

**City of North Ridgeville
State of the City Address**

January 19, 2017

2016! What a year! I can honestly say that 2016 was the busiest year of my thirteen years as Mayor.

Before we get into the details, let me recognize several people here today.

Thank you to Marjorie Snyder and the North Ridgeville Chamber of Commerce for sponsoring today's event. The Chamber does a great job and hosts a number of events and meetings throughout the year that really supports our businesses and the community at large.

Thanks again to Dr. Powell and the School Board for again providing the facility. They are at least as busy as we are as they continue to grow, and build and remodel their facilities so they can offer better learning opportunities to the students of North Ridgeville. I have enjoyed watching the new grades three through eight school building go up, and I was honored to help dedicate the new sports stadium that is one of the best around.

Several public officials are with us today ---- Judge Gary Bennett; Retired Judge John Musson, Lorain County Commissioners Ted Kalo, Lori Kokoski and Matt Lundy; School Board President Kelly McCarthy and School Board Vice President Marci Saxon; and, we have our City Council president, Kevin Corcoran; At-Large members Bernadine Butkowski and Roseanne Johnson; Council members Ward 1, Gregg Westover; Ward 2, Dennis Boose; Ward 3, Bruce Abens and Ward 4, Robert Chapek.

I would also like to thank those in my office that make my job easier-most of the time. Jeff Armbruster, Safety Service Director extraordinaire, Robin Mayda Administrative Assistant to Jeff and my Administrative Assistant, Tissy Simon, who thinks she is Mayor.

Would our department heads please stand? These are the individuals that keep our City running year in, year out within budget.

Finally, thanks to my wife Beverly. Without her support, I could not do what I do. Thank you.

With so much going on last year, it's really hard to decide where to start. But let me begin with a few financial highlights from last year, and near the end of my speech I will review our Auditor's outlook for 2017.

When Tim Pope became Treasurer, I informed him I wanted to consider an investment advisor for handling City funds. We are very fortunate as a City to have Tim on board with his financial expertise. After reviewing proposals from several firms Tim recommended we retain Meeder Investment Management to assist with our investments. With their assistance, the City was able to double our interest earnings over previous years. As the chart shows we have been able to increase our investment income from approximately \$73,000 to over \$180,000. This may seem like a small amount but with interest rates hovering between .55% and 1.2% it is imperative that we invest wisely and Meeder has helped us maximize those efforts.

Last April Tim Pope, Deputy Auditor Teresa Machovina and I, along with our Bond Counsel and Bond Underwriter went to New York City to meet with Moody's Investment Services to review our Bond rating in anticipation of refinancing almost \$12,000,000 of previously issued bonds, and issuing \$6,200,000 of new debt for the new Fire Station. We knew we had a strong Aa2 rating and were hopeful we would retain it. I have an embarrassing story here, but it has a good ending. Moody's scheduled an hour and a half to meet

with us. Usually the Mayor speaks for about forty five minutes as a cheerleader for the City, informing them of all the good things going on in the City, then forty five minutes is spent reviewing financials. So when they asked me to tell them about our great City, I began speaking at 10:00 a.m. With slides and bullet points I was really into telling them all the great things going on, how the City was growing, new homes, and new businesses like Riddell. They asked questions and seemed interested. No one got up and left. So when I had finished, I looked at my watch and it was 11:30! I had spoken non-stop about how great North Ridgeville is for an hour and a half. Pretty embarrassing but we have a great story to tell! But Moody's seem to take it in stride and reviewed financials and we left – and still caught our plane. We were delighted when Moody's informed us they were upgrading our Bond rating to Aa1. Only 16 municipalities in Ohio have a higher bond rating. This means less interest cost to the City. By refinancing earlier Bonds and with our upgraded Bond rating we were able to save the City \$1,549,478 on a net present value basis, and over \$2,000,000 in gross savings. So I am very proud of the job that Tim Pope and our Treasurer's Office have done in getting the most out of the limited amount of funds we do have available.

