

FAIRVIEW PARK STATE OF THE CITY
Delivered by Mayor Eileen Ann Patton
March 10, 2010 ~ Gemini Center

Welcome, thank you to the Fairview Park Chamber of Commerce for hosting this event. I would like to acknowledge all of our businesses here today and thank you for the investment you make in our community. Joining us also are School Superintendent Brion Deitsch and members of the School Board, thank you for being here. I would like to thank City Council for the important role that each of you play in reaching the goals we have set forth for our great community. I would like to acknowledge the City Directors that are here today. This is the outstanding group that I meet with every Monday morning as we implement both long and short term plans for our city.

Jim Kennedy, Director of Service and Development
Lisa Rocco, Director of Finance
Sara Fagnilli, Director of Law
Regina Sillasen, Director of Senior Life
And Tim Pinchek, Director of Recreation
Dave Simon, Fire Chief
Sel Kulcsar, Building Commissioner
Jim Maat, Service Supervisor

Pulling this group together, which at times can be challenging, is Bridget Hinkel, my Administrative Assistant. My appreciation to all the employees at city hall. The special talents that each of you bring forth, along with your dedication in serving the residents of our community is overwhelming. I would like to take a moment to recognize all of you and ask that you stand to be acknowledged.

We have a cherished book at city hall that I have referred to many times over the years. We call it the “green book.” And it is written by Margaret Schaefer Goebelt entitled, FAIRVIEW PARK IN HISTORICAL REVIEW. There is a chapter called “*An Affair of the Heart*” and it begins like this: Your town will be what you want it to be, it isn’t YOUR town – it is YOU.

These words were the last two lines in a program of the **Fairview Mothers Club that was established in the early 1900’s**. It goes on to state: “1910 was an era when people solved their own problems on a local level. Its citizens almost immediately became involved in the needs and concerns of their fellowmen. They accepted – even welcomed – a personal commitment to make their town what they wanted it to be. Folks saw things that needed to be done, and found the most effective way of doing them.” As History has a way of repeating itself, this statement, made 100 years ago, those things are happening right here – today. We are in need of solving a problem on a local level.

It has been a difficult couple of months as we put together the City’s budget which must be approved and certified at the county by March 31st. This 2010 budget reflects a great amount of work.

As one of the worst economies in the past 70 years unfolds, the federal government, state government and the county government have slashed thousands of dollars that go to local municipalities. These are our operating dollars. From last year to this year, over 1 million dollars have been taken away from our general fund to operate our city. These are cuts that are not within our control.

On January 22nd of this year, we were officially notified in writing from NASA Glenn that the federal government does not have the funding to continue to maintain and operate the two NASA buildings that

are located in our city. NASA is our largest taxpaying business which brought in over \$250,000 in income tax to our general fund. All of the civil servants will be relocated across the street to their campus headquarters located in another city. In addition to this, income tax revenue decreased last year by \$164,200, bringing a loss of over \$400,000 to our community. This loss of revenue is huge especially for a bedroom community like ours.

Due to the banking and housing crisis, home valuations went down throughout the county. Because our city receives 13% of the property taxes, we were notified that Fairview Park's decrease would amount to \$298,062 less than we received last year.

The Local Government Fund, which is money allocated to municipalities from the State and County, is \$83,013 less than we received last year.

Our projected expenditures for the year 2010 are \$10,915,798. Our projected revenue for this year is \$9,170,254, leaving a \$1.7 million dollar deficit.

Faced with this challenge, we commissioned a "Financial Committee" of employees, which include representatives from the Police Department, Fire Department, Service Department, City Council and the Administration to address this deficit.

Through our discussions, it was clear that this economy has made it impossible to balance the city budget without significant changes in the city's economic structure. Since taking office, we've made significant cutbacks over the years, including not replacing retiring employees, or filling positions that were vacated, and other methods which needed to be implemented. Many discussions took place about manpower numbers and the minimum needed to continue to serve our residents. The Service Department has, over the years, been reduced from 45 employees to 27 and a two officer positions in the Police Department have remained vacant.

We do not have a city hall receptionist and the positions of Purchasing Clerk And Payroll have been consolidated. Many employees are cross-trained to handle duties in various departments when illness, injury or vacations occur.

