

FAIRVIEW PARK STATE OF THE CITY
Delivered by Mayor Eileen Ann Patton
March 9, 2011 ~ Gemini Center

Good afternoon, thank you Fairview Park Chamber of Commerce for the opportunity to speak today about our wonderful community.

It is great to be here, thanks to everyone for coming. Three weeks ago, in this room, I spent a day with the Fairview High School junior and senior class during Youth in Government week. I was asked to talk to seven classes about being a Mayor, how city government works and how each department operates. Being teenagers, I wanted to catch their attention about the city that they live in. I told them that in a way, we both grew up together. I began my journey as Mayor the same year that they began their journey as kindergarten and first grade students. They are the first class of students that I read books too at the old Garnett school, we planted trees together on Arbor Day at the old Coffinberry School, I attended their DARE graduations, sponsored their baseball teams, gave tours at city hall, and I look forward to watching them graduate this year.

I took them on a visual tour of our city and the changes that occurred all around them during their 12 years of education.

The first picture, I explained to them, was what Lorain Road looked like when I became Mayor and they were 5 or 6 years old, and what it looks like today.

I would like to share with you some of the pictures I used to compare the city of yesterday to the city of today:

- Old Motels – new office buildings
- Old City Parks – new city parks
- Old Westgate – new Westgate
- Old Trailer Parks – new Gemini Center
- Old Donut Connection – new Dunkin Donuts,
- Old vacant gas station - new Chipotle
- Vacant undeveloped land – Fairview Corporate Center on Brookpark Road
- Old Gilles-Sweet School – new Gilles-Sweet School
- No Senior Center – new Senior Center
- Old Lorain Road – new streetscape, e.g., benches, light posts, flowers, clock tower

As I shared with the students at Fairview High, our goal is to do the best we can so that they choose to make Fairview Park their home when it is time for them to raise a family. We are a city that welcomes new ideas while keeping the best from the past. What's important is that we believe strongly in helping residents to create a city of opportunity and to leave our children a community better and more productive for the next generation.

As Mayor, along with a dedicated City Council, an outstanding staff of directors, chiefs, and employees, our job is to make decisions that achieve the greatest common good for our business owners and residents.

Today, I would like to update you on the Financial State of our city. As I reported last year, many concessions were made to assist us in balancing last year's budget. With the help of our city council, employees, and residents, we finished the year without having to layoff any police, fire or service personnel. That was our goal and we reached it. As this has been one of the most challenging financial times for all municipalities since the 1930's, I would like to thank all involved for working together during these trying times. Throughout my report today, I will recap other steps that were taken to help control cost and keep our spending down.

Our General Fund dollars are spent on personnel, equipment, utility bills, and the general operations of our departments. The General Fund generates dollars mostly through income tax. As this chart will show, our General Fund income tax has declined over the past three years from \$4.7 M in 2008 to \$4.4 M in 2010. The loss of income tax from the civil servants at NASA is the largest cause of this decline. Our Street Fund, funded by a quarter percent income tax voted on by the residents, has seen the same decline from \$952,400 in 2008 to \$883,000 in 2010. And our Gemini Center, funded by ½ percent income tax, also felt the decrease in revenue from \$1.9 M to \$1.7 M in 2010. As our net income tax collections are down by 7.29%, it has been a difficult year as every purchase is examined for urgency. Decisions are made to do more with less without sacrificing safety and services needed. It was a year that many of us will not soon forget as we worked our way through these cost saving procedures. Due to the steps taken during this difficult year, we have submitted to City Council a balanced budget for this fiscal year.

However, our financial state is still rather fragile as we carry over a small, modest surplus. We will continue to carefully monitor our income tax revenue, selectively choose our purchases, and examine each and every financial decision that could affect our budget. Also, as is the situation in communities across Ohio, we carefully monitor activity in Columbus as our state legislators prepare to balance the difficult state budget. Cuts in Columbus could affect revenue to our city.

We are very pleased to share with you that our Finance Department recently received the distinguished CAFR award citing excellence in financial reporting.

Our Finance Director is constantly researching ways to save the city money. This department was able to secure a 40% discount in the city's Bureau of Workers' Compensation payments for 2011 as a result of outstanding management of existing claims. We were also able to reduce the city's annual premium cost for city wide general liability insurance as a result of discussions and research with several vendors.

Our small but effective Building Department has also felt the affect of the economy as development projects slowed down. This loss has an impact on our Building Department as fees collected for permits, building, electrical, etc, saw a decline in revenue. One hundred thirty-one less permits were issued last year.

