



2019

STATE OF THE CITY

March 16, 2020

Jim Ludban

City Manager

City Manager's Message

City Council and the Citizens of Willard.

It is my privilege to present this, my 4th State of the City at, this, my final meeting with Council.

To say that these past 4 years has been invigorating and rewarding, would be a drastic understatement, and, you haven't allotted sufficient time for us to articulate the breadth and depth of challenge, growth, and accomplishment that we, all of us, have been part of.

2019 was an intense continuation of your City team excelling in service delivery to our bosses, our citizens, maturing in professionalism of that service delivery, and in their willingness to be responsible and accountable for our actions.

I believe that the outstanding job each of department did with their individual 2019 annual reports is testament to their growth and conviction about the direction of their departments, and, our City.

Our leadership understands that people want a firm sense of direction from Leadership.

They comprehend the value of establishing measurements, and, that we will never manage that which we do not measure.

Their reports have morphed into consistent stories of growth and measurement.

Their reports read like the Who's Who of, Git 'er Done!!!

I am proud of each of them and honored to have been able to coach them.

Shortly after you (not all of you, as I recall), but, shortly after you selected me to serve as City Manager, you may recall that I placed a hand written sign in the lobby that said, “Let’s Make a Difference, Together”. It was posted in both English and Spanish.

The intention was simple. None of us is as good as all of us, and it’s going to require ALL of us, you as the elected leadership of the community, your City employee team, our business and industry, our schools and their leadership, our Ministerial Association, our service organizations, and every person who calls Willard Home, **to Make the Difference we all desire.**

Over time, the effect of that collective effort kind of took on its own identity. I believe that people wanted more than basic infrastructure and city services. They wanted to feel safe, to be part of something positive.

People identified with, even before it was easy to say, **I’m Proud to Call Willard Home.**

Our citizens appeared more emboldened to Say Something, when they Saw Something. We have experienced success in arresting and seeing long standing problem people dealt with by the courts.

As our own employee team developed an understanding of 15 simple rules of engagement, each of them has become more confident in their roles, made changes that have exploited their teams’ talent, skill, and ability, and enabled us to get more accomplished with less.

As a Community, we still must work to enhance the “inclusion” of more citizens in programs, committees, projects and involvement in our City.

We promised you that in 2019, we would “continue to stay focused on doing the right thing for our community and work every day to make a difference in people’s lives. **I assert to you that, together, we have done that.**

On the following pages, I have summarized the highlights of each department’s annual report.

FINANCE

Collected 91.5% of budgeted revenue (\$14m of \$15.3m budgeted)

Spent 76.4% of budgeted expense (\$14m of 18.3m budgeted)

In a nutshell, we spent a million dollars less in 2019 than the previous year, finishing the year spending one-half of one percent more than actual revenue

Implemented finance software transition to Tyler Technology. We continue to learn, and address issues created by the transition

Assistant Finance Director, Lori Huff earned the promotion to Finance Director, following the resignation of Sue Johnson

Reduced the full-time equivalent positions by a position with the change in leadership

Note: Have supplemented finance staff with the addition of a part-time employee (Katie Kriebel)

Utilization of part-time employees, where appropriate have had a positive affect on Wages & Benefits, which is the costliest expense category

Local Government funds have been virtually eliminated at the State level with the removal of Personal Property, Commercial Activity Tax, Intangible Financial, Inheritance Tax. Our effect is the loss of about \$500,000 each year.

Offsetting the lack of Local Government funding is the necessity for Council to continue to consider Utility rate adjustments to ensure that revenue covers the costs of operating, capital, and capital reserve (Required by EPA)

When the Administration and Council consider the sustainability of our services to the public, the City Manager is of the opinion that we should review the adequacy of our existing income tax strategy. Questions to evaluate include our 100% resident's income tax credit and an increase to the current 1.375% income tax.

MAINTENANCE

Maintains nearly 60 miles of water lines, 570 valves – 13 main line breaks repaired

Developed valve exercise program to conform to EPA

Flush 480 + fire hydrants twice yearly

Maintain 30 miles of sanitary and 15 miles of storm sewers

Maintain more than 30 miles of city streets

Completed 3 separate 1 block waterline replacement projects, saving about \$35g compared to bidding the project out

Implemented: Catch basin repair/maintenance

Street Sign evaluation/replacement

Water Valve Exercise (545/25)

Increased utilization of Street Sweeper (1640 miles/335)