Not wanting to create a situation that would produce overtime and further create a larger deficit, nor create a situation that would reduce the safety of our residents or the services provided to them by implementing layoffs, the city employees, through a series of these meetings agreed to:

- All employees, union and non-union, will implement a pay freeze for 2010 and roll back their wages to 2009.
- All employees will be enrolled in the City's low option cost-savings health care plan.
- City Council will implement a 4% wage decrease.
- All union employees and non union will take 5 non-paid furlough days.
- All administration staff will take 10 non-paid furlough days.

These employee concessions, along with one time transfers and moving some employees' salaries out of the general fund, still found us facing a deficit of almost \$500,000. Discussions continued regarding how to reduce this deficit and every idea was placed on the table, and the merits of each one were weighed heavily. It was agreed that a \$10.00 a month fee for rubbish collection and disposal would be implemented to assist in offsetting this deficit.

This program will begin April 1st with the specific provision that this fee will expire on December 31, 2011. This will allow us time to monitor our revenues while working with NASA to refurbish their building for future rental use.

And as the days and months continue here at city hall, we are being proactive. Our “Financial Committee” will continue to meet every 2 weeks throughout the year to chart our income tax receipts as we receive them. This will allow us to carefully plan for the remainder of the year and make adjustments where necessary.

To say that the start of 2010 will be a challenging year is true – as these challenges come on the heels of a global recession that has affected almost every family, business and government agency.

As we celebrate our centennial and reflect over the past 100 years and read about the challenges that the early families of our community had to overcome - we build on that strength knowing they weathered many storms and survived, and we will too.

Though the financial state of our city continues to remain our top priority, we have many things to celebrate in our city and in each of our departments.

We are very focused on programs that “Strengthen our Neighborhoods.” Today, I would like to share them with you and I begin with our **BUILDING DEPARTMENT** which had a very active year as we continue the inspections of rental homes in our community.

RENTAL DWELLING LICENSES are issued once a year and are good from July 1 until June 30th. When the homes are in conformity with the Building and Zoning Codes, a license is then issued.

We have been able to identify 191 Single Family rental dwelling units in our community. fifteen two-family, three – three-family and one four-family homes. Our Building Department has conducted 179 rental inspections to date and will continue to do so until June 1st of this year. Of the 179 inspections, a total of 35 violation letters were sent to the homeowners. Each rental dwelling is charged a \$100.00 fee per year and the total fee for this program collected in 2009 was \$27,000.00.

This focused project was initiated to strengthen our neighborhoods and the tangible results of the corrections of violations will improve the entire community.

Another important program that the building department performs is the inspection of ***APARTMENT BUILDINGS*** in our community. Apartment inspections are made each year in concert with the Fire Prevention Bureau. Forms are mailed from the Building Department and initial inspections are made. When violations are found, the property owner is given 30 days to make corrections, follow-up inspections are then made. When the buildings are in conformity with the Building and Fire Prevention Codes, a license is then issued.

We have 39 Apartment and Apartment complexes located in our community. That consists of a total of 82 Buildings which in total, consist of 1, 783 apartment suites.

The entire inspection procedure takes from four to six months to complete. Last year all apartments received their license. Total fees for this program collected in 2009 were \$10,482.00.

It is important to note that our Building Department has only two inspectors completing these assignments and they do an outstanding job. Their office support staff also consist of two employees that oversee and take **APPLICATIONS FOR PERMITS** in our city. Last year 1,494 permits were issued for various projects. The estimate valuation of construction throughout our city last year was valued at \$6,770,889.46.

Due to the completion of many construction projects in our city, such as Westgate and the Brookpark Road office park, permits were down in 2009 compared to 2008 by 302 applications. The estimated valuation of construction throughout the city was also down by \$ 3,465,652. This downturn can be attributed to the economy as many developers, business owners and homeowners are putting on hold any major projects or improvement to their property.

As all of us in this room know, the biggest investment many of us make in our lifetime is the purchase of our home. Our **SUMMER PROPERTY MAINTENANCE PROGAM** continues each summer. A building department employee administers this program each year to preserve maintenance standards in our residential neighborhoods. Areas of the city are inspected on a rotating basis and in the year 2009, the areas of Wards 4 and 5 were inspected.

Our property maintenance employee inspected 2,463 homes last year and 298 properties were notified of code violations. Once a home is identified of a violation, a notice is sent with a time period to comply. Our inspector informs the owner of consultation services, educational programs, loan programs and the appeal procedures if desired. We also offer our residents an opportunity to speak with our prosecutor if personal family or financial issues prohibit the owner from correcting these violations in a timely matter. Our ultimate goal is to work with the homeowners in keeping our residential neighborhood strong and beautiful.

As I stated earlier, over the years our **SERVICE DEPARTMENT** has seen many changes as we now have 18 employees less then we had when I first took office. This department does an incredible amount of work and improvements throughout the city on a daily basis. This tireless group oversees snow plowing, grass cutting, leaf pick-up, sewer work, street repairs, maintenance of our city buildings and parks, vehicle and machine repair, recycling, tree trimming, cemetery maintenance, and all traffic issues.

As we carefully monitored the economy and in anticipation of possible declines in revenue which later proved true, the City carefully chose to cut back on infrastructure project expenditures in 2009. As a result, a major \$1.2 million dollar storm and sanitary project on Woodstock was deferred and a \$1.1 million dollar zero interest loan from Ohio Public Works was refused because of lack of available matching funds and the City's decision not to incur additional debt in our sewer fund. We also put on hold the final phase of a three-phase city hall roofing program due to reduced revenue receipts in the city's Capital Projects Fund.

Other projects were carefully planned and budgeted for that help keep our community moving forward. We were pleased to continue our **ANNUAL STREET PROGRAM**, which completed its 20th year with complete or partial repaving or repair of seven (7) streets throughout the community at a cost of \$498,848. In addition, as a result of a grant award of \$36,000, a new disabled parking area was installed adjacent to the Police Station.

In order for our Service Department to continue to service our residents, we were able to replace, through available capital dollars, one heavy duty pick-up truck at a cost of \$27,000 and one cargo van for sewer work throughout the city at a cost of \$21,145.00

As part of our continuing efforts to **REDUCE FLOODING**, the Service Department employees installed permanent restrictors on all storm water catch basins to slow water flow into the sewers which prevents backup into our residential homes. This work marks the completion of this program which began in 2007, and together with some of the larger sewer projects previously completed, has resulted in no reports to the city of basement flooding in more than 2 years. Also as part of these efforts, a major storm sewer repair project was completed on West 228th at a cost of \$17,900.00.

Since this administration took office, we have spent over 5 million dollars (\$5,073,152) on sewer related projects and repairs. We have all certainly seen the benefits from this comprehensive, much needed program and it has indeed strengthened our neighborhoods.

The **DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** plays an important role in “strengthening our neighborhoods”. This department is responsible for expanding economic revitalization in our community. This activity continues to be one of the primary goals of this administration.

Our community showed its true character by laying out the welcome mat and supporting new and expanding businesses in 2009. During the year, seventeen (17) new businesses were issued occupancy permits and include: Gray House Pies, Jeffrey Paul Salon, IMARC Medical Research, and the return to Fairview Park of Dominic’s Santos Italian Restaurant. Westgate continues to fill out their center with the opening of Mattress Warehouse, Nails and Comfort, Sally’s Beauty Supply and Dolce Wraps.

The five office buildings previously constructed at the Fairview Corporate Center at West 227th and Brookpark Roads are now fully occupied with the addition of several new businesses. During the year, Davita Health Systems, a kidney dialysis provider began operation and Strayer University opened its Business College in late fall. Serious discussions continue with several clients for the sixth and final building.

During the year, the city was awarded a grant of \$812,000 from NOACA for streetscape improvement on Lorain Road from West 223rd street to the North Olmsted border. This award has been designated for distribution to the city during state fiscal year 2012. Since this grant calls for a 20% city match – or \$162,400 – plus additional mandated ODOT expenditures, the city will go forward with the necessary preliminary work in the hope that the city’s portion of the needed finances will be available in 2012.

