

NORTH RIDGEVILLE STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Mayor G. David Gillock

January 17, 2013

Thank you for that kind introduction and thank you all for being here, my 10th State of the City Address.

Thank you to the Chamber of Commerce for once again being such a great host. And certainly thanks to Dr. Powell and his staff for accommodating us here today. Jim, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your recent promotion to Superintendent of the Schools, and I look forward to working with you the next several years.

I would like to introduce our other public officials that are here today including Senator Gayle Manning, State Representative Matt Lundy, County Commission Tom Williams, from Congressman Bob Gibbs' office – Dallas Gerber and Susan Brinker, School Board members – Maria Sycz, Kelly McCarthy and Frank Vacha, and City Council members – Kevin Corcoran, Dennis Boose, Nancy Buescher, Bernadine Butkowski, Dick Jaenke, Rosanne Johnson, Bob Olesen, and George Smith.

I certainly want to recognize those in my office that keep things running smoothly. Jeff Armbruster, former Mayor and State Senator and now Safety Service Director and quasi operator of the French Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Andy Crites, City Law Director who makes sure we all stay out of jail.

Tissy Simon, Robin Mayda and Penny Smith who really carry the day-to-day load in my office.

And of course, my wife Beverly who makes it all worthwhile. After 46 years together she usually knows what I am thinking before I do. And if she doesn't, she will tell me!

2012 was such an odd year that I think we should just start out with some of the crazier stuff we have to deal with.

Earlier this year I received a packet from a North Ridgeville resident putting the City on notice. On notice of what, you might ask? His opening paragraph says:

The Office of the Postmaster General, Divine Province is an International Peace Council established under the Universal Postal Treaty for the Americas 2010 operating under the authority and protection of the Papal Seal of Peter under country code DVN/DP/999. All members of the Council are Internationally protected foreign officials, International Diplomats at peace with the United States and the many franchised County, City, Towns and States thereof. Please take note that you are bound and liable under the following, to wit: it then goes on with 14 legal pages gobbledy-gook that explains how that under the Curia Vatacano (Member file number: 101000107) he is a commercial vessel, an official carriage registered under the universal post office and authorized to transport the official post and sacred cargo beyond the sea! Oh, and note,

he is under the protection of the Crown and the “One Holy” all taxes and tithes prepaid.

And that is just the opening.

On a more serious note, 2012 continued to be a financial challenge for the City, but still a good year in terms of moving projects forward. We’ll come back to the financial notes later but let me recap some of what was accomplished in 2012.

At long last our railroad quiet zone project came to an end. Quad gates have been installed at crossings at Root Road, Race Road and Chestnut Ridge Road. A physical barrier has been installed at Maddock. Vehicles can no longer go around gates and the trains no longer sound their whistles. Imagine my surprise, however, when over the Christmas holidays the Chronicle Telegram had an article of a car being hit by a train in North Ridgeville! Subsequent investigation revealed that a local elderly resident had somehow gone through an open gate on the cul-de-sac on Route 83 where the old road used to be. I guess she just forgot!

We were able to double up on our Ohio Public Works Projects by doing two projects in 2012, the rebuilding of Chestnut Ridge Road from Bainbridge to Lear Nagle, and total repaving of Chestnut Ridge Road from Lear Nagle about half way to the County Line. These two projects combined totaled almost \$1,000,000. Our upfront costs were only \$235,000. The rest of the funding was provided by either a grant or an interest-free loan payable over 20 years, a great way to finance road construction projects.

Let me bring you up to date on Center Ridge Road. Not too long ago a constituent said to me, “when is something going to be done on Center Ridge Road?” I think my attempt to hide my frustration failed as she later said she wasn’t being critical, just asking what was happening. We have been working on this project seriously for nine years now. The end is potentially in sight.

You may recall in 2011 the preliminary design work was completed at a cost of \$895,000 with the City’s portion at \$224,000. We held public meetings in 2012 where we showed three alternates. Based on feedback received, Alternative 2 was selected which places the new highway slightly towards the south, and is the least costly and affects the fewest number of properties.

The next phase is the detailed design work which should begin this year at a total cost of \$2,280,000. The City’s portion is \$570,000. That’s why I cringe when people ask me when is something going to happen. We are spending serious dollars towards this project. Yet this is small potatoes compared to what is coming in the future. As an example, we just received an email that advised us that as a result of the State issuing bonds against the Turnpike to finance road construction projects, the Governor has accelerated scheduling for projects on the TRAC list, which Center Ridge Road is on. We have been advised we will need to fund \$3.52 million for Right-of-Way acquisition this year because of the accelerated schedule and TRAC will contribute \$3.38 million to the project. It has yet to be determined how we will fund this next step in the process, but it is vital to the community that we continue to move forward with this project.

