

# Nappanee State of the City 2017

## **Building Expectations**

The purpose of the State of the City is for the Mayor to annually report to the Council and community on the health of the City. I can tell you that Nappanee is healthy and poised for another great year in 2017. But before we get into specifics for this year, let's take a minute to reflect on 2016. In doing so, we can celebrate some of our successes, analyze some of our weaknesses, and effectively set realistic expectations for the coming year.

Although 2016 marked a transition in leadership, Nappanee continued to advance with some significant accomplishments. On a personal level, much of 2016 was a year of learning and observation. Learning the daily operations of the City and the personnel it takes to serve the community has taken some time to fully comprehend. Observing the dedication and passion our City employees, volunteers, and residents have for Nappanee is both refreshing and inspiring. It is the team effort that makes Nappanee so unique. I want to again thank all of our elected officials, city employees, board and commission members, volunteers and residents who work extremely hard to make Nappanee a very special place.

Along with a new mayor, leadership changes in a few of our city departments brought new management as well as fresh perspectives. Steve Rulli was selected as Police Chief, Rex and Beth Hershberger took over as co-directors of the Elder Haus, and Chris Davis became the new Superintendent of Parks. Under Chief Rulli's direction, the police department and the reserves are fully staffed and equipped to provide more effective and efficient law enforcement. The Hershbergers' genuine concern for Nappanee's seniors have created an encouraging environment for improved health and social activities. Chris Davis has been actively working on better maintenance, improved facilities, and long-range planning for our parks. We are pleased to have these individuals join the other department heads and work as a team to make Nappanee better.

2016 also saw the addition of Nappanee's first Legislative Body Youth Advisor. Court Clark won an election at the high school to serve on the Council. Not only has Court provided a vital link to the youth in our community, he has demonstrated leadership and service to Nappanee. He has conducted a survey of his peers, giving the City direction on places and activities that are important to the students. Court has also worked with my office to begin the process of setting up a database that matches students interested in serving the community with individuals around the city needing assistance.

Vibrant Communities of Elkhart County has provided Nappanee and the Wa-Nee community with a list of action items to help improve the quality of life through place-making projects and initiatives. Through community input with Nappanee and Wakarusa, we were able to identify some of the most important priorities moving forward. Additionally, Regional Cities has had a

positive impact on the economic future of our region with several projects beginning implementation in St. Joseph, Elkhart, and Marshall Counties.

With the help of the Chamber of Commerce, Nappanee saw the addition of several new businesses and the expansion of a few of our manufacturers. Label Shopper, Tractor Supply Company, Vintage Haus, Nephew Pharmacy, Russell Cellular, Farmhouse Spa, and Market Street Fish opened businesses. Intech Trailers and ATC Trailers are both currently working on new buildings to expand their operations. We also annexed additional land for the residential expansion of Heritage Farms. Total permits for new construction in 2016 doubled. Total investment in new and remodeled residential and commercial construction increased from \$7.4 million in 2015 to \$14.6 million in 2016.

In our downtown, we began work to improve the brick sidewalks and planters. We added a dumpster enclosure and additional parking on South Elm Street and made preparations for additional parking north of the existing library parking lot. Our street department strung lights and added a Christmas tree to the pavilion to provide a more festive downtown for the holiday season. We also continue to celebrate our community through the Apple Festival, Art Festival, Quilt Gardens, 4<sup>th</sup> of July events, Memorial Day parade and service, Veterans Day, Harvest Festival, and Miracles on Main and Market Street. This year we also had the privilege to celebrate the State's Bicentennial, as Sarah Stump, Kirt Hunsberger, Larry Thompson, Peg Hoffer and Gale Gerber carried the torch through Nappanee on its way around the state.

The Indiana Legislature passed two significant laws that had a positive impact on our street department. Senate Bill 67 returned money to local municipalities to be used for new road projects and existing road maintenance. House Bill 1001 provided a 50/50 matching grant program for local road projects. Combining the two bills allowed the City to save approximately \$220,000 in road funding in 2016.

Along with the positives, Nappanee also dealt with the loss of three individuals that had a large impact on the community. Chuck Grimm, one of Nappanee's most passionate historians, passed away, leaving a void on our Historic Preservation Commission and the Nappanee Center. We also lost Frank Hartman, long time firefighter and community ambassador. Additionally, just this past weekend, the Wa-Nee community lost a longtime servant and advocate, Doc Abel.

As I mentioned in last year's State of the City, a fair amount of time and attention was spent in 2016 bidding and starting construction for our long-term control plan for the Combined Sewer Overflow project. Construction started in October and is anticipated to continue through the Spring of 2018. The new sewer rates also took effect in October. While the amount of increase was shocking to some, we feel the decisions made are in the best interest of the long-term future of the Utility, the City, and the environment.