This department, working with the administration and city council, implemented a program to inspect rental homes in our community. This program has been successful in keeping our rental homes up to code and safe. Rental licenses are issued once a year. When homes are in conformity, a license is then issued. Of our 255 registered rental homes, 196 were issued a licensed during this period, collecting \$30,050.00. Apartment inspections are also made each year in concert with our Fire Prevention Bureau. When violations are found, the property owner is given 30 days to make correction. We have 39 apartment complexes, totaling 82 buildings with 1,783 units offered for rent. In 2010, a total of \$10,482.00 was collected.

As a fully-built out community, we are pleased to share with you that four brand new homes were built last year with an estimated valuation of \$700,000.00. Fourteen new garages were built, 15 decks, and 39 homeowners had major alterations made to their homes. We appreciate the investment that our residents are making in our community.

Our Fire Department has seen many changes recently. Fire Chief David Simon, along with five firefighters retired over the past couple months. On Monday, Bud Williams was sworn in and named as our new Fire Chief. We also saw promotions in rank of Captain and Lieutenant. Two new firefighters have been hired to begin the process of filling the six vacancies. This department received a \$3,450 grant from Ohio Department of Public Safety and purchased an AED for our fire engine, gloves used for squad runs, IO Needles and Blades used to help insert a breathing tube. A generous donation of \$300 from the Fairview Park Junior Women's Club was used to purchase slide boards for stretchers and IV needles. The Fire Department personnel have remained very busy again this year as they had a total of 1,820 runs, which include squad, fire and miscellaneous runs. We had a total of nine major fires for 2010 with one minor injury to a resident.

Discussions continue on the creation of a Westshore Regional Fire District. Recently, a meeting took place with the Westshore Mayors, Fire Chiefs and City Councils to further discuss this idea. This working group is putting together a "vision statement" to explore the potential of consolidation as a way to be more cost effective. Presently four of the Westshore cities, along with North Ridgeville, share in a central dispatch center located in St. John Westshore. Our firefighters are well-trained and ready for all emergencies that may happen in our community. Our Fire Department appreciates our supportive city residents and will continue to strive to protect and serve as "life safety" is their ultimate goal.

In a survey conducted by the Plain Dealer, respondents were asked to rate their community on safety. Fairview Park received the highest rating possible. Our residents reported feeling safe and secure. Our Police Department is committed to forming partnerships and solving problems with our community. Fairview Park became one of the first cities in Cuyahoga County to be equipped with a video system directly linked to the Grand Jury. Our officers are now able to provide direct testimony to the Grand Jury without having to personally appear at the Justice Center downtown. Three new mobile data terminals were purchased and placed into police cars in 2010. These devices provide the police with accurate, up to date information from all areas of law enforcement. The Police Department received a Drug Prevention Grant in the amount of \$18,487 from the State of Ohio. Four police officers have received drug prevention training and are maintaining an active relationship with the youth of our community in an effort to reduce drug and alcohol abuse. As safety of our officers is always a priority, we were pleased to receive \$1,028 from the Department of Justice for the purchase of bullet-proof vests. Training continues within our department with WEB, our Westshore Enforcement Bureau. Our police officers stayed very busy last year with 12,149 calls into our police department.

Under the guidance of our Police Department is the Fairview Park Auxiliary Police Unit. These dedicated auxiliaries are required to volunteer an average of at least nine hours per month. Last year, they volunteered 1,671 hours as they assist the department in traffic control, city events and training. A special thank you to our school guards who help protect our children during the school year, during all sorts of weather. As you can see, they are dedicated and always prepared!

Our Senior Center is constantly growing in popularity! Many seniors come into the center on a regular basis to take advantage of the various fine programs and services available. In 2010, over 28,000 visits have been recorded. Transportation continues to be a vital service offered to those who have no other means of getting to their medical appointments, to drugstores for prescriptions or to the grocery store. Our outstanding senior van drivers provided approximately 8,614 rides last year. Our hot lunch program is another essential service we provide. Seniors are served a hot, healthy meal for a suggested

donation of \$1.00. This program is offered at no cost to the city and is fully funded by the Older Americans Act. For the 4th year in a row, our Senior Center was awarded a grant to host a senior's farmers market. Over 160 low income seniors received \$50 in vouchers to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables grown locally. During the summer months, this stand is located at the Senior Center and is a win-win for our seniors and our local farmers. Other vital programs offered to our seniors include: senior students helping senior citizen day, computer classes, our very popular senior prom, age 90+ celebration luncheon, Funsters singers, gift shop, exercise classes, karaoke sing along and our billiards room. In an effort to help reduce costs, the center is closed the first Monday of each month which then allows for necessary maintenance of the building.

The hard work of the senior staff, our relentless focus on meeting the needs of our seniors, and a spirit of cooperation from the community and the seniors that use the center has paid off, as we are considered one of the best centers in the County.

When many of our seniors are not at the Senior Center, they can be found at the Gemini Recreation Center. This beautiful, active building has now been our home for three years. As I showed you in a previous slide of the income revenue slow down, we continue to take a business approach of prioritizing programs, personnel and events as we continue to work our way through this economy. Adjustments have been made and are being closely monitored. In an effort to keep within our budget, a full-time position that was vacated in Programs will not be filled and duties will be shared among employees. In 2010, 6,294 members filled the halls, the exercise equipment floor and track, two pools, the Wave Room, basketball courts, Kids' Club, and our ever popular community rooms where we hosted the Boo Bash, Bunny Brunch and our Holiday Festival and Tree Lighting Ceremony.

The Recreation Department continues to be busy creating programs for all ages that included over 48 programs for youth and adults and 16 varieties of fitness classes during 2010. Last year, the football stadium underwent a major renovation, removing the old track surface and sub-base, and a new base was installed on the running track. As the football stadium is owned by the city, this project was paid for through the settlement the city received with the previous pool contractor. These dollars were only permitted to be used for capital improvements. We hope athletes and visitors alike enjoy the new letters, numbers, field stripping and the new color of "Warrior Red" that enhances the beauty of the turf football field.

This past January, we hosted a "New Membership Drive" and are pleased to announce that 101 new members signed up. We welcome each of them and we hope they enjoy the Gemini Center as much as many of us do.

In a year in which the overriding principle involved belt tightening and limiting expenditures, the Service Department activities focused on getting things done with less. In many instances, this activity took the form of scaled-back projects while seeking outside funding to get things done without city money.

During the year, instead of the normal Annual Street Program, which typically costs between \$500,000 and \$900,000, the city selectively chose certain streets, such as Lorain Road, Story Road, and West 210 Street for a crack-filling project at a cost of \$100,000. This resulted in a lengthening of the life of these streets, allowing the street fund to build up to provide for surplus for this year. As a result, we will return to the regular, annual program this 2011.

This has been a difficult winter and Fairview Park, unfortunately, was not exempt from the recent damaging ice, thawing snow and heavy rains. We did have reported basement flooding in about 85 homes. Each area is being addressed by our City Engineer, Service Department and the Service Director.

In 2006, a sewer study plan was completed. Troubled areas were identified and we are addressing these areas and making repairs, project by project. These repairs are very expensive and having this study plan assists us in reaching our present and future improvements.

Over the past 12 years, we have spent almost 6 million dollars addressing our sewer system. We are committed to continuing our sewer program. Last year, we expended \$19,000 for computer controllers at both pumping stations in Ward 5. Failure to install this new equipment would have resulted in these stations shutting down. During this past storm, the pumping stations did not shut down. As we continue our plan, 42,850 feet of sanitary and storm sewer mains were cleaned by City crews throughout the city and permanent restrictors on storm sewer catch basins have been repaired or replaced and 30 catch bases had a complete rebuild. Over this past winter, as we worked on our sewer plan, legislation was prepared and introduced by City Council to begin the process of televising and grouting of sewers in the Ward 5 area.

We know that these investments have and will make a difference as the work continues.

In an effort to reduce costs, particularly overtime, 2010 saw the introduction of 24-hour, 3 shift operations in the winter months which resulted in reduction of overtime for snow removal. We used 1,818 tons of salt this winter at a cost of \$117,391. As of March 3rd, we have 800 tons in the salt bin, awaiting the next winter snow storm.

In keeping with our efforts to get things done without the use of city funds, we were able to obtain a major grant from NOPEC (North East Ohio Public Utilities Commission) which enabled us to make significant energy related improvements to our municipal buildings. This grant included the following projects: in city hall – 78 new windows, five pedestrian doors, a new hot water tank, eight garage doors, and at the Senior Center – a new HVAC system. This grant was for the entire project at an award of \$119,989. These new improvements will help keep utility costs down for this coming year thus saving the city money.

In anticipation of our five-year contract for rubbish collection with Republic Waste expiring in November, discussions are underway to upgrade operations for this service. In connection with these efforts in the spirit of “green,” discussions are ongoing with Republic and other companies to improve our recycling services to increase the amount recycled, increase revenue and reduce costs. In this regard, the city plans to continue the special recycle/shredding days for residents which began in 2008. We are able to provide this service through a county grant. Last year, through the efforts of our residents, we collected a total of 14.1 tons of paper, computers, tires and household hazardous waste. Our recycle/shredding days will take place on April 30th and again in early fall.

Also, during the past year, we received at no cost to the city, installation of new gas mains on West 210 Street from Lorain Road to Center Ridge Road. This project provided upgraded service to our residents at a cost of \$1.2 million dollars. The project was paid for entirely by Dominion East Ohio Gas.

Today, I conclude with our Development Department as we continue to focus on the primary goal of maintaining, promoting and expanding economic revitalization. During a tough economy, we are pleased to report that a total of thirteen new businesses opened in Fairview Park, including five new stores at Westgate. Positive Education Program (PEP) opened in July of 2010 and now occupies the entire building at the eastern end of Brookpark Road and is currently generating \$80,000 in annual income tax to the city. The Clark Station, located also on Brookpark Road, went into bankruptcy some years ago and remained vacant. The city worked tirelessly with the mortgage company to bring about new ownership, which resulted in the reopening of this facility in October.

As further enhancement to the business district, the city continued to promote and make available the County Storefront Renovation Program in 2010. Individual business participation in this program resulted in more than \$51,000 in improvements to business facilities. Most notable were the significant exterior aesthetic improvements to Bonnie's, Aces Café and the Emerald Necklace Inn.

In 2010, we continued to work on a number of other specific projects in an effort to bring additional tax dollars to Fairview Park. Working with the Westgate partnership, arrangements have been completed to bring a specialty grocery store to this retail district. The company is called Earth Fare, located in the southeastern United States. They recently opened a store in Fairlawn. Earth Fare, which is a healthy grocery store, will also have prepared food served inside and outside. This new business will be located next to Books-a-Million and groundbreaking for is scheduled for May of this year with a grand opening in October.

Many of you have read recently in our local papers about the city's efforts to bring about a skilled nursing and assisted living facility to Fairview Park. This project is very exciting for our community as it will fulfill three needs. The first is the development of this vacant property as designed by the Gemini Project. The second is for revenue that the city and the schools will receive in the form of income tax and property tax. Lastly, this project will allow many of our senior residents to remain in our community in their later years. The city recently entered into an agreement with the schools to transfer this property to the city in return for a credit of twelve years of recreation center usage. Steps have been taken to rezone this property to accommodate this new business and it will appear on the May 3rd ballot. We encourage your support.

One of the most pressing issues facing our community today continues to be NASA Glenn and the future of the two buildings that are located in our city. Much time, effort, and constant monitoring of this issue is a priority for the city and for development director, Kennedy. Throughout the year, focus has remained on the redevelopment of this northern campus. A developer has been identified who is willing to work with the city to refurbish these facilities. The key to the success of this project is the promising introduction and passage of enabling legislation prepared by Congressman Kucinich that will provide for the transfer of this property to Fairview Park for redevelopment. Last month, city council passed a resolution in support of this project.

In this economy, we must also continue to expand certain enhancement efforts that, on a broad basis, can help "set the table" for future development.

In 2010, these efforts took on a variety of forms which include:

1. The establishment of the Small Business Alliance Group, made up mostly of downtown businesses. This group enhanced participation in the Boo Bash, Halloween Parade and the Tree Lighting Ceremony by providing a gift shop from our local businesses for the children. They sponsored the Haunted Trolley Rides at Halloween, helped sponsor the carriage rides at Christmas, and recently provided an opportunity for business promotion by sponsoring the Sweetheart Walk.
2. We co-sponsored with the schools our second annual Realtor Seminar at the Gemini Center on May 26 to promote our housing stock. Forty-five realtors participated and became more acquainted with the beautiful neighborhoods, the quality of our schools, our parks system and our business offerings.

3. Our Development Director also established the first ever Westshore Economic Development Directors meeting with our surrounding cities. Exchanging ideas and enhancing our efforts in development will continue as a major theme of these meetings.
4. And finally, on May 12 of this year, the city looks forward to participate in the first ever Business Expo, sponsored by our Fairview Park Chamber of Commerce.

All of these activities will lay the groundwork for business to flourish, expand and relocate to Fairview Park.

Before I end today, I would like to invite you to participate in an exciting program that, if successful, will be sponsored by our very own Fairview Park Garden Club. This is an extraordinary club, who year after year, continues to plant and tend to flowers throughout our community. Partnering with the Garden Club, we would like to hang large flower baskets by the shopping center on Lorain Road and at the Gemini Center. Members of the Garden Club have made a proposal to their club to donate money to purchase the hardware and the hanging baskets. To help with the cost of the flowers that will be planted in these beautiful baskets, we are offering “sponsorships” of each basket at a cost of \$45. If you as an individual or your organization would like to purchase one, you will be recognized for your sponsorship on our city marquee, our WOW cable channel, the city’s website and on a banner that will be displayed at the Gemini Center for all to see. As we only have a limited number of baskets for sponsorship, you don’t want to miss out on this great opportunity to welcome the warm summer months ahead with beautiful baskets of flowers in our community. On each table are forms to fill out – so that you don’t get – left out. Thanks to the Garden Club – who will be celebrating their 10th anniversary this year - for this wonderful opportunity and we hope that all of you will join in.