Poured 150 + yards of concrete panels on streets

Prepped and planted Phase #1 Boulevard trees

Smoothest Leaf PU program ever. -23 Days picked up 44 lds

39th consecutive year of Tree City USA-

Acquired used Stump Grinder – removed 63 stumps 1st yr. -Pd for machine

Facilitated the reservoir Grant work

Kim Williams Sign Co. Kim designs and makes most City signs

Spring Clean-up – Accepted and disposed of 31 tons of trash

Installed 300 new radio read meters – cut read days to 3

Technology use efficiency enables PT status

Installed water meters at all City use locations (16)

Achieved 75% plus monthly shut off rate for delinquent utility bills

PARKS AND RECREATION

Bryson and his team were instrumental in the success of the Ohio Flags of Honor Memorial and displays. This event saw individuals, businesses, industry, veteran service and social service organizations, and every department of the City come together to work toward the common effort to honor the lives of 301 Ohio military members who have sacrificed their lives in the Global War on Terrorism. Many consider the Flags of Honor weekend one of Willard's grandest public displays in recent memory.

The 33rd consecutive Festival in the Park successfully occurred during the same period as the Festival.

2019's seasonal staff earned exceptional remarks for their collective effort to put others before themselves to make our park system a better place for our community. The staff exerted a yeoman work ethic and worked closely together. One example is one of our workers who started a recycle effort at the park. Bottom line, such behavior by our youth is both encouraging and promising that Willard is still blessed with motivated youth to grow into our leadership of tomorrow.

Park revenue from all sources decreased by \$20,000 from the previous year.

Pool revenue was flat with 2019 and we were able to enhance utilization with several programs.

Loss associated with swimming pool operation was reduced by almost \$3,000 in 2019 (\$6500)

Grants and donations significantly increased, enabling the expansion of activity and investment in recreational efforts.

Reservation, shelter, and showmobile rental income decreased by \$2,500 vs 2019.

We made \$32,000 in capital improvements, including expanding the nature trail, completing the disc golf course, starting the pickle ball courts, and replacing playground equipment.

We initiated our first public survey effort with more than 600 respondents providing us valuable feedback.

The Pepperidge Farm Concert Series experienced another successful season. We are very grateful to Pepperidge for their continued participation and support.

The employment relationship with Huron County Job and Family Services enabled us to reduce expenses in 2019 by \$5,000 (+-)

WATER AND WASTEWATER TREATMENT

With Scott Pifher's vision, both Water and Wastewater pioneered the concept of dual role operators, licensed and capable of operating in either plant. This practice enabled us to consolidate some maintenance function and reduce full time equivalents. The sharing of resources fosters both teamwork and efficiency.

Water loss is the difference in what the water plant produces and what gets billed, or so we thought. The EPA guideline is that water loss needs to be less than 15%. We concentrated our effort to understand it more than 2 years ago. We determined that many of the City's user points were not metered and other complexities about the timing of billing and other measures. Although not a science yet, we now have monthly metrics that enable us to determine that our loss is well within the EPA guidelines. In 2019 our average monthly loss was 9.8%, and a significant amount of that involves our own processes that we can't meter.

The WTP average daily production of water for 2019 was 1.3 million gallons. We can produce 3.2 MGD.

The enhancement of our Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition (SCADA) capabilities at both WTP AND WWTP have enabled us to reduce the number of hours that each plant is manned, while maintaining continuous operation at WWTP. SCADA automatically notifies appropriate personnel if necessary.

In 2019 we deployed 2 solar units into the reservoir. They produce ultrasonic sound waves that are harmless to fish, yet help control algae, including cyanobacteria (bad bacteria). This initiative has virtually eliminated our introduction of chemicals into the reservoir to control algae. The cost of the units has already been offset by the savings in chemical costs.

We pumped more than 457 million gallons of water out of the reservoir in 2019.

Our largest industrial and business water consumers used approximately 100 million gallons of water in 2019.

WTP chemical costs were reduced by \$58,000 in 2019 vs the previous year, reducing the chemical cost per million gallons by \$127.

All finished water samples analyzed in 2019 met or exceeded EPA standards.

Bulk water sales brought in \$259,000 in 2019.

Laboratory services performed for others netted \$10,800.

The leadership at the Wastewater Treatment Plant (Carl Stevens/Scott Pifher) were awarded the Ohio Water Environment's Awesome Operator designation.

Capital improvements included the rehab of clarifier #3 utilizing local contractors for part of the project.

Local contractors also participated in the metal installation of a vertical loop reactor.

Carl Stevens facilitated the award of a \$14,000 grant from the Huron County Solid Waste Management to support the City's recycling program.

