

MAYOR JUDY COOK
2005 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS
Presented at February 6, 2006 Council Meeting

“2005 began with the exhilaration of being settled in the newly renovated Public Safety and Administration building. After two and a half years of managing in the temporary trailer offices and amidst a major construction zone, city staff at last began conducting business in the new facility. In addition to the comfort and esthetic appeal of their new surroundings, staff quickly realized how superior the new setting is for serving our citizens. Gone was the inadequate safety department work space, replaced with a state-of-the-art safety department facility. In May an open house was held for the citizens of Oakwood to tour the building and familiarize themselves with the new building. The completion of our transition to the new civic center came in July with the rededication of historic memorabilia that had been temporarily removed or destroyed in the renovation process. This ceremony created the important historical setting for the new facility.

Several major issues required the focus of both Council and staff during the year. Securing a use for Sugar Camp that best serves the whole community occupied the entire year and remains a major agenda item today. Staff performance to this end has been outstanding and we remain optimistic that a favorable resolution to this issue will take place. Threatened loss of local government funds from the state brought united efforts not only from our Council and staff but throughout the region. Our success in retaining that major funding is a significant victory for local tax payers. The future for this funding is still challenged so we remain diligent in monitoring state action. In another state action, Senator Jeff Jacobsen through legislative action turned control of the Regional Transit Authority Board over to the Montgomery County Commissioners and away from more diverse local control. Because of her outstanding performance, our representative Cheri Ohmer was retained on the Board as a Montgomery County appointee.

Budget concerns were also a major issue. The ongoing threat of using reserves to balance the budget required careful consideration and discussion. Our citizen Budget Review Committee provided invaluable guidance in these discussions. With the help of estate tax revenue received at an unexpected level, an increase in income tax revenue and some fee increases to levels closer to costs, we were able to end 2005 with higher General Fund balances. Also, provided present income levels continue, we will seek renewal of the levy expiring in 2006 at no more than its current level (i.e., no increase in taxes for city services in 2006.)

The city continued water meter replacements throughout the year and will soon complete that project. It was another banner year for water production. Without the need to purchase more expensive water from outside the city, costs were significantly limited. Our water rates remain significantly lower than the average rates paid throughout the Miami Valley area. The annual streets and sidewalk programs occurred on schedule with property owners again benefiting from curb and driveway apron maintenance being done at city expense. The most significant work took place on Fairmont Avenue and Oak Knoll Drive. An unexpected emergency arrived with a rash of whooping cough cases in December. Our Department of Health rose to the occasion with immediate response and the health risk was quickly brought under control.

Special attention has been devoted to our community business district. The already vibrant district is enjoying new development in the form of a 10,000 square foot retail center at the corner of Orchard Drive and Far Hills. The city is looking for ways to make the area more

pedestrian friendly while alleviating parking congestion. Attractive new banners have added identity to the area. The winter lighting of the trees was enhanced to the applause of many. The district has become a community gathering place so we seek to make it more conducive to that role. Noteworthy also in the past year was the construction of Little Woods Road and the plan approval and beginning of construction on the first new home in the Runnymede Hills Subdivision.

Also in 2005, for the first time the city granted money to the Oakwood Historical Society in support of repairs to the Long-Romsper House. The allocation recognizes the Society's community role as keepers of our historical records and responsible party for our historical center.

The year was rich with community celebrations. The second annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast took place in January with approximately 250 citizens attending, some 75 more than in 2004. One of the many benefits of this event is the opportunity to work jointly with the city of Kettering in hosting the celebration. It requires yearlong planning and the Oakwood committee contributed in an exemplary manner. In April the annual New Resident Breakfast was held. This is an occasion that allows us to specially welcome new Oakwood citizens. Families enjoy this opportunity to speak with Council, staff members, Municipal Court Judge Bob Deddens, and school and library officials. That Day in May enjoyed a beautiful day after several years of disappointing weather. This is primarily an event produced by Oakwood Rotary and greatly enjoyed by the entire community. The service to our community provided by Oakwood Rotary is varied and extensive. That Day in May is the most visible but many additional benefits come to the city from Rotary such as the annual citizen of the year award; the 2005 award going to Bill Kendell, longtime member and chair of the Oakwood Planning Commission. We are grateful to the leaders and members of Oakwood Rotary for all that they contribute to the community. In the spring, the Dayton Philharmonic Volunteer Association brought their biennial Show House to Oakwood at the former Schuster estate. This was a repeat performance for Oakwood and again was well received and very successful. Spring also brought the 4th annual C.A.R.E. walk to the streets of Oakwood—literally. Each year this breast cancer awareness and support effort grows. We are justifiably proud of the citizen organizers, promoters and participants who make this annual event such a success.