The Treasurer's Office has also managed our Community Housing Impact and Preservation, referred to as CHIP grant, for as long as it has been in existence. Unfortunately, the City is no longer eligible for the CHIP grant. For many years this program provided needed funds for emergency repairs and program home improvements to low or moderate income homeowners. Last year we were able to fully rehab four homes and repair five homes. However, the State changed its eligibility threshold for the grant based on cities with a minimum of 25% low to moderate income homeowners. With the latest census North Ridgeville fell to 23.7%. That's a good thing for the City overall, but unfortunate for those that do need assistance. However, participants can now apply through Lorain County in future years. For more information, residents can contact my office or visit the City's website to learn how to apply through Lorain County.

Now let me discuss some of the projects going on in the City. I would like to start with our road projects, and we have five in process from near completion to beginning construction in 2017.

Lear Nagle gets top billing as it is our largest project currently underway. Scheduled to be finished next fall, Terrace Construction is well ahead of schedule and should finish in the spring. Today we have at least two lanes open from end to end with new turning lanes at the intersections of Chestnut and Lorain/Cook. When the weather breaks this spring they still need to replace the Chestnut intersection as well as finish some driveways, sidewalks, catch basins and other items. It is already a tremendous improvement as is and will be even better when finished. I would like to publically thank Terrace Construction for the job they have done. We have gotten letters from residents lauding Terrace for their communication with the residents and for making things right when a problem arose. It's rare when we get compliments about a contractor and even rarer when a resident takes the time to write to us. Great job, Terrace Construction.

Performance Lane leading to Riddell and the bowling alley, Brunswick Zone, is now open for use, and I'm sure the bowlers are glad to have a new road to get to their destination. In addition to the new road, utilities, sanitary sewer and waterline were installed.

The Jaycox Road extension to the new grades three through eight school and main fire station is still in the design phase and working its way through wetland issues that must be addressed. The road will now have three lanes, one each way and a center turning lane which will better enable our emergency vehicles to get out even when traffic to the school is at its peak.

The roundabout at Mills Road and Route 83 remains on schedule. This is an Ohio Public Works grant program project. We will receive the grant funds July 1 and will go to bid around that date with construction to begin late July, or early August. This is a joint project with the City of Avon. Construction costs are estimated at \$1,200,000. We will receive \$600,000 in grant funds and Avon and North Ridgeville will contribute \$300,000 each. In order to complete the construction in the most efficient and cost effective

manner the intersection will be closed for a period of approximately two months. A temporary road will be constructed from the north side of Route 83 to the east side of Mills Road so those businesses on Mills will have a way to get out.

And, finally on road projects, we will go to bid on the widening of Center Ridge Road in November of this year. ODOT pushed the bid date back another month, which is ok, as we anticipate actual construction to begin in early 2018 and the project is scheduled to be finished October 2019. Utility relocation continues and should be completed by the end of this summer. Center Ridge will be widened to five lanes with a ten foot multi-purpose path on the south side and sidewalk on the north side. Storm water detention will be added which does not currently exist, helping to reduce flooding issues throughout the area. While we are on the topic of Center Ridge Road, we completed installation of 8,634 feet of sanitary sewer in several sections along this major thoroughfare in 2016.

In 2017 we will also continue our paving program although there will be changes. The last two years we have appropriated approximately \$750,000 towards paving that our own crews perform. In 2016, our crews paved the following streets:

4,700 feet on Bagley Road replacing a section that received a bad batch of asphalt in 2015

5,200 feet on Mills Creek Lane

3,700 feet on Hickory Trail

2,500 feet on Meadow Moss Lane

1,000 feet on Fern Tree Lane (east)

1,800 feet on Race Road

3,850 feet on Island Road

2,115 feet on Mildred Street

1,600 feet on Burns Road

2,000 feet on Sugar Ridge Road

This totals 5.5 miles of paving.

We also contracted for 1.5 miles of tar and chip on Bender and Otten Roads and Lee Avenue. Drivers often complain initially about tar and chip because of the loose gravel. But actually, over a short period of time the tar and chip becomes a very good surface that provides an excellent base to later pave over with asphalt.

The City also completed our annual Ohio Public Works Commission Grant by completing the paving on the north end of Jaycox Road. Over a two-year period Jaycox has been completely repaved from Center Ridge Road to Mills Road.

I will be requesting of City Council during appropriations, \$450,000 for force accounts, paving we do ourselves using our own crews. We will also pay \$307,000 as part of ODOT's urban paving program to pave certain portions of Lorain Road and alternate Route 83. In total you will see an estimated \$1,120,000 in street paving in 2017, that's a 37% increase over last year. Besides establishing priorities for which streets get needed repairs, we often get suggestions from constituents. Consider this one from a Liberty Elementary third grader. "Dear Mayor Gillock. Thank you very much for being our Mayor. Thank you for fixing the street and roads. Thank you for road cleanup. Also, please fix McArthur Street. It is very lumpy."

Along with the street improvements the City also added almost a mile of new sidewalks in 2016, not including those that are part of the Lear Nagle reconstruction. Through grants from Safe Routes to School and Lorain County General Health District, we added approximately 5,637 feet of new sidewalk. These are in various locations around our schools as well as along Aurensen Road. This year we will also add a small section on Route 83 from Aurensen to Bainbridge so residents residing on Aurensen, Noll and Behm, as well as the new Cross Creek Development, will have safe access to City Hall, South Central Park, the library and to the school campus.

Besides the grant we received from the Lorain County General Health District for the Aurensen Road sidewalk, we also received a grant from them for senior fitness equipment at the Senior Center. Those two grants totaled over \$64,000 giving our residents healthier walking, biking and fitness opportunities.

In addition to the sidewalks and fitness equipment the City really went on a health kick that resulted in the City receiving the 2016 Healthy Community Award from the Ohio Department of Health's Bureau of Creating Healthy Communities. Only 13 other communities in Ohio received this award. Following are some of the things that North Ridgeville did to qualify for the award.

- Instituted a No Tobacco Policy on any City-operated properties
- Continuation of the Heart and Sole Program
- Working to make fruits and vegetables available to all
- Adding healthy options to school and park concession stands

Thanks to the Lorain County General Health District and Erin Rechin for helping make this possible. Why do we do this? In a study published in November in the journal *Health Affairs*, researchers set out to see whether communities that convened multisector networks to implement health improvement activities actually reaped any measurable benefits. The short answer is a resounding **yes**. The study found that communities that undertook such networking efforts experienced a significant decline in deaths due to heart disease, diabetes and the flu. I believe giving our residents and employees healthy options make us a better community overall.

This is a great segue into highlights from our Parks & Recreation Department. In October 2016, we received notification from Ohio Department of Natural Resources that we were awarded \$52,244 as a result of our NatureWorks Grant. We will use these dollars this year to rehabilitate our existing four tennis courts at South Central Park. When finished, the courts will serve a dual purpose – tennis and pickleball. Pickleball is sort of like badminton with a wiffle ball and is a growing sport for young and old.

We also used a Community Development Block Grant of \$33,100 to complete phase 2 of the ADA six-foot wide accessible walkway at the Shady Drive baseball/softball complex. This walkway was completely funded by grant dollars.

And, as you can see from the slide, the Parks & Recreation Department offers a variety of programs and special events for all ages. There were 3,372 participants in attendance at the various sports, fitness and educational program offerings. Across the 11 special event programs held in 2016, there were 6,634 participants.

Let's talk a little bit about our first responders.

Our police department has been very busy with over 30,000 service activities. Yet they still find time to take some needy children shopping. Through their "Shop with a Cop" program they set a goal of \$5,000 to take kids shopping. They were delighted when the total hit over \$9,000 and they were able to take 27 less fortunate kids shopping for Christmas. The kids were able to spend \$175 on Christmas and the families

received another \$175 to help with groceries during the holidays. Thanks to all of our officers for all they do and donating their time and effort to help those less fortunate.

In addition, the police department received a \$10,000 grant from the Ben Roethlisberger Foundation to help fund a new K-9 that will be on the road soon. Yes, that is the Ben from our rival to the East, but no, it did not change any of our police allegiances. They are still Browns fans, but thanks to Ben for this outstanding donation to our police department.

Last March we hosted 9 girl scouts and during the question and answer period one of the girls asked about our jail. I informed them that we had 5 cells for men and 2 for women. After some thought, one of the girls asked if that meant boys commit more crimes than girls. Caught off guard, I just told her no, girls were just smarter and didn't get caught as much.

The Fire Department was also busy with 3,290 responses, up very slightly from last year. 2,817 of those were EMS and 473 were fire calls. Interestingly, our EMS calls were up almost 8% while fire calls decreased. As our population continues to grow, I would expect this trend to continue for the next several years.