In the meantime, with the assistance of the County Department of Development, we were able during the year to offer storefront renovation funding assistance to Fairview Park businesses. In 2009, fifteen (15) storefront applications were processed, resulting in more than \$115,000 in improvements being made to properties on Lorain Road. Thank you to these businesses for the investment you continue to make in our community.

All improvements made on Lorain Road, help strengthen our neighborhoods as many of our residential streets connect off this Main Street. This past year, we were pleased to continue the improvement by the demolition of the final two motels on Lorain Road. It is with great hope that we can move forward on development plans for both of these areas. The Cleveland Motel land is on the market for sale and the Country Inns parcel is part of an overall 11 acre development plan that we have been working on. As the economic environment continues to be challenging at this time, we have carefully chosen specific

steps in moving forward on this project. Last year, the city applied for a \$325,000 Grant from the Community Development Block Grant Program which will allow us to purchase two smaller parcels in this target area. We hope to receive this grant award which will be announced in the Spring - an important investment in the future of our community and this overall project.

In June of last year the Development Department held a “business property seminar”. Business owners met with city officials and a commercial real estate professional to develop strategies and provide the assistance necessary in addressing vacancies. Also held was a “real estate seminar” in partnership with the Business Advisory Council of the City Schools. This day-long event included presentations and a bus tour to showcase Fairview Park and highlight the value and quality of our housing stock. We received excellent feedback from realtors and a special thanks to Fairview resident and local realtor, Judy Nicolff who was very instrument in this program to showcase our city.

One of the many reasons people choose to live in our community is safety. Our 26 **POLICE OFFICERS** and our 27 **FIREFIGHTERS/PARAMEDICS** continue to strengthen our neighborhoods through neighborhood patrols, speed enforcement trailer, motorcycle and bicycle unit, youth commission program, and fire prevention programs in our schools. Last year, our Auxiliary Officers volunteered almost 2,000 hours, making a significant contribution to our community. Training continues for both departments which include programs such as “Fraud Against Seniors” and paramedic and fire training disciplines.

This week, meetings are taking place with regard to a Fire District Regionalization study that is underway for the Westshore communities.

A new 911 phone system was purchased which enhances the ability of our safety forces to provide professional responses to police, fire and EMS requests. With over 1,500 emergency calls to our Fire Department, and over 12,000 calls for service to our Police Department, this new system will enhance our ability in servicing and protecting our residents.

We also take great pride that we are able to offer programs that help keeps senior citizens feeling safe in their homes. A program initiated by our Fire Department installs lock boxes on our senior homes that include important information should our safety forces need to enter during an emergency.

We also continue to offer the “ARE YOU OK” Program initiated by our Police Department where our senior residents can be telephoned on a daily basis to make sure that they are OK. These programs are an important part of our **SENIOR CENTER**, which will celebrate its 10th Anniversary in its present building. Last year we had 32,000 visits by our seniors attending our hot meal program, computer classes, health services, legal and tax assistance, educational programs, and social services performed by our licensed social worker. One of the most important programs we have is transportation. Our outstanding senior van drivers provided 9,700 priority trips last year. Many seniors come to the center every day to see friends and have fun at their “home away from home.”

Today, I will conclude my department reports with an update of the building we are all gathered in today. The amount of activity in **GEMINI CENTER** has been incredible. At the end of 2009, we had a total of 6,593 members. As the economy shows no prejudice, our center has been affected due to the majority of the funding of the Gemini Center is supplied through income tax receipts. As I stated earlier in my financial report, these receipts are down, therefore, over the past months we have taken a business approach of prioritizing programs, personnel and events as we work our way through this economy. Adjustments have been made and are being closely monitored by our Recreation Director.

This is a very busy building and has become the center of our community. I would like to share with you some of the numbers that have been recorded over the past year:

Registered in our program were 3,907 children

1,383 adults in sports and leisure programs

133 sports teams

1,798 swim lesson registrations

2,171 water exercise registrations and

Over 300 volunteer coaches

We had over 254,193 daily visits recorded in 2009.

Our goal is to continue to provide a first class facility of which our members of all ages can be proud.

As we begin a new year – one that celebrates 100 years! – I count our blessings, as we have a great community, rich history and even a greater future.

Thank you.