The goal is to start construction in 2016 with a completion date in 2017. Our portion of the actual construction costs has not yet been determined exactly but it will also be several million dollars.

Reconstruction of Lear Nagle also continues to move forward. We are just now completing the detailed design engineering. In October, we received a grant of \$225,000 to apply towards these costs. ODOT has accelerated the reconstruction of the Lorain/Lear Nagle/Cook intersection portion of the project and through their Safety Program has approved funding for later this year of \$241,000 for Detailed Design, \$270,000 for Right-of-Way Acquisition and \$2,412,000 for construction in late 2014 going into 2015. The City is required to match 10% of these costs.

We also completed replacement of the water line on Cornell Avenue at a cost of \$333,000. It is our goal to complete a water line replacement each year. We had 38 water main breaks last year, or about three per month.

Next year, besides the annual projects we do such as Full-Depth Concrete Repairs, Bridge Inspections, Storm Water Outfall Screening and Sampling, we hope to continue our GIS Mapping and Water System Modeling. Let me explain these in more detail.

GIS mapping is basically a computer map of the City that shows much of our infrastructure such as water and sewer lines, streets, fire hydrants, zoning and so forth. We use this every day. Our City continues to grow each year and for the map to be useful to our inspectors, service personnel, developers and others it needs to be kept up to date. We try to map a quarter of the City each year at a cost of about \$20,000. This is integrated with Google Earth so when someone is talking about a particular parcel we can pull it up on the computer and actually look at it. For example, if we need to know where the nearest water line is for a project we can find it on the map including its size. Let me give you another example.

A couple years ago, a resident that lived on a cul-de-sac came to the City and said that when we paved his street the vehicles turning on the cul-de-sac pushed on his driveway apron causing it to crack. We pulled up the aerial photo and sure enough, there was a picture of his driveway apron and it had several cracks. He insisted that the cracks were recent and due to the paving we had done. We then looked back about 10 years and showed him an earlier photo of his apron that showed the cracks had been there long before we paved his street. You didn't know we could do that, huh! He sheepishly stated that he guessed he just hadn't really noticed them before and the meeting was over.

The EPA also requires us to map every storm sewer outfall in the City so if there is ever a contamination they can trace it back to the source. This is all part of our GIS mapping system.

We have also mapped our entire water system that allows us to analyze what happens throughout the system when something changes and to help determine why pressures might be insufficient in an area, and how we can improve it. We also do approximately one quarter of the City each year.

During 2012, we were also able to lock in favorable rates for our water for the foreseeable future. We purchase about 3,000,000 gallons of water daily. Most of our capacity was purchased from Avon Lake Municipal Utilities over the last several years.

Avon Lake Municipal Utilities have been raising rates about 10% a year and have forecast similar increases several years forward. In 2011, we went to \$1.22 per thousand gallons and then had another increase to \$1.41 in July 2012. We were able to negotiate a purchase from Elyria at \$1.21 per thousand gallons for up to 2,000,000 gallons per day, and lock that rate in for 10 years. We are extremely pleased that we have been able to work with Elyria to keep our rates low.

Flooding issues continue to plague City residents in some areas, although overall I actually do believe we are doing much better. Highland Drive and the Pitts area continue to be our worst areas. Starting late last year we expended approximately \$150,000 to construct a new detention pond under the power lines just off of Jaycox on City-owned property along the ditch that ultimately flows under Highland. The engineering firm, Bramhall Engineering & Surveying, has advised us that this will help relieve some of the flooding in that area. It should be completed early this year. And, Bramhall is also completing a study relative to the Pitts area. Hopefully, completion of this study will give us some recommendations that we can take to City Council for funding that will finally bring some relief to that area.

The building department issued 249 new house permits in 2012, up from 180 in 2011. Last year we integrated mobile technology into our inspectors' workday by providing each of them with an iPad. Our inspectors can now look at the plans for a project in the field enabling them to make sure work is being done as approved. This also allows them to log their notes and inspection results immediately, saving time and paperwork. Looking ahead to 2013 we will begin electronic plan review which will allow users to upload applications and drawings for permits through the internet for review. Users will be able to track the status of their plan review and know when their permit is ready for pick up.

