

State of the City Address
Mayor G. David Gillock
2012

I'm back! After a grueling campaign year, which fortunately I did not have to participate in, I am beginning my third four year term as your Mayor. Thank you very much! How fortunate I am to be able to serve another four years, at a job I extremely enjoy.

Thank you to the North Ridgeville Chamber of Commerce and Executive Director Dayle Noll for sponsoring my 9th State of the City. We're going to keep doing this until we get it right.

(Introduce Superintendent Larry Brown if not already done).

I would like to recognize our City Council members, especially those that are here today. Ward 1, Nancy Buescher; Ward 2, Dennis Boose both of whom were also reelected this year without opposition. Ward 3, Dick Jaenke and Ward 4 Bob Olesen who both successfully won their respective reelection campaigns. Our at large members are Council President Kevin Corcoran who is back for another 2 year term as Council President, Council President Pro Tem Bernadine Butkowski and At Large Councilman Roseanne Johnson.

From City Hall I would like to recognize Safety Service Director Jeff Armbruster. Administrative assistant from my office Robin Mayda.

Next I would like to acknowledge my Administrative Assistant Sandy Hall. (ask Sandy to stand) Sandy is retiring in about 50 work days. Sandy has been with me at the mayor's office since day one. In addition she is very close family friend. My kids consider her their special aunt and our grandkids feel the same way. Sandy has served the city since 1990 when she started out as part time secretary to some of our boards and commissions. She became full time in 1998 when she went to work in the Clerk of

Councils Office. Sandy is keenly aware of the need for confidentiality and she is often the eyes and ears of the mayor's office. I sometimes find out about issues or problems from her because people are not always comfortable going straight to the mayor. She is a good listener and sounding-board and above all she is loyal. Frankly, it is going to be very difficult to replace her. I would like to publically thank Sandy for her years of dedicated service to our city and to the mayor's office. (Applause)

Would all other City Employees please stand? I know several department heads are here, as well as several other City employees. I especially want to recognize our new police chief Michael Freeman, Captain Marty Garrow, and IT supervisor Steve Dove. Each of these individuals was promoted to department head or Captain last year.

I would like to tell you that one of the first things Chief Freeman came to me about after being sworn in, was that one way or another he wanted to assign an officer as the School Resource Officer. This is something that I have always believed in. I wholeheartedly supported Mike in this and he made it happen. Mike, and I agree, believes that prevention is the most cost effective way to combat crime and having an officer available in the schools can be particularly effective.

Other elected officials that are with us today are _____.

And, as usual, I want to recognize the first lady of North Ridgeville, my wife Beverly who keeps me going.

First, a public service announcement. Please be sure to tip your waiter or waitress. Last year at one of our local drinking establishments, a customer allegedly did not tip his waitress. She was arrested after she tazered him several times. When brought to court and accused of tazing the customer 11 times, she responded "not guilty, your honor. It was only six times."

Last year was a tough year for City Hall, but I am extremely proud of how we all worked together to get through the year. 2011 started with the negotiation of union contracts, the State of Ohio reducing our local government funding and then theoretically giving us the “tools” to survive. Those tools, known as Senate Bill 5 and later as Issue 2, threw a wrench into negotiations and to our planning throughout the year. Senate Bill 5 even affected some third graders I talked to. One of them asked me a question about SB 5. In a follow up letter, 3rd grader Irving said “I was so happy that you were coming into our class. I like it when you talked about Senate Bill 5. It was a surprise when you were going to run for Mayor for 4 more years. You didn’t read my question. It was how old are you and when are you going to retire. Your friend, Irving”. I’m not sure where Irving was going with that, and I probably don’t want to know.

We started the year with less carry over than ever before. I think the fact we had any carry over was due to several years of preparation for hard times. You may recall, I told you last year that the unencumbered balances in our General Fund, Streets, State Highway, Street Levy, MVR and Surface Drainage accounts had decreased by about \$800,000. As we negotiated, each of our three unions had to try and guess what the State would mandate and pass regarding their fringe benefits, and we had to do what we could to keep all of our accounts in the black while dealing with significant reductions in funding in our major accounts.