During the summer several events took place. The very popular House Dog Show again brought enthusiastic pet owners to the high school to promenade their pets. With the large array of contest categories, many departed as winners. Citizen Phyllis Heck again organized this happy occasion. The beautiful "Giving Strings" concert took place on Lonsdale in August. Founded by Colleen Judge and her sister, this has grown into a much anticipated event enjoyed by many. It has the additional benefit of raising money in support of programs benefiting youth. For the second year The Farm on Ridgeway was the site of a concert by the Oakwood High School Band and open to our citizens. This lovely setting provides an opportunity to showcase the talents of our student musicians and we are grateful to owner John Gray for opening his property for this community purpose. For our Ice Cream Social in August the day was sunny and bright. The community responded with high attendance and enthusiastic participation. Citizens of all ages enjoyed this event which was so well planned and executed by the Leisure Services Department and citizen volunteers.

Fall was ushered in once again with Scarecrow Row, our Halloween decorating event. To brighten the dark days of winter our celebration of lights is a welcome relief. In its new home at Shafor Park, this community event is planned as a family celebration and occurs

on the same night as our luminary display in the community. It is the work of the Environmental Committee that makes lighting our city possible. It is a long, cold day for committee members as they line our streets with candles. Also key to the success of this event is citizen Emcee Dan Edwards. Dan follows his service as emcee for our Ice Cream Social to a chillier session at our winter event. We are most fortunate for his willingness to share his talents.

We honor citizen participation in several ways throughout the year. City Beautiful awards were given to home owners for exceptional outdoor landscaping. These citizens are nominated by neighbors who appreciate the benefit to their neighborhood. Collectively they add great beauty to our city. The scarecrow contest brings crowds of people to Shafor Blvd. The array of entries offers a great creative variety and is a very popular display. Choosing winners is especially difficult. Our winter holiday home decorating contest presents awards for both day time appeal and night appeal. The entire community appreciates the efforts of home owners to beautify and brighten their homes in the dark of winter.

Regionally, we are engaged in many cooperative efforts which aim to benefit all. Vice Mayor Carlo McGinnis continues to represent the city on the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission. This important organization works on transportation issues and has expanded into other areas with regional significance. They have recently been promoting the Greater Dayton Compact which seeks consensus on a vision for the region. Councilman Roger Blumensheid represents Oakwood on the Miami Valley Communications Council. As Vice President he has been and continues working to select a new director for MVCC and develop a new organizational structure and work plan for the organization. The member cities, including Oakwood, have voted to have 20% of the franchise fees rebated to their cities. Our city Manager, Norbert Klopsch is newly elected as the Vice Chairman of Gov. Tech which is the MVCC cities manager group. Norbert and I participate in the Greater Dayton Mayors and Managers Association and I am currently serving as president. This multi county organization addresses issues of regional concern and seeks opportunities for cooperative and collaborative solutions to problems. Norbert and I also represent Oakwood on the newly formed First Suburbs Consortium of Dayton. This council of governments specifically addresses issues that effect first tier suburbs of our central city. By speaking with a collective voice and joining with other such organizations throughout the state we can more effectively bring about change and action to benefit our cities. Another effort at regional cooperation is the Dayton Regional Network. This consortium seeks support from all facets of community life to more cost effectively benefit our citizens. I am currently a member of that group. One can see by the number of organizations striving for regional cooperation that there is new effort and sense of urgency to accomplish that outcome.

Reviewing the past year, it is clear that the city that we know and enjoy is only possible because of the quality staff that provides service to all of us. City Manager Norbert Klopsch is coming to the end of his fourth year as chief executive of the City of Oakwood. Guided by the tenants of the Oakwood Comprehensive Plan, City Council establishes policy and direction for the city manager and monitors outcome. Reviews by City Council reveal that under his direction the city has been managed effectively and efficiently. Significant challenges have been addressed and solutions diligently pursued. The staff for which he is responsible is capable, talented, and dedicated. Team effort is the hallmark of their performance.

As we look forward to the coming year there are many reasons for optimism. Our citizens continue to stay informed, communicate points of view, and become involved. With diverse missions, our city committees operate effectively and are well staffed with concerned citizens. The Oakwood Historical Society and the Oakwood Preservation Trust are working together on meaningful projects for the city with an eye to possible unification in the future. Our Sister City organization is working to strengthen its membership and undertake new projects. City Council and city staff are devoted to assisting the citizens of Oakwood in their efforts to shape their community. We are always open to new opportunities for communicating with citizens. My fellow Council members offer a rich variety of skills and knowledge which they use wisely in guiding the city. Citizens are well served by their leadership. And, of special note, we have not raised taxes for city services since 1991 – 15 years ago!”

On the horizon is our centennial celebration. The event will take place in 2008 and work is already in progress. Under the leadership of co-chairpersons Madeline Iseli and Richard Good, plans are being outlined. The Centennial Film Committee has been working for over a year on a film presentation of Oakwood history. It is an exciting prospect.