Our Parks and Recreation Department had a very busy and successful year. In 2012, we offered over 100 tot, youth, adult programs and special events for our residents. Fifteen security cameras have been installed in our parks to help keep them safe. Parks and Recreation is in the midst of a Master Plan study that will help us plan for future growth and projects in an organized and cost-effective manner. Finally, we were awarded a \$150,000 grant through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to construct a 1.2 mile walking trail that will go from the Middle School Parking Lot behind the football stands, along the edge of the property owned by St. Peter Church, wind around the North Ridgeville Library and then go around South Central Park and the lakes. This was the third year we had applied for this competitive grant and we received the highest score in the State for our application.

Our Police Department responded to over 36,100 calls in 2012. Chief Freeman has characterized 2012 as the year that citizens and police worked extremely well together to solve serious crimes. During the year we fell victim to two different groups of criminals who perpetrated a number of burglaries. Thanks to observant neighbors letting the police know when something seemed amiss or just out of place, but groups of criminals were caught and prosecuted. To quote Chief Freeman, "By working together and sharing information we can continue to make North Ridgeville a safe place to live and work."

The North Ridgeville Fire Department was also busy in 2012 with a record breaking year of 595 fire calls and 2,488 emergency medical calls for a total of 3,083 responses. At the beginning of the year we took possession of a new fire engine purchased with a grant from FEMA which has been a great addition to our fleet.

2013 brings with it a certain amount of trepidation in the Fire Department. Rick Miller has been our Fire Chief since before I was on City Council. And while I have complete confidence in both of our assistant fire chiefs, Rick's intended retirement in April is going to cause a lot of changes. Besides leadership and management style changes, his retirement will cause a number of promotions throughout the department. It doesn't matter to me who gets promoted as they are all great guys and competent of doing the job, but still it will be a huge change not hearing Rick's stories each day of the big one that got away! Rick, I wish you a great retirement and plenty of successful fishing in 2013.

The North Ridgeville Office for Older Adults (Senior Center) had a busy year in 2012. Our "young at heart" seniors attended all types of activities from self-defense to defensive driving, crafts and bingo to watercolor and mahjonn. Attendance at these activities increased 10% over the previous year. Services are a large part of the Senior Center and include our Meals-on-Wheels program. Volunteer drivers delivered 10,583 meals in 2012. In addition, a complimentary meal is provided prior to a holiday – last year we provided over 500 complimentary meals for the holidays and 1,810 complimentary meals for those who couldn't afford their daily meal. This is in addition to the 1,138 meals paid for annually by the North Ridgeville VFW Post 9871.

The Service Department experienced a change in leadership in 2012. Al Swindig Jr. was named Superintendent after Bill Gluvna announced his retirement at the end of August. It was an easy decision and a smooth transition since Al started his career with the Service Department more than 28 years ago as a laborer/meter reader, then machine operator and foreman. He's done a great job overseeing our streets, water lines and sewers. This year the department's major paving projects included the following: the intersection of Chestnut Ridge Road and Lear Nagle Road; Root Road from Chestnut Ridge Road to Lorain Road; Chestnut Ridge Road from Avon Belden Road to relocated Route 83; and, Barres Road from Stoney Ridge Road to Meadow Lakes Drive.

Don Daley, long time superintendent at the French Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant, also retired at the end of 2012. Don did a tremendous job over the years keeping the FCWWTP state-of-the-art, and he is the only superintendent North Ridgeville ever had at the plant. Completing the public-private partnership with quasar energy group, now known as French Creek BioEnergy is the last of many of Don's outstanding achievements. We wish Don well in his retirement.

French Creek BioEnergy is up and operating and at long last we have a secure, cost-effective and dedicated process for disposing of the sludge left over at the end of our treatment process.

Replacing Don is our new Superintendent who is with us today, Corey Timko. We are very fortunate to be able to obtain someone of Corey's caliber and we know that Corey will be an outstanding leader of French Creek. He will come on board, effective February 1. We have known Corey for some time from working with him in his position

at the City of Lorain, and I look forward to getting him started at the French Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant.

2012 also saw the end of our income tax department, as I made the decision to join RITA, the Regional Income Tax Agency. This was an extremely easy decision when all factors are considered. I first started thinking about it when the State started talking about promulgating new rules regarding Municipal Income Tax Collection. As President of the Northeast Ohio Mayors and City Managers Association, I was very involved throughout the year as discussions were held regarding our income tax collection procedures. The bill did not succeed in 2012 but will be reintroduced this year. What started as a suggestion to have the State take over tax collection evolved into a discussion ranging from standardization of forms, definitions, new auditing procedures, changes in a lot of the rules, etc. Simultaneously it became known that our department head, Laverne Porowski, would be eligible to retire. I also realized that because of changes in the State Law, RITA could do a better job of auditing and verifying collections than we could. They have the ability to review actual Federal filings which we don't. Because of all of this, and a potential savings annually of about \$280,000, I made the change. We will still, at least this year, be able to help individual filers on site, but you can now file over the internet with Turbo Tax or mail in as you've done in the past, but to RITA and not to the City. We think in the long run and with the technology RITA has available, residents will grow to appreciate their services.

Also at the State level, I have been very involved in the effort to either eliminate or regulate Internet Cafes. Opponents of proposed legislation successfully fought off efforts to essentially eliminate Internet Cafes in the final week of 2012. Rest assured new legislation will be introduced this year. North Ridgeville has some of the most extensive regulations in place. We have had very little problems with the Cafes and they have generated in excess of \$110,000 in fees the last two years, revenues that have helped somewhat in replacing the revenues we have lost due to elimination of the personal property tax, a 50% reduction in local government funds, a reduction in property taxes and elimination this year of the estate tax. Internet Cafes have created jobs, filled vacant buildings and helped our City coffers. Let's regulate them, not eliminate them.

Let's turn to school safety. I want to address a couple issues. First, at the end of 2012 as a result of what occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary and a proliferation of rumors, hearsay and a video or two, our schools and many other schools around us were inundated with safety concerns. I want to assure you that we take school safety extremely serious. Our police department is continually working with the schools and Chief Freeman reinstated the School Resource Officer immediately upon taking office. Safety within our schools is something that is considered on a daily basis. We will continue to look at ways to make it better, but rest assured it is of the highest priority.

Secondly, last year we undertook a new program called Safe Routes to School. This is a federally-funded program through what is called MAP – 21 – Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, the current transportation funding program. Safe Routes to School programming has been around since the 1970's but found traction in the US in 1997. Funding began in earnest in 2005, with \$612 million made available nationally from 2005 to 2009. We did apply but were unsuccessful at that time. Last year, our Council President Kevin Corcoran suggested we give it another run. Tissy Simon has coordinated efforts with all the schools culminating in a public meeting here tonight at 6:00 p.m., same room to present the draft plan and ask for public comments. This plan aims to help

improve safety and increase the number of students walking and biking to school. Once this phase is completed we will be able to apply for funding. Funds can be used for a range of purposes such as encouragement and educational activities to promote safe walking and biking to school as well as brick and mortar improvements such as new sidewalks and safer crossings. I invite you to come back in a few hours and see what opportunities are available and to provide any comments you may have on the draft plan.

Another exciting part of my job as Mayor is performing wedding ceremonies. In 2012, a total of 21 couples tied the knot. Over the course of my nine years, I've officiated 256 weddings. The unanswered question is of those 256 couples, I wonder how many are still married today?

And if you need something to fill your time between now and this evening, Lorain County Community College is having an open house today from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the new University Partnership Ridge Campus on Lorain Road. This new \$12.5 million, 46,000 square foot facility adds a new dimension to North Ridgeville. Residents can now obtain Associate and Bachelor degrees not only from LCCC but the Universities of Toledo and Akron in North Ridgeville. We welcome LCCC to North Ridgeville with open arms and know they will quickly become a key component of the City.

While we are talking about the education and our schools, as you all know one of the most enjoyable things I get to do is visit the kids at school. After visiting Liberty last year on February 10th, I received this letter the following week. Dear Mayor Gillock. Happy Valentine's Day! Thank you for coming to Liberty Elementary to talk to us. One thing I learned is 600 dears, spelled dears, caused problems and got hit.

As I stressed last year, when we try to get a financial snapshot of where we are at end of year, we look at General Fund, Income Tax and a few street related accounts. Last year, we were ahead by \$300,000. Preliminarily for 2012 we are ahead of that by approximately \$500,000. While this is good news on the books, one must understand that a big part of this continues to be concessions made by the unions, including a furlough week and other concessions. Those concessions are no longer in place in 2013. The fire contract renewal is currently being negotiated and it appears we will be going to fact finding over wage issues. We will also lose about \$150,000 in estate tax this year due to changes in State law. This administration and City Council work extremely well together to conserve funding and prioritize spending. And, we have new funding obligations that now have to be addressed. As I mentioned very early in this Address, funding for Center Ridge Road and Lear Nagle Road have been accelerated and are now of immediate concern. The next step will be to sit down together and make some very tough decisions on how we are to proceed financially to meet our annual obligations as well as continue to move the City forward.

Thank you for listening. I hope you are as informed as another 3rd grader from Liberty. "Thank you for coming to Liberty to talk to us. One thing I learned is that there is no feeding the deer. I'm excited that you came. I also learned that you are so kind hearted. Thank you for the ruler and the coloring book. I will use my ruler on my homework. I hope you come another time!"

I hope you feel the same way!

Thank you.