We settled with our AFSCME union first with a three year contract and effectively an 11% concession by the union of a combination of furlough days, insurance contributions and reduction in longevity. Our fire union reached an agreement next with an approximate 9% reduction in pay and benefits and a two year contract. And finally, our police settled for essentially a 9% reduction with a one year contract.

All of our employees stepped up to the plate and made personal sacrifices which helped us to get through a very challenging year.

Well, we all know what happened at the ballot box with Issue 2, a resounding defeat for those “tools” that the Governor was going to give us to deal with the reduction in Local Government Funds. So now we are left with reductions in Local Government Funding that we have to deal with on the local level. And we need our employees working a full 52 weeks a year, not 50 weeks. Although furloughs and not filling vacant positions immediately mean lower payroll, it also means less services, less work being done, overtime and inefficiencies. We need to get our employees back to work, full time to provide the services our residents demand and expect.

Earlier this year I sent a graph to Council that tracked our Property Taxes and Municipal Income tax for the last 8 years. At the end of 2010 our funding had finally climbed back to where we were in 2006. We have had 4 years of declining or flat revenues, yet our expenses continued to climb. Year after year we continued to erode our carryover funds. Because we had always budgeted for a reasonable carryover or reasonable amount of unexpended funds carried over from the previous year to protect our bond rating which affects the interest rates we pay on borrowing, we have always been able to keep all of our balances in the black. But because of all the uncertainties, and what we saw happening around us in neighboring communities, we were more conservative last year than ever. We continued to slash spending, took concessions and delayed replacing employees.

Because of those efforts, at the end of 2011 we are in somewhat better shape financially than we anticipated. In those same funds I mentioned earlier that showed an \$800,000 reduction at the end of 2010, are showing an increase of approximately \$762,000. What we didn't expect was our 2011 income tax revenues to be up 9% after being flat the last 2 years. So for the first time in several years our increases in revenues in those key accounts actually exceed our expenditures by about \$300,000.

So while our revenues are now beginning to show improvement, at least for 2011, we need to continue those cost savings measures where we can

through 2012. We still need to put out fires and take people to the hospital, we need to keep our homes and streets safe and we need to plow and maintain our streets. People still want water and they want their trash picked up. My point is we need to continue to provide the services our taxpayers want as efficiently and cost effectively as possible. And we are doing that.

Let me mention one other revenue source that has helped our bottom line in 2011. In early 2010 the State essentially said, internet cafes or sweepstakes are not gambling, but are gaming because the odds of winning are pre-determined. Therefore, they are legal. They began to open in surrounding communities and we had inquiries from potential vendors and support from many in the community. Working with Council we passed one of the most comprehensive ordinances legislating internet cafes in the State. We require background checks, clean records to work or own a store, a \$5,000 annual license and a \$30/month/machine fee. In 2011 we realized almost \$110,000 in fees alone (not including taxes) from the 7 or 8 that are now open. We have had no significant problems with them and our seniors enjoy them. I do think their existence will be short lived, however. Our Attorney General Mike DeWine, has indicated he intends to introduce legislation to regulate this industry. The controls that he has indicated, including no more than 5 machines per location, no cash winnings, and prizes only not to exceed \$10 will be the end of Internet Cafes. I anticipate that this legislation will pass sometime this year and by the end of next year 2013, internet cafes will be gone. Also in 2013, the estate tax will be eliminated. We average about \$150,000 per year in estate taxes, so by next year we will have to make up another \$250,000 in lost income between the loss of estate taxes and the elimination of internet cafes.

There is another third grader at Wilcox that may have an alternative. After visiting with them last year, Aidan wrote me the following letter. "Dear Mayor Gillock. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to go to Wilcox. Everyone really appreciated it. I have a few real quick questions. First, where's the local recycling plant? I'm making a business that takes recyclable products to a recycling plant. Second, about how many people are in North Ridgeville? I want to make sure we have a high enough

fee. Yours truly, Aidan”. Now there’s a future entrepreneur and I want to wish Aidan luck as he enters the business world. I can see his picture in the yearbook under the caption, Most Likely to Succeed.

You might have noticed I really enjoy relating to our school children, but I have to tell you of one of the more traumatic events of last year that occurred at Lear North Elementary. Bill Green, Executive Director of Business Services asked if I would read a short story at the Lear North “Muffins with Mom” program. Now this program is at 8:30 in the morning and all those 1st graders show up with their Moms and Grandmas, a few Dads and Granddads for a preschool educational event and donuts or muffins. I was to read them a short story. Mr. Green had earlier advised me the story I was to read was a sad one, but I didn’t think much about it. So on an early Monday morning I showed up at a packed gymnasium at Lear North. Bill introduced me and told the audience I was going to read the short story by Robert Munsch titled “Love You Forever”. This has got to be one of the saddest stories ever written. As soon as he said the title, the whole gymnasium went, “Aww!” and I knew I was in trouble. As the story begins, a son has just been born. The story then continues through the life of the boy until he is a grown man. The mother continues to rock her son to sleep singing "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, as long as I'm living my baby you'll be." Later, the role is reversed and he holds his elderly mother and says "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, as long as I'm living my Mommy you'll be." At the very end of the story, the mother passes away and her son is the father of a little girl, rocking her to sleep; singing the same song that his mother used to sing to him. I actually finished the story without crying, although most of the mothers were. I left the school, got in my car, and bawled my eyes out in private all the way back to my office. In the future I will bring my own book.

Now let me mention a few of the other high points of the year. Some are a continuation of grants or activities actually began the year before.

Our Railroad Quiet Zone project is nearing completion and will be done sometime early this year. All funding is in place and work has begun. The

railroad recently asked the PUCO for an extension to July 1st, because their work requires asphalt replacement and the plants are closed until the spring. And the work we have to do follows theirs. The railroad has installed the new gates at Chestnut, Root and Race without the arms to date. So that project will be completed this year.

We have almost completed our Ohio Public Works Project for 2011 which was the rehabilitation of the culvert on Chestnut, just east of Lear Nagle, and the replacement of the northbound lane at the Lear Nagle and Chestnut intersection. We have had about as many positive comments on replacing that lane as any project we have ever done. This year we will have two OPWC projects.

Our plan has always been to repave Chestnut from Lear Nagle to Bainbridge in 2012. That project is estimated to cost \$825,435. We will use a grant of approximately \$270,000 and an interest free loan to pay \$487,000 towards the project. We will use \$338,428 from our Street Levy to complete that funding. Also, in December I was contacted by the Ohio Public Works Committee, a source of State funds for infrastructure projects. I serve on the local committee, called the Integrating Committee as well as the Executive Committee. The chairman informed me they had \$667,000 available in interest free loan funds payable over 20 years. We were successful in applying for that funding also which we will also use this year to move our 2013 project up a year. We will now be able to pave Chestnut Ridge from Lear Nagle east about half way to the County Line and we will only have to use about \$34,000 out of the Street Levy for that project this year. Our plan is to then move our 2014 project up a year and pave the rest of Chestnut Ridge to the Cuyahoga County line in 2013. So we will do 2 OPWC projects this year.

Center Ridge Road and Lear Nagle Road widening projects continue progressing through the process necessary to obtain funding. Center Ridge Road is now before the Trac Committee and we are waiting on their decision regarding the next phase. We have requested \$1,710,000 towards a total cost of \$2,280,000 for preliminary design work. Current plans are to begin

construction hopefully in 2016. Lear Nagle is currently undergoing design. We are looking at widening it to 3 lanes from Center Ridge to Chestnut, and potentially 4 lanes from Chestnut to Lorain. The intersection at Lorain/Lear Nagle/Cook will be an astronomical challenge itself, but we may have found some help. ODOT District 3 has identified that area as an area that they are going to study for improvement. Any improvements that they might make to the intersection will be incorporated into our overall design of Lear Nagle and the intersection.