As we look to 2017 and beyond, we anticipate continued growth, diversification of businesses, and improved infrastructure and services. We need to maintain effective and efficient government on a daily basis while looking down the road to anticipate and adjust to change. We

also need to maintain our communication with local, county, state, and federal leaders to ensure Nappanee has input in decisions at all levels. Staying in contact with town managers and mayors of Elkhart and surrounding counties allows us to collaborate and influence policy for the entire area. It is also critical that we stay engaged in regional organizations like MACOG, ECCVB, Economic Development Corporation of Elkhart County, Community Foundation of Elkhart County, Advancing Indiana Municipalities, US 31 Coalition and the US 30 Coalition as we look at improving the economic development and quality of life in North Central Indiana.

Financially, we remain healthy and will look for ways to better invest and manage our cash reserves to provide greater returns. We will be working with our financial consultants and council to prepare a 5-year fiscal plan that will allow us to budget more effectively and anticipate and plan for larger capital projects.

Our Parks and Recreation Department will be adding a new employee to better maintain the grounds and facilities in our parks. 2017 will bring improvements to South Park. We also will continue to work in Stauffer Park with the Little League board and other groups affected by the disruptions caused by the CSO project. As certain areas are closed to the public, improvements will be made. Little Paws will be renovated and a new restroom facility will replace the former restroom that was removed for construction. We also plan to explore the feasibility of adding an RV park in Nappanee to increase tourism and bring in visitors to help support local businesses.

Our water department will add two new production wells at Wellfield Park, to replace our aging wells in West Side Park. We will also begin planning for a new water tower to serve the east side industrial development near the airport. We will also add a new employee to the wastewater department to better maintain our existing sewers and assist with the operation of the new storm water storage and treatment facility.

Our Street Department will be looking at extending Jackson Street south to CR 1350 to improve access and open up more areas for residential development. We will also be making modifications to North Nappanee Street, in connection with the installation of the new water lines running from the new wells to the water treatment facility. We also anticipate improvements to Miriam Street following the CSO project and the possibility of extending Walnut Street east to Oakland Avenue. Other future road improvements contemplated include Woodview Drive, North Main Street, and East Market Street.

Elder Haus Senior Center will be receiving a new van in the spring of 2017, thanks to a grant from INDOT and MACOG. Improvements are also planned for the interior of the Elder Haus that will create a more inviting and safer space for our seniors to socialize, dine, exercise, and learn new skills.

In 2017, our police department will be adding a K9 unit back to the force, the fire department will be adding a new pumper/tanker truck to replace two trucks ('74 and '79), and EMS will be replacing the 2004 ambulance. All of these purchases are possible due to the Public Safety Local Option Income Tax (LOIT), approved a few years ago by the Elkhart County Council. Dedicated

volunteers continue to allow us to provide exceptional services for medical emergencies, accidents, and fires, however, we recognize that reliance on volunteers is becoming increasingly difficult around the nation and around the state due to job constraints and additional training requirements. We need to proactively anticipate the day when volunteers are no longer sufficient to meet the demands of the departments and analyze our emergency staff and facilities for the future needs of Nappanee.

We anticipate significant economic and physical growth. The annexation request of approximately 9 acres at the corner of SR19 and CR 150 is scheduled to occur in the spring. A new private event center is planned for Wabash Avenue. Kosciusko County has rezoned a tract of land on the city's south side for commercial development. We are also working on a couple of retail developments and additional industrial development within the city limits.

We continue to work with Wa-Nee Schools, Nappanee Boys & Girls Club, and Family Christian Development Center on the Community of Wa-Nee Vision 2020. We await the results of the feasibility study that will be completed and presented to the committee in January. The project received a conditional grant from the Community Foundation of Elkhart County worth up to \$520,000. Results of the feasibility will help the partners as we secure funding to make all of the individual projects a reality, changing the way the community delivers human services, from the very young to the very old.

We recently received word that Nappanee will be receiving a LIVE.WORK.PLAY grant from the Elkhart County Convention and Visitors Bureau (ECCVB) and Community Foundation of Elkhart County (CFEC) to improve our website and hire a Director of Community Outreach. The grant will provide Nappanee with \$40,000 per year, for three years. We hope to make it easier for residents and guests to find information about events and activities and be more engaged in community planning and conversations. We all know what makes Nappanee a great place, but let us endeavor to share our story with the rest of the region. More details on our "Embrace the Place" will follow in the next few months, with the goal of having a new website up and running by the end of 2017.

As we anticipate the continued growth, we still plan to update our comprehensive master plan with input from all stakeholders. We also hope to establish a Community Arts Commission to give direction on public art education, maintenance of existing public art, and future art installations within the community.

I could keep talking, but as you can tell, we have plenty to do in the coming months. I am excited about future of Nappanee and I hope you share my enthusiasm as we continue to work every day to make Nappanee more efficient, attractive, and safe. We will continue to work with residents and businesses to provide a user-friendly government, family-oriented service and team-minded problem solving as we shape our future together. May God continue to bless Nappanee, the State of Indiana, and the United States of America.

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