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CITY OF BELLEFONTAINE
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State of the City 2016

January 2017

The state of our city remains strong. Like many cities our size, we continue to combat the rising cost of providing quality services to our local residents and businesses. We are blessed to have a dedicated leadership squad, supportive elected officials, and a team of associates committed to serve our community.

The City of Bellefontaine continues to balance its revenues and expenses in an effort to keep our financial position stable. Our 2016 year end General Fund revenues were \$8,665,294 and the expenditures were \$8,641,058. Our comprehensive funding (which includes the General Fund) had revenues of \$23,660,102 with expenditures of \$22,867,799. Our Treasurer, Mark Fissel, reports that our investments, while safe and secure, are earning an average of 1.5% as a rate of return.

The City's 5 year Strategic Plan was completed in December. It was a collaborative effort bringing together ideas and input from both internal and external sources. We collected information from elected officials, city department heads, community leaders and hundreds of local residents. Its primary focus is on planned land use, housing, utilities, transportation and the general "character" of our community.

This past November, the opportunity for aggregate gas and electric competitive rates was on the local ballot. The issue passed. While natural gas rates remain at an historic low cost, citizens and small business owners will look to 2017 for lower electric rates through this process.

City Auditor, Jack Reser, and his team received the highest award (Ohio Auditor of State Award) for a second consecutive year. Likewise, we commended them for their excellence in practice. This is also attributed to our department heads who continue to work well within the guidelines of our budget to help us maintain a clean set of financial records. The city continues the practice of total transparency as we remain participants with ohiocheckbook.com.

With the passage of State Senate Bill 5, which went into effect on 1-1-16, The City of Bellefontaine entered into a partnership with RITA (The Regional Income Tax Agency). In addition to the support that they provide the city and our tax payers, they enable all of us to file our tax returns electronically via their website. With their assistance, we notified 239 tax payers that they had delinquent tax filings from previous years. RITA has the ability to look at individuals or businesses who file their federal and state taxes, but may have overlooked filing locally.

Code enforcement officer, Wes Dodds, had another productive year. He notified 807 code violators and 721 became compliant. This represents an 89.3% compliance rate. City Council initiated a vacant building enforcement program to reach out to vacant building owners to gather up-to-date contact information and secure their plans for the future of that structure. The city also applied for and received grant dollars to remove seven condemned structures in our city.

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The Fire Department replaced three firefighters who retired or resigned in 2016. The aerial ladder truck had repairs completed at a cost of \$58,000 which brought it back to full working order. They responded to 2733 total incidents. This is a 5% increase from the previous year. 499 of them were fire engine responses while 2,234 of them were EMS incidents. There were 178 total mutual aid runs given while we received 21 total mutual aid runs. Our ambulance service produced revenues of \$505,556 in 2016. This reflects a 6.9% increase over 2015. Firefighters also had a busy year hosting 133 public events or classes for our community. Additionally, the department purchased a new power lift cot, three video laryngoscopes, and eight sets of turnout gear. With the assistance of a grant from the Mary Rutan Foundation, 7 AEDs were purchased and distributed.

The Water department responded to 24 water main breaks; the lowest number in six years. In an effort to reduce costs, the department joined forces with the Logan County Health Department to analyze our water samples. Our Wastewater Treatment Plant continues its good work. We process and treat over 885 million gallons of waste water while receiving zero violations with respect to their EPA testing. We also took delivery of a new manhole saw which greatly reduces time required to restore a manhole. In 2016, they were able to replace and update their crane truck. It nearly doubled their capacity to do the heavy lifting for many of our departments.

The city's engineering department had a busy year. By using \$790,000 from an OPWC grant, we were able to resurface over 50 streets in our community at a cost just exceeding \$1 million. We replaced a major water line on S. Main St. at a cost of \$552,000 and reconstructed East High St. Bridge. Other activity includes 8 new homes, 6 apartments downtown, and numerous industrial/commercial development projects.

2016 marked a year of celebration. It was the 25th Anniversary of our Sister-City Pact with Suzuka, Japan. A delegation of 10 adults and 8 students, from our community, visited Suzuka in late July. More than 500 local and Japanese students have experienced this cultural exchange over this period of time. In October, a delegation of 10 Suzuka officials visited our community. A ceremonial Japanese maple tree was planted and several gatherings were held to honor of this auspicious occasion. We also celebrated the 125th Anniversary of First Concrete Street in America by hosting concrete contractors, from across the nation, during their annual convention in May.

Our city parks continue to restore and update their facilities. We received a \$51,000 grant to repair shelter houses, create handicap accessibility, and add new playground equipment. The Hoffman Municipal Pool saw over 15,000 swimmers this summer. The Myerah Nature Preserve, now on its third year under our ownership, continues to be enjoyed by many of our residents. We have experienced an increase in the different species of both plants and animals located on the preserve.

Our Police Department entered into a contract with Mary Rutan Hospital to add 5 additional police officers. This effort enables the hospital to have a police officer, on site, 24 hours a day. The police department partnered with the local Rotary Club and several local businesses to purchase two driving simulators. The devices are used at all county schools in the hopes of bringing awareness to students about distracted driving. Law enforcement continues to focus their efforts to reduce drugs in our schools and community. The outreach efforts, of the Police Department, continued at a very busy pace. There were over 30 events throughout the community with public speaking, K-9 demonstrations and neighborhood events. We hosted a very successful football tailgate event in the fall. Now in its 5th year, the department continues to offer classes through the Citizens Police Academy.

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Our Utility Department continued to update their software and produced a new billing statement in 2016. We continue to find benefits with the Neptune Automated Rating System which can proactively notify customers that they may have a leak within their home or business. The Utility Department continues to move toward even more convenient method paying our monthly bills.

The Bellefontaine Municipal Court saw a caseload of 9080 cases. 5726 traffic cases, 1608 criminal cases, 982 civil cases, 447 small claims cases and 316 parking tickets. Another probation officer was added, through the assistance of a grant, which helps them oversee a case load of 130 individuals. In 2016, we saw the implementation of 2-1-1 phone system where individuals can call for non-emergency assistance and reach an operator 24 hours a day to assist them.

Our downtown area continues to revitalize, grow, and develop. There are many events throughout the course of the year that bring shoppers and visitors to this area. The DBP (Downtown Business Partnership) continues to expand on these ideas. We were proud to host events from both Ferrari Club and the REO Club last summer. In 2016, we celebrated and welcomed many new and exciting additions to the downtown business family over the course of that year. We saw the addition of new loft apartments above the downtown area, new restaurants, coffee shops, retail establishments, and a doctor's office. We created legislation that gave structure to "food trucks" conducting business in our community, as well.

We continue to work closely with the Chamber of Commerce with a common goal of economic growth and development. In 2016, there were a number of businesses that reported both additional construction projects and new jobs. Likewise, the revitalization of our downtown business area also translates into new jobs for many. We continue to work with area businesses in an effort to retain and attract new prospective employers to our community. We remain involved with the complicated landscape of maintaining and preparing our local workforce for these opportunities.

I am confident that the City of Bellefontaine is positioned to have another exciting year! We may pause, with this document, to reflect on the accomplishment of the past year; but our work is far from complete. In the spirit of continuous improvement, we remain focused on what we can do even better. We realize and embrace this ever changing world that we live in. Bellefontaine IS the Peak of Ohio and we strive to operate at Peak Performance Levels!

Respectfully submitted,

Ben Stahler

Mayor, City of Bellefontaine