We are continuing with studies regarding storm water management throughout the City. We have already looked at the Highland Drive area and we now know how to resolve that issue. We continue to look at the Pitts area. We have determined from engineering studies that the problem is not downstream with issues such as bridges over the Robinson ditch, but the causative factors are likely upstream. We need to do more research and will be asking Council for the approximately \$15,750 to continue addressing flooding in that area.

Recently, there has been discussion regarding water lines on various streets in the City. This is an area we also continually look at. Unfortunately, with budget concerns the last few years we have reduced funding for water line replacement. We intend to ask Council to consider funding one or two of the worst lines this year, such as South Barton or part of Cornell and try to do a little bit each year.

I might point out that our Service department repaired 41 water line breaks last year, as well as 15 service line breaks, 150 curb box replacements and 12 fire hydrant replacements. We're keeping those guys busy! They do a great job throughout the year.

Unfortunately, they can't do everything. About a month ago they received a call at the service garage. We had a power outage on a Saturday morning throughout the City and it was as dark as could be. A resident called and left a message on our answering machine. He wanted to know why, since the power was out throughout the City, cars driving down Bainbridge Road had

their lights on! Bill Gluvna, our Street Superintendent called the gentleman back and explained cars have their own battery and are not plugged into the grid.

Housing starts in 2011 declined to about 180. I say declined as we have been averaging around 240 per year. However, 180 is still a very significant number and well ahead of any surrounding Cities. Meadowlakes, Waterbury, Ridgefield and now Hampton Place developments continue to grow. Cypress Station and Timber Ridge are still growing. In addition, Ridgecrest Apartments with 76 completed upscale apartment units is growing by leaps and bounds, and opened up a new phase already. Build out will be 157 units which they will probably complete this year. Northborough, behind Café 83 is not only growing but is not building spec units, something we have not seen in several years.

On the commercial side 2010 saw the beginning of the new Lorain County Community College distance learning facility on Lorain Road. Panera Bread opened and is certainly a welcome addition to the community based on great traffic they are seeing. JBC Technologies is completing a 40,000 square foot addition. Rhenium Alloy acquired the 66,000 square foot Marconi building on Taylor Parkway and is renovating the building for manufacturing bringing 75 new jobs to North Ridgeville. McDonald's recently opened a new facility on Center Ridge Road. Davita Dialysis now has 2 facilities in North Ridgeville, one behind Center Ridge Nursing Home and another by Aldi's. Anytime Fitness Center and Tru Tan have also opened in the new building next to Aldi's. Lake Ridge Academy recently installed new solar panels along the turnpike that not only give the students a great learning experience, but are greatly reducing their electric bills. Carol Klimas, the headmistress recently commented to me, it is surprising how much sun light we actually get in North Ridgeville, even in the winter.

Kalt Manufacturing continues to grow and has now been visited by both of our last 2 governors because of their involvement in both the windmill industry and the new oil industry in Ohio.

Last year I mentioned that hopefully we would see a new biogas facility at our French Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant. Quasar Company is now actively building the new anaerobic digester on the French Creek which is a tremendous improvement for our plant and the customers of French Creek. This will help us to keep our sludge out of the landfills, reduce our costs of sludge disposal and create electricity for use in the plant and selling back to the grid. It also gives us the potential in the future to use the gas created, or to exchange it for natural gas to power City vehicles. This project is a tremendous boon to French Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant.

This year the City will see the results of a feasibility study to consider creating a Regional Sewer District. Collaborating with the City of Lorain, Avon Lake and others, we are studying the feasibility of combining all of our plants to more effectively and efficiently provide sanitary sewer services to the northeast area of Lorain County. Several collaborative meetings were held throughout 2011 and we are now ready to make a presentation to our respective City Councils.

The City also completely renovated the Community Cabin at South Central Park including adding handicapped accessible restrooms to that facility.