Although not a highlight, it is significant that the fire department administered Narcan 101 times in 2016, compared with 55 times in 2015. The overdose incidents have doubled without an end in sight.

On a happier note the fire department again teamed up with the American Red Cross to install smoke detectors in homes of residents that didn't have a working smoke detector. A total of 139 detectors were installed in 61 homes. In addition, UH St. John's Hospital gave away another 100 smoke detectors to residents that attended the Fire Department Health and Safety Fair. The Department plans on teaming up with the Red Cross in 2017 for the third year of installing detectors in residents' homes.

And speaking of the annual Health and Safety Fair, attendance was again outstanding at the 3rd annual Fair. It corresponds with National Fire Prevention Month. Area hospitals, businesses and city departments help by providing items and information to promote fire safety and healthy living. It is a family-friendly event and will be held again the first Saturday in October.

Great news! Just last week, Chief Reese received notification that two third graders from Liberty Elementary were chosen as winners of the Division of State Fire Marshal Fire Safety Poster Contest. The poster will be displayed at the Annual Fire Expo in June, and following the Expo it will be displayed in the lobby of the State Fire Marshal. Congratulations to third graders Samantha Decara and Lily Rock on a job well-done!

And more good news concerning the construction of the new headquarters fire station. It has been decided that the new station will be built on the new section of Jaycox Road which will be constructed this year. The new station will be located on the west side of the road across from the new school and next to the Service Department. This is a new use for the city owned property which became available after the old radio tower was removed. Building plans are being finalized and construction should begin later this year. This \$8,200,000 facility, while not extravagant will be state-of-the-art, and will enable our fire fighters to train and serve in a safe and functional facility. Our chiefs will be able to counsel firefighters in private. We will be able to store sterile equipment and supplies as they should be and have the room and equipment to clean contaminated equipment safely. We can't get this facility constructed too soon, and our fire fighters deserve a safe, functional facility to work in. Please stop by the informational table, if you haven't already, to view the plans and to ask questions of our architects, Mull & Weithman or Fire Chief Reese.

Our Service Department was very busy in 2016. In addition to the road repairs and paving previously mentioned, they've cleaning over 3.5 miles of ditches, and our Service Department employees disassembled and moved a metal barn located behind the old Fiesta Jalapenos building. The barn was only a couple years

old and the City acquired it through the appropriation process for widening Center Ridge Road. Rather than demolish this new building, they took it apart bolt by bolt and reconstructed it at the service garage location where it has been put to good use. Our crews cleaned and jetted over 4 miles of sanitary sewer lines and also cleaned storm lines in the Main, Broad and Pleasant neighborhoods. They repaired 23 water main breaks, down from 31 last year and made 21 service line leak repairs. We continue to replace old water lines and just last year we replaced the line on Olive Avenue which helped reduce our number of breaks. The Service Department also replaced 64 curb boxes and flushed 2,312 hydrants and painted 100 of them.

The water tower was inspected last year. Several maintenance items were completed last year but this year, 2017 will require an expenditure of approximately \$322,000 for other maintenance items including painting the exterior. The exterior according to the engineering firm is in good to fair condition overall, but the coating is moderately faded and the primary modes of deterioration are spot coating failures. The tower was built in 2001 and has not been painted since. This will be presented to City Council during our appropriation hearings next month and is expected to be approved. Currently we anticipate keeping the same paint scheme.

Continuing on with utilities, we currently have over 13,000 water, sewer and sanitation accounts. There have been nearly 5,000 new customer accounts added in the last 15 years and North Ridgeville continues to be one of the fastest growing communities in the State of Ohio. We received a grant for \$38,000 as a result of our recycling efforts which were used for Safetyville and Youth Bureau programs administered by the police department, city park equipment such as signs, benches, picnic tables, parking stops and playground mulch and playground equipment. We also purchase recycled copy paper, calendar magnets reminding residents of upcoming bulk pick-up days and many other items used to promote the City.

French Creek, the City owned and operated Regional Waste Water Treatment Plant, completed several upgrades to assure the residents and businesses in Avon and Sheffield Village as well as North Ridgeville have reliable sewer service. In 2016 these included replacement of the Ultra Violet Disinfection System, replacement of the Grit System, upgrading of the SCADA System (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) which allows the City to operate and control the system remotely and upgrading of the Influent Pumping system. These improvements cost over \$5,300,000 and are essential to keeping the plant operating efficiently.

In 2017 French Creek will design the necessary upgrades to the CM Tank Aeration and Blower System and upgrade to the filter building at an estimated cost of \$5,750,000.

The Office for Older Adults, Senior Center, continues to support our senior citizens by offering numerous programs, services and activities for our young at heart. Mentioned previously, an outdoor Older Adult Fitness Station, the first in Ohio, was installed to help seniors with balance, coordination and dexterity. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held on October 7, 2016 to celebrate the official opening of the fitness station. Co-sponsors included Orthopaedic Associates, University Hospitals St. John Medical Center, North Ridgeville Heart & Sole and North Ridgeville Seniors, Inc. New programs will be introduced in 2017 to promote fitness and proper use of the equipment.

More astounding figures to share relating to the Senior Center – our Meals-on-Wheels volunteers delivered 9,375 meals in 2016 compared to over 7,000 in 2015 and provided over 2,700 trips for seniors to doctors' appointments and other needs compared to 2,500 the previous year. And, in 2016, the Senior Center hosted over 11,000 visitors compared to 10,000 the previous year. We are very fortunate to have an Office for Older Adults in our community and without the support of the staff and many volunteers, this would not be possible.

I would like to mention Mayor's Court which continues to be a real asset to our residents letting them handle their minor cases locally and at less cost than going to Elyria Municipal Court, only because of a drawing the

daughter of a defendant made while attending Mayors Court with her mother. Names have been deleted to protect the guilty!

Our Engineering Department is keeping busy with numerous projects underway. In addition to several major projects already mentioned, they are continuing their work on our sanitary sewer lines and sub-basins. The City is divided into 16 sub-basins in which AECOM was contracted to inspect and prioritize the areas that are in need of relining and rehabilitating sewer lines and manholes. Sub-basins 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12 and 13 have been tested and repairs were made in 2016. Next on the list are Sanitary Sewer Sub-basins 9, 10, 15 and 16. These sub-basins have undergone field testing to determine and define what repairs are needed. These repairs are anticipated to be made in 2017-18.

Our Building Department is also keeping busy. Building permits were up slightly with a total of 1,977 permits issued in 2016 including 194 new homes, 3 new apartments and 7 new commercial buildings. In addition, a total of 8,894 inspections took place in 2016 compared to 8,437 in 2015.

Turning to new Commercial Projects, always of interest to constituents, we have several.

As you all know by now Riddell is relocating to North Ridgeville where “the old shopping center” used to be by the Brunswick Zone bowling alley. The new facility covering over 347,000 square feet will be responsible for the assembly of football helmets and custom shoulder pads. It will also serve as Riddell’s primary reconditioning plant. Riddell will relocate its production of full-size collectible football helmets and distribution of most football gear and apparel to the new facility. Riddell is planning to have employees operating out of their new facility as early as March of this year. For other businesses that might be looking for a new location I would like to quote one of Riddell’s press releases. “The support provided by the State of Ohio, Lorain County, and the City of North Ridgeville, was a key factor in Riddell’s decision to reinvest in Northeast Ohio.” Riddell will employ approximately 350 on a full time basis and up to 100 more during seasonal operations.

Harvest Ridge Church, although not a commercial project is worthy of note. Harvest Ridge is under construction to add 15,000 square feet to their existing facility. Pastor Crow and his congregation continue to grow by leaps and bounds and is an integral part of our faith community.

The Northridge on Westminister Avenue renovated their center with a new entrance, replaced an outside pavilion, and constructed a 216 square-foot addition in 2016. In just a few short weeks they’ll be holding an open house and ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate their transformation.

I would be remiss if I didn’t mention the North Ridgeville City Schools and the new grades 3 through 8 building that is slated to open later this year, in time for the 2017-18 school year. The new state-of-the-art building will be flexible to allow for personalized learning. And, the new Ranger Stadium opened at their new location, behind the new construction, in August 2016. The stadium is impressive with seating for 4,500 and the home press box measures 1,000 square feet. If you haven’t driven down Bainbridge Road lately, make a concerted effort to do so and check out the progress being made on the schools’ property.

Dunkin’ Donuts is now open on Lorain Road as our retail sector continues to grow. You will see more in the future as road construction is finished. I know several businesses are interested in locating on Center Ridge Road when it is finished.

Bindery Tech took over the building that once housed Akin and Akin, and then South of the Square Collision. South of the Square Collision relocated to Race Road in the former Northridge Supply location. They did an outstanding job renovating the space and celebrated with a re-grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony on July 28, 2016.

Also celebrating grand openings in 2016 are two businesses located on Victory Lane – Leffew Fastpitch and Satellite Shelters. They are welcome additions to the southeast corner of the City.

In 2017 we will see several new projects with University Hospitals medical facility on Lorain Road leading the charge. This new over 50,000 square-foot-facility will cost about \$32.4 million and will be a state-of-the-art outpatient health center and freestanding emergency department. Included in the health center will be outpatient laboratory services, physical therapy, and primary and specialty care physician services. Other services will include UH Rainbow Babies & Children’s Hospital pediatric services, heart & vascular services, orthopedics, pain management, general surgery and rehabilitation. The emergency department will be operational 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. This facility will provide critical care to our residents much faster improving their care concerns and allow our first responders to get back in service much faster, reducing our need to depend on neighboring departments to assist.

Lake Bella Investments will construct a new 12,000 square foot office building on Cook Road. It will contain the offices of Alber & Rice, a structural Engineering firm now located in Cleveland and a yet to be announced tenant.

Azac Properties LTD plans to build 16 mini storage buildings on property located on Race Road. Permits have been issued to construct 2 of the 6 buildings as part of phase one.

Finally, First Federal Lakewood will be relocating from their existing office at the corner of Pitts and Center Ridge to the southwest corner of Lear Nagle and Center Ridge. We are extremely happy that they will remain in North Ridgeville on Center Ridge Road.

Other projects are in the works and will be announced throughout the year as they come to fruition. But I anticipate we will see several more new businesses come to town as Center Ridge Road is widened.

With all the city projects happening in the City, we still find time to educate our youth on city politics and the operations of the City. We host students throughout the year from the schools, and Boy and Girl Scout troops to name just a few. Last May was our biggest group to date; Liberty Elementary brought 320 third graders through our facilities meeting with our various departments. Here are a couple of their thank you letters that really stood out.

Comity

“Dear City Leaders, I have learned so much about my comity. I learned that the bars back of the police car is for prisoners not to escape. What I liked about this trip is going in the anabolic. This trip was meaningful experience because it helped me learn more about my comity I live in. That is what I learned on my field trip to City hall.”

Open hearted

“Dear Mayor Gillock. I want to thank you for working on increasing the roads. I want to thank you that because now my mom can come home quickly. I also want to ask you a question. Do you like being the “King” of North Ridgeville? She has more to say but ends with “You are the most open hearted person I know besides my mom.”

Now I would like to share with you information relative to our Auditing department.

We now have a new City Auditor, Mr. Jeff Wilcheck. Jeff has big shoes to fill after Chris Costin retired after nearly 30 years as City Auditor, but has no problem doing so. Jeff previously worked at the State Auditor’s Office and is well known throughout the State for his expertise. And thanks to Teresa Machovina, our deputy auditor who held the department together for several weeks in 2016 when we did not have an

auditor including playing a key part in our bond efforts. In 2016 the City received the Auditor of State Award for its clean audit. I think it is important to occasionally review the criteria for receiving such an award.

First, the City must file timely financial reports with the State Auditor's Office.

The Audit report cannot contain any findings for recovery, material citations, material weaknesses or significant deficiencies or questioned costs.

The management letter cannot contain any comments relating to Ethics referrals, questioned costs less than \$10,000, lack of timely reports, reconciliation, failure to obtain a timely single audit, findings for recovery less than \$100 or reference to public meetings or public records.

Congratulations to our Audit team for a job well done.

What else is going on in the City? Let me hit some highlights we experienced during 2016.

North Ridgeville continues to be ranked as one of the safest communities in Ohio. We were rated by several different organizations including Value Penguin who rated us #4 statewide of "Large Cities" with a population over 20,000 behind Hudson, Hamilton, Warren County and Solon.

Our population continues to rise. In five years since the 2010 census North Ridgeville has grown from a population of 29,465 to a 2015 estimate of 32,483, a growth of 10.2%. It is anticipated this trend will continue as Waterbury, Meadow Lakes and Ridgefield continue to be built out. In addition, to those 3 developments others include Hampton Place, North Ridge Pointe, Mill Ridge and The Reserve at Winfield.

In 2016 we performed 26 weddings. In the time I have been Mayor we have joined 338 couples in Holy Matrimony. We request a donation to the Senior Center for performing the ceremony and over the years approximately \$35,000 has been given to the Senior Center as a result of these rituals.

This year the City will see an alternative to Time Warner Cable. WOW cable is currently installing cable throughout the City and if they have not already started signing up new customers they soon will. I am not suggesting one company over the other but our residents have long stressed their desire for other options and having more choices is always good.

Also, the Northeast Ohio *Gift of Lights* was hosted by Victory Park Ohio with a portion of the proceeds to benefit UH Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital. Visitors from all over came to North Ridgeville to enjoy the 1.3-mile drive-thru holiday light display. Unfortunately, because of the unseasonable temperatures, the display closed a week earlier than planned because of the impassable roadways. We did receive communication from Victory Park that they exceeded their goal of 10,000 cars visiting the light display and will return in 2017 even bigger and better!

While we are on the subject of holiday lights, the Micklos Family from North Ridgeville was featured on the final episode of "Great Christmas Light Fight" that aired on December 19th on WEWS Channel 5. They didn't win but sure put up a "great fight!" If you drove down Lorain Road near Island Road around the holidays, you couldn't miss the house on the corner of Lorain and Deer Run Drive. Congratulations to the Micklos Family for an outstanding light display!

So, let's conclude with a review of our financial status at the end of 2016, and our 2017 outlook.

In our presentation to Moody's last year, we indicated that our combined carryover goal in the General Fund and Income Tax Fund was \$3,971,033. Keep that number in mind, \$3,971,033.

At our appropriation hearings last February after trimming the budget as much as possible we anticipated a carry over or surplus in the General Fund of only \$545,957, well below where we would like to be. We know that our department heads are frugal in their spending and that number traditionally comes in much higher, but we use a very conservative budgeting approach. Although we anticipate revenues to rise, we only budget off of the prior year revenues. This, along with knowing our department heads won't spend everything appropriated will give us a small cushion. In 2016 our actual General Fund carryover was \$1,989,390.

During 2016 our expenditures came in \$1,200,000 under budget, an outstanding accomplishment by our department heads. We do everything we can to save money and spend only what is necessary and as usual, it paid off, although this is significantly more than normal.

In addition, our income tax revenues left at the end of the year were estimated at \$1,425,075. Our actual carryover of income tax revenues were \$2,677,308, an increase of \$1,252,233. I attribute this to four factors. 1. The City is catching up with recovery from the recession. We always lag a year or two. Residents are getting jobs, raises and promotions again that give us some increase. 2. Our growth continues with an average of 200 new homes per year so we have more residential taxpayers. 3. We looked at our 25 largest employers and all 25 showed an increase in withholding tax. And, 4. With all the construction going on in the City there are more people working in the City and paying taxes. So although these increases may not be sustainable in the long term we should continue to see positive growth for the next few years. Why, 350 new employees at Riddell, 100 new employees at University Hospital and in 2018-19 widening of Center Ridge Road.

What this means is that our combined General Fund and Income Tax carryovers total for 2017 is \$4,548,024. This is \$576,991 above our goal of \$3,971,033 as stated earlier.

Financially, we had a good year. All accounts are in the black and final revenues are up. However, please keep in mind that as a whole the City is still eating into its surplus each year. We will continue to be conservative in our budgeting and diligent in our expenditures but the future remains to be seen but indications are that we are holding our on.

I would also like to take this opportunity to mention that I'm continuing monthly Coffee & Conversation with the Mayor. These have been well-received and are in their third year. I invite you to not wait until next year's State of the City Address to learn about City projects, but join me at a monthly coffee. Or, feel free to call or stop by my office...my door is always open.

In summary I am so proud of our employees and what we have been able to accomplish. Council has stepped up to the plate and working together we have paved more streets than ever in the last two years, we have more projects than I could ever have imagined. North Ridgeville continues to grow by leaps and bounds and I believe we are well positioned for the next few years.

As always, it is my pleasure to serve as Mayor of this great community and I thank you for allowing me to speak to you here today.