

MAYOR JUDY COOK
2003 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS
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“Two thousand and three was a challenging year for Oakwood. In May we suffered the tragic loss of our Vice Mayor Jack Donnelly. This was an unexpected event that shocked the community. Jack had served the city in many ways, culminating as Vice Mayor, and has been sorely missed

Many projects required planning and oversight. In addition to these on going responsibilities, new issues appeared that needed concentrated study, preparation and daily review.

The development of a new Comprehensive Plan for Oakwood dominated the work of City Council. This document will be the policy guide for physical improvement and development for years ahead. The response and assistance from Oakwood citizens has been outstanding and ensures a final plan that represents a composite of community views. The final stages of the Plan preparation are in progress. A completed Plan will be ready for citizen review followed by Council approval in the next few months. It is important that a high level of citizen interest and involvement be maintained.

The current addition to the City Building to house the Safety Department has progressed well despite uncooperative rainy weather. An early summer move to this new facility is anticipated. Once the Safety Department is ensconced in their new quarters, the renovation of the unserviceable east end of the building where they currently work can proceed. The space will replace administrative and Council chamber areas given over to the Safety Department. The completion of the City building project is projected for the end of the year. We have great hope of a ribbon cutting celebration in 2004.

Another major undertaking in 2003 concerned replacement of the posts and chains along Far Hills Avenue. Not only had these safety measures come to the end of their serviceability and thus needed replacing, but the plan for safety along Far Hills, particularly for our school population, needed reexamination. With the help of a citizen task force, a new pattern of safety measures is in place and will be implemented in 2004. The plan includes removal of posts and chains in some places and replacement with new barriers in the remaining areas. The important safety measure of sidewalk widening on the east side of Far Hills from Patterson Road to the High School is also included. Along with the many other precautions addressed by parents, school officials and city staff, this will enhance the safety of students as they walk to and from school and for pedestrians in general.

The often debated timber walls in the business district will have their life extended by filling, capping and exterior cosmetic treatment. The great expense of replacement encourages innovative solutions to their deteriorating condition. However, the time is not far off when replacement will be required.

Our street maintenance program included many projects. The major work of resurfacing Shroyer Road was done cooperatively with the city of Kettering. The Oak Knoll project was completed with the construction of a cul-de-sac on Deep Hollow in preparation for the closing of the stretch of Deep Hollow bordering Hills and Dale Park. Through a decision by property owners, Harman Terrace went from a private street to a public street and enjoyed construction improvements. Our corporate line moved a few feet north along

Irving Avenue through cooperation from the city of Dayton. The sidewalks, tree lawns, curbs and curb cuts are now part of the city of Oakwood along the Oakwood portion of Irving Avenue. An added benefit for citizens this year is the decision to cease charging property owners for curb and curb cut maintenance.

In 2004 the entire city will have water meters replaced. The new meters can be quickly read electronically without entrance to the home required. This is a project that has been years in coming and will correct long-time error in billing for water usage. The cost will be balanced over time in the saving of expenses for meter reading. In recent years it has become increasingly difficult to find people home to secure entrance to read meters. Much of the planning for this major project was completed in 2003.

Also in 2003, the Safety Department analyzed their major vehicle needs, including fire trucks and medic vehicles. This study resulted in the recommendation to purchase a new fire truck. We will purchase the new fire truck this year. This is a needed replacement for a 24 year old truck that no longer meets fire code standards and has many mechanical problems. The good news is that it can be purchased without concern that it will fit in the assigned storage bay – this because the new building addition was designed to accommodate today's fire trucks.

The Leisure Services department had an active year. New equipment brought improvements to the popular Health Center at the Oakwood Community Center. The Lobster Fest was held again with the Sister City organization. A community calendar was produced and distributed to citizens. An eye-catching community cookbook full of tempting recipes was produced and sold. For the 21st time in succession, Oakwood was awarded Tree City USA status. Of special note was the program on architectural history and preservation offered as part of the community program. This series of evening lectures was well attended and included a variety of information regarding history and renovation. This was largely the work of Oakwood Preservation Trust and was a great gift of time and expertise. The theme of this series will be enhanced by the production of a documentary film. With professional help and support from the city, the Oakwood Historical Society and Oakwood Preservation Trust will collaborate to create an educational film regarding the historical architecture of Oakwood.

Significant unanticipated agenda items in 2003 included subdivision of one of the few remaining multi-acre lots in the city and the marketing of Sugar Camp. Both these issues concern use of land which is a precious commodity in our city. It is perhaps serendipity that the occurrence of these issues coincides with the development of a new comprehensive plan. They bring to the forefront all the aspects that are part of land use issues. They are the very issues for which a comprehensive plan should provide guidance. Both of these property issues remain unfinished so will continue as a concern and responsibility for city staff and council.

The financial position of the city remains healthy. Careful planning and execution allows maximum benefit for dollars spent. Our estate tax receipt added to our resources again which will allow us to continue providing the finest city services without raising taxes.

Reserves for known future expenses are in place. The passage of the 5.5 levy renewal by 76% was a statement of support for city programs and allows the city to continue the excellent services our citizens expect.

Throughout the year, we have not forgotten to be joyful and celebrate. Celebration of Flight 2003 was richly observed by Oakwood. Our first work of public art was devoted to

this theme and dedicated last summer. The Wright Brothers' Hawthorn Hill and other Oakwood homes of the same period were part of a popular tour organized by the Oakwood Historical Society, the Oakwood Preservation Trust and the city. An Oakwood day at Celebration Central, including an opening ceremony, was part of the July events. Our City Beautiful awards recognized the creative skills and hard work of our citizens. Halloween offered the exciting new treat of the scarecrow contest. This was enthusiastically welcomed as a new community event. Our winter celebration of lights included a new celebration this year. The lighting of the Chanukah menorah joined with the lighting of a Christmas tree, holiday decorating awards and our luminaries lined streets to celebrate the winter holidays. We will begin the new year with a Martin Luther King Breakfast jointly sponsored with the city of Kettering to celebrate the vision of Dr. King.

It is a full agenda that faces the city for 2004. It will require the help of many people. The citizens have elected a City Council that is prepared and willing to assume the task. For city staff, Homeland security and utility aggregation are new requirements. This excellent staff of people under the direction of Manager Norbert Klopsch and our department directors allow us to enjoy the quality of life we greet daily in our city. They will manage the challenges ahead. In addition are the countless hours given by citizens as members of city committees. Their volunteer contributions allow community richness that would otherwise be financially out of reach. Their assistance will continue. And finally, always on call, are the citizens of Oakwood. Their contributions are unique and limitless. Perhaps the greatest gift is the hours given to each other as neighbors and friends. It has been a privilege to serve as Mayor of Oakwood this past year and I look forward to the year ahead.”