In addition, North Ridgeville is even becoming more of a new tourism destination. Local resident Deborah Cipriani each year puts on “Skunkfest”. For years Deb held the event behind her home, but for the last few years it has been at South Central. Attendees come from all over the US and even some from England to show off their pets and learn more about the animal. Last year we I received an email from a gentleman from Omaha, Neb regarding the Skunkfest. To quote, “Skunkfest is not only fun, but indispensable for educating people about this often misunderstood animal. ...Since most Americans have to limit the extent of our travels each year, we have to reject some destinations in favor of others. For me, that means that Skunkfest and North Ridgeville beat out South Dakota’s Black Hills. I can only presume that other travelers chose the skunks over other national landmarks. Skunkfest means a lot to us. Again, thank you.”

And speaking of visitors, Victory Park the softball/soccer facility on Lorain Road had a good 2011 other than the record setting rain, and 2012 promises even more visitors to North Ridgeville. In addition to Victory Parks continued growth, the North Ridgeville Soccer Association is going to host an 80 team soccer tournament in 2012 to coincide with the Corn Festival to be held at Victory Park. And Victory Park will also be getting ready for the 2013 Gaelic Games which will be played there over Labor Day. The games are expected to bring 1,500 athletes and contribute \$1,200,000 to the local economy. The park is finally starting to become the destination spot envisioned when the City originally leased the park to a private developer in 2009.

Speaking of using City property, last year the residents of the Pioneer Ridge development, an active older adult part of the Waterbury development, approached the City about using part of our property to grow a community garden. Never in our wildest dreams would we have imagined how successful the garden would become.

Working with local farmer Bob Ternes and Forest City, the developer of Waterbury, a section of land was prepared and water provided. Residents of Pioneer Ridge were there from early in the morning till late in the afternoon tending their crops. The excess production was donated to Community Care providing fresh vegetables to those in need. They were there so much that one lady driving by stopped and asked if they were workers from the City Jail! The garden and some of their workers are on the cover of our City magazine. Next year, the garden will be opened up to more City residents, giving more people the opportunity to grow their own vegetables. What a tremendous use of property not otherwise being used for anything productive.

Our Office of Older Adults continues to be a busy place. Our van that transports our seniors who don't drive to the doctor, dentist, shopping, etc made over 2600 trips. And over 1000 seniors enjoyed trips to Amish country, the Lorain County Fair and other local attractions. They also take longer trips including a week in Vermont enjoying the fall foliage.

One of the most important things our Senior Center does is provide Meals On Wheels. We have over 50 volunteers that help deliver the meals and we want to acknowledge the financial assistance the North Ridgeville V.F.W. provides towards these meals. Last year we delivered over 11,000 meals in North Ridgeville and some of the townships.

Last year we implemented all city recycling using the blue and green containers. After one year I am pleased to say that it has been a great success. We have had a few complaints, not many and we have been able to address most of those. Not only are the containers neater looking and less susceptible to being blown over, the amount of trash and garbage being recycled has increased tremendously. In July, August and September last year our trash being recycled increased from 279 tons to over 752 tons, an increase of 169%! In addition our yard waste collection over the same period increased from 620 tons to over 1,340 tons, an increase of 116%. In just those 3 months last year we kept almost 1200 tons of trash out of the landfills. The success of the container program and increase of recycled materials last year might be the most significant achievement of 2011.

One last 3rd grader story, young Elise also from Wilcox wrote me, “thank you for taking the time to come to Wilcox elementary. I had a big question for you and the community. If I could get 6,000 people or less, we can clean anywhere in the community. Sincerely, Elise.” That would also help keep trash out of the landfills!

And one more before I close, and I’ll clean this up a little but I still have the actual message. A lady called our office one afternoon to tell us that she uses her commode 3 times each night before flushing in an effort to save North Ridgeville’s water. We want to thank her for that.

So all in all, I think 2011 turned out to be a tough year, but working together we have held our own. Finances certainly remain a concern. While we have good control of our expenses, our revenues continue to fluctuate, some up some down. We will continue our conservative stewardship while providing

excellent service. We have an employee force that we can be proud of, leadership in our departments that continually get more done with less, and a City that is recognized throughout Northeast Ohio as a leader. We can all be proud to be a part of or associated with North Ridgeville, a great small town community.

Thank you.