatherings.

In the upcoming year, the budget includes infrastructure improvements on 11 streets through contracted work and 70 streets through in-house work. This is a 15% decrease which is directly related to the size and cost of individual projects.

Proposed water line replacement will take place on Grand Avenue and Woodland Avenue. Sanitary sewer relining will take place in the Sanders and Tee sewer sheds. Storm water improvements are slated in the Cayton and Rosetta watersheds. Finally, park improvements include the replacement of the Florence tennis courts located at Boone County High School, the replacement of the Stringtown Park playground safety surface and the asphalt re-surfacing of the Orleans Park basketball court. By proactively updating and replacing infrastructure now, future costs and emergency replacement of infrastructure will be kept to a minimum.

Thanks to the efforts of the City's Urban Forest Commission and the willingness of this and prior City councils to fund projects. One of the projects undertaken this past year was the installation of trees along Main Street near the Point Property. 2017-18 plantings include a joint project with the Boone County Urban Forest Commission. The plantings will take place in the U.S. 42 – Pleasant Valley – Gunpowder Road intersection. The City's commitment to its urban forestry



and beautification strategy is a positive to our City. This commitment has allowed the City to be designated for the 25th consecutive year as a “Tree City USA”.

During the past year, the department organized, planned and implemented 16 special events. A few highlights include hosting a record breaking crowd of over 3,000 for the Halloween Night Out, as well as hosting 611 residents who participated in the spring and Fall Cleanup. Our Veteran’s Day Program served as a backdrop where we welcomed members of our adopted unit from Ft Campbell, Bravo Company 101st Airborne Division, 2nd Brigade 502nd Infantry Unit also known as “The Renegades”

When talking about our Public Services Department, we of course would be remiss if we did not mention the special contributions they make during the winter months. When snow falls and ice forms, and whenever Mother Nature strikes, whether on a holiday or in the middle of the night, our Public Services employees report for duty to help keep city streets clear. Their efforts ensure businesses can open and residents can get to work. Their hard work also allows emergency first responders to safely travel to calls for service within our community. While our mild winter resulted in minimum salt usage and overtime, we know that we plan for the worst and are prepared for whatever Mother Nature throws our way. Thank you for your contribution towards keeping our community safe.

Our Economic Development Team finalized many development projects and continues to search for the businesses our community needs and desires. The Florence Heights development is almost done – Costco and Dave & Buster have done very well over the last year and have been a welcomed addition to the Florence community. Construction of a new Outback Steakhouse on the corner of Pinnacle Drive and Mall Road has been completed and they are open for business. Directly across from Outback on the other corner of Pinnacle Drive will be the city’s second Chick-Fil-A, where construction efforts have begun, with an anticipated opening date of Fall 2017. Menards has delayed their construction plans, not just here, but across the country. Menards does own the property near Costco, and according to all of our communications with their representatives, they remain committed to bringing their store to the Florence Heights Development.

Concerns remain nationwide about the future of brick and mortar retail stores and large urban Malls. Our discussions with some of the national retailers, as well as GGP, owner of the Florence Mall, have reassured us that they are aware of the concerns and recognize that as needs in the retail arena shift, so must their focus. They view the changes as an opportunity to recreate and reinvent the retail experience for the next generation. We look forward to working with them to provide the best possible options for our community.

Major projects on the primary industry side include Bosch Automotive on Spiral Drive. In total they will add 70 new jobs and invest over \$100 million in a

new building and equipment. A new road providing access to Bosch is under construction. Located off of Ted Bushelman Blvd, it will be named Renegade Way, in honor of our adopted military unit, “The Renegades”.

As a result of the annexation of 170 acres of airport property, we continue to work with CVG on the Van Trust Development (right behind Wal-Mart) and other proposed developments. We welcomed the opportunity to annex and provide our excellent city services to this area. Amazon Prime has announced their intention to make CVG their new Air hub. The total build out is estimated to be more than \$1.5 billion dollars with employment opportunities for an estimated 2500 employees. While this project is not located within our city boundaries, we will be involved in discussions regarding flow of traffic and the positive impact this will have on our city as well as our entire region.

Other recent openings include Gabes (formally known as Gabriel Brothers), Bear Paddle Swim Club, CoreLife Eatery, T-Mobile and Vision Works. Magnolia Springs Senior Living and Gerner and Kearns Law Firm, both located off of Ewing Blvd. have opened recently. New hotels, Hilton Home to Suites (Woodspoint Drive), as well as Comfort Suites Hotel (Merchants Drive) are set to open in the near future, and “Villages of Florence” ranch style rental units located on Hopeful Church Road is also set to open later this year.

Mall Road has continued to see substantial growth and redevelopment with the opening of the 75 south bound ramp from Mall Road as well as increased traffic from the Florence Heights Development. The City hired a consultant to perform a traffic study looking at current and future traffic patterns in that area. This study has recommended signal timing changes, the possibility of an additional traffic light and increased signage that will benefit both residents and visitors to Florence.

Those are just some of the highlights and we would encourage you to read the city's latest Development Update published quarterly on our website. It contains details about all the new development occurring in Florence.

Each year as we work through our budgeting process, many opportunities present themselves as possibilities for funding. One such opportunity came up when the city received a donation of property located at the corner of Mall Road and Connector Drive. The donation had several stipulations regarding how the City could use the property. The donor and City Council approved the use of the property as a "Florence Community Plaza" on that site. The Plaza will include areas dedicated to those who serve and protect our city, our Police Department, or Fire/EMS department and our Public Services Department. It will also serve as a

gathering spot for city events such as our Annual Christmas Tree Lighting, and other city outings.

We have completed the Master Planning of our property located on Rosetta Drive. This parcel was home to the old water and sewer department maintenance facilities and has been grossly underutilized since the decommissioning of the pump station and the merger of Florence Water and Sewer Department into the Public Services Department. The blueprint will allow for transformation of the area into a multi-department training facility, providing storage of supplies and equipment such as road salt, as well as providing a more secure and functional police impound lot.

The City also closed on the sale of four acres on the Government Center campus to the Northern Kentucky District Health Department. The health department purchased the land for the construction of their new District Health Offices. The groundbreaking ceremony took place on May 19, 2017 at the Florence Government Center. Construction is already underway!

Boone, Kenton and Campbell Counties are in the process of upgrading their antiquated and costly communications software and radio system. As a part of that project, Florence will be required to purchase new 800 mhz radios for our Police, Fire and Public Services Departments. The new radio system will allow for interoperability between jurisdictions, in the event of a multi county event. Our budget includes \$900,000 for the purchase of our radios.

In 2016, the City created a cross-functional Wellness Team to assist in establishing a program to involve our employees in improving or sustaining their wellness. This team has developed a plan as well as initiating steps to increase awareness of healthy alternatives. The kick off was the first week in May and we look forward to the progress this program brings to our employees.

We continue to seek out interest from the students in our area. Our Young Ambassador and Youth in Government programs provide insight into the local government processes. The attendance from the county elementary schools for our Youth in Government program this year broke records with almost 1000 students in attendance.

In 2017, we will have a new website that will provide an easier, more efficient way to communicate with City Officials, pay bills and get the information on upcoming events. This should be up and running in a few weeks.

During my lifetime here, I have seen the transformation of our little town into the 8th largest city in the state. Florence was in the right place at the right time. We are all about “Location, location, location”. But it took leaders with a vision to make it happen. It is a busy place – one of the biggest complaints we hear is about traffic. But the traffic, the busy roads, traffic signals, storefronts, restaurants and many other businesses are a testimony that we must be doing something right. A city, by

definition, is people choosing to live together to create a place where people can work, play and educate their children and raise a family. City employees have a big role in making that possible for the people in our community, and we are grateful to each and every one of them.

It is the commitment and supportive attitude of past and our current city elected officials, as well as our department heads and staff members that have allowed our community to flourish. To that point and in effort to determine the future direction of our City, we have budgeted money for a Strategic Planning process. We intend to involve citizens, businesses, employees and elected officials as we look into the future and determine what comes next for our community.

The state of our city is strong. No one person can lay claim to that. We are all a part of an ongoing commitment to the progress of our community. Together we will keep moving forward.

I offer my sincere thanks to Y'All. It is our residents, our business owners and their employees, and the dedicated public servants who come to work every day that help to keep our city on track. You are the reason for our success. We have worked hard to manage our growth and provide direction. This is the place I have chosen to live and raise my family. We may not have riverfront property and views to promote, but our view from the top of our Florence Y'All water tower is just as

impressive because of each and every one of you. Thank you for allowing me to serve – It is indeed a labor of love.