748 million gallons of wastewater flow was treated in 2019, averaging just over 2 million gallons daily.

We partnered with a local farmer to apply 263 tons of biosolids to 73 agricultural acres.

The cost of chemicals utilized in 2019 was \$51,000 equating to \$68 per million gallons of treated flow.

WWTP is the City's largest consumer of electric. The operating changes implemented resulted in a \$50,000 reduction in electricity costs vs 2018.

Revenue from laboratory analysis for other parties exceeded \$10,000.

FIRE/RESCUE

Fire loss for all of 2019 amounted to \$37,500, which represents an 80% reduction from 2018.

Emergency service calls increased by 1.5%. We answered 1,523 requests for emergency assistance.

Fire/Rescue received the American Heart Association's Lifeline EMS Gold Award in 2019 for implementing quality improvement processes for treatment of heart attack patients.

Capital and efficiency measures enabled Fire/EMS to use 4.3% less electric and 13% less natural gas in 2019.

Willard's Miss Flame, Kennedy Daub was chosen as the 2nd runner-up in the NOVA Convention pageant.

The department frequently responds to area villages via mutual aid requests. We have reached out and invited area Fire/Rescue units to participate with us in our training efforts. We believe that building relationships and strengthening knowledge and capability better enables all of us to serve our communities.

The department's years of service for the 7 full time and 36 part time employees exceeds 562 years. Approximately half of our employees reside outside our designated service area.

Fire/EMS responded to 45 overdose patients and deployed 295 doses of Narcan in 2019.

POLICE

The first note of interest in the PD annual report is found on page 3, the personnel roster, where you can't miss the assignment designations. Policemen aren't simply patrol officers, dispatchers don't just dispatch (now called Public Safety Telecommunicators) and every single employee has companion assignments to their "regular" duties. We believe that these additional expectations provide opportunities for people to grow and contribute and keep the job interesting.

You will find throughout the report, information alluding to the decline in property crimes, burglaries, breaking and entering, theft from vehicles. Domestic abuse and assault cases were reduced by 30-40% each.

Calls for service decreased by 5.7% in 2019.

The tragedy of drug use was evident in Willard in 2019, when 4 persons died as a result of drug overdoses.

Vehicle accidents were approximately the same as the previous year at 170.

Officers made 100 less traffic stops in 2019 vs 2018.

Willard's Public Safety Telecommunicators were the first department in Huron County to become appropriately certified, as required by ORC. The law requires that personnel answering emergency medical calls for service must be Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) certified. This

credential enables the PST to follow protocols to talk callers through performing assistance to victims, while waiting for the ambulance to arrive. Willard's PST's have been recognized for providing life-saving instruction in this capacity.

Note: Fire/Rescue and PD currently provide Emergency Medical Dispatch training/certification to all agencies in the County.

Public Safety Telecommunicators answered 5.8% more calls in 2019, averaging nearly 3 minutes per call, on the line.

The police evidence room logged 825 units of evidence in 2019. There are currently more than 1300 items in inventory. They are required to be inventoried two times per year. The evidence room is certified correct by Sgt. Mahon.

Officer Kelbley is responsible for vehicle maintenance and statistics. His effort resulted in more than \$6,000 savings from the budgeted amount, in supplies and maintenance costs in 2019. He also provides research and specs for all police vehicles.

Police unit members amassed almost 950 hours of training in 2019. Several members are certified in various aspects of police work and much of our effort is accomplished in house.

Juvenile Officer, Sgt. Gillmor responded to 197 cases during the year. Ryan also mentors at the school, is our senior field training officer for new employees, organized and leads the school Drone Club, is instrumental in the Bike Rodeo/Touch a Truck, serves as the City technology resource, and is recognized as Huron County's Mobile Forensics Expert. In

2019 he examined 159 devices, utilizing the training received through the United States Secret Service National Computer Forensics Institute.

Detective Bureau officer Gilliam worked the cases that resulted in 89 people being indicted in 2019. More than 230 individuals have been indicted in the last 4 years.

Detective Gilliam investigated 19 overdose cases in 2019.

Gilliam created and participated in 62 search warrants. We have executed 168 search warrants since 2016.

The conviction record for cases Gilliam works is very high, thanks in large part to the work of our Law Director and Assistant Huron County Prosecutor Bambi Page.

The PD's annual Drug Take Back effort collected more than 100 pounds of old, unneeded prescriptions.

School Resource Officer Tackett covered more than 1000 miles, walking the floors of the schools in 2019.

In his third year as SRO, he is responsible for DARE, Safety Town, community programs, emergency drills, student contacts, investigating complaints, assisting school administration, and volunteers as a chaperone, trainer, and often a mentor and "receptive ear" for students and staff.

We are investigating the possibility of some arrangement that would extend the number of hours that the PD has a presence in the schools.

Public Safety Telecommunicator Handshoe is the catalyst behind the Parking Enforcement Bureau follow-up and

reporting. 112 parking tickets were issued in 2019. 80% of those were paid.

30 tickets were forwarded to collections, of which only 3 have been collected.

162 tickets remain outstanding with a collection value of \$10,000.

It should be noted that a Court ruling severely hampers the ability to enforce parking regulations, in that it prohibits the use of marking (chalking) tires on vehicles, as a tool to determine that the vehicle has not moved.

It should be further noted that legislation passed by City Council make removing illegally placed vehicles in our City less complicated.

\$1755 was collected in parking fines in 2019.

Senior Watch is a community initiative started by Officer Slone. Although other officers participate, Slone is responsible for the effort that saw 441 Senior Watch Checks happen in 2019. He has also provided assistance and small gifts to many of his Senior contacts.

The Bike Patrol is Back. Officer Myers was certified, joining two other officers previously certified, and we sporadically employed the practice during special events, and when manpower permitted.

Foot Patrol is emphasized as a means of increasing visibility leading to an enhanced feeling of safety and continuing to improve relationships with the public. 1969 foot patrols were logged, by officers, in 2019.

PUBLIC WORKS & CODE ENFORCEMENT

We paved and improved another 1.33 miles of City streets in 2019.

The cost of the improvements was almost \$400,000, of which \$135,000 was derived from grants/Issue 1 funding.

We modified our street improvement focus from total street, curb, and sometimes sidewalk renewal to street resurfacing, with additional concrete and some prep work being performed by our own forces.

The effect of that change dramatically reduces the cost per mile to resurface/repair, enabling us to plan more miles of paving at a lesser cost.

These past 5 years we have paved 8.8 miles with City paving projects and 4 additional miles of ODOT paving projects! Our cost equaled \$2.9 million dollars or, approximately \$329,000 per mile

That equates to 35% of our streets having been resurfaced in that period.

For comparison, in the previous 6 years the City spent nearly \$2M to pave 2.7 miles at an average cost of \$740,000 per mile.

We now maintain a rolling 3-year plan for street improvement projects. We include planned water/sewer projects in the plan.

The 4-year practice of utilizing our own forces for smaller water line projects realizes huge savings to the taxpayer. We continued that in 2019 replacing 3 separate blocks of 4-inch water mains with 6- and 8-inch lines. These separate projects would have cost \$110,000 to contract out, and the in-house completion cost of \$76,434 realized a \$34,000 savings.

The GIS (Geographic Information System) project represents an arduous project and accomplishment for the City and was championed by the Public Works Director. The daunting cost of acquiring GIS caused it to be delayed yearly in Capital planning. His persistence caused us to allocate minimal dollars to start the process, training and utilizing our own people to accurately verify the location of our water and sewer infrastructure, right down to specific valves, manholes, etc. Entering this data into GIS completed the map that the EPA subsequently required as part of our Asset Management Plan. The process has consumed nearly 4 years, and, we saved more than \$200,000 by accomplishing it in house. We have less than \$64,000 invested.

Willard has almost 60 miles of water mains, 632 water main valves, and 525 hydrants.

Willard's Water Rules and Regulations were last updated in 2008. They are the playbook, mandated by the EPA to reflect their rules and consider their recommendations, as well as detail processes for our use. The updating process requires every department, except police to be involved. The product has been accepted and is in force, including a provision that will keep it updated annually.

Valve maintenance and exercise is process required by the EPA, and that benefits from our use of GIS technology. Willard has 632 water main valves, 25 of which are deemed critical and must be tested more frequently. The process requires systematically tested and documentation of compliance. In 2019 we developed an acceptable regimen.

Water and Sewer systems across the United States, including ours are aging and will require massive capital investment. To that end, the EPA requires that public water systems track and report Asset Management metrics that deal with operating costs to produce water per service connection, operating ratio, water line breaks per 10 miles of distribution pipe, non-revenue water, maintenance tasks per year on vertical assets and other customer service metrics as specified.

The City Engineer, Dan Thornton takes the lead in many of these tasks, and has done an excellent job maintaining our compliance, as well as provide insight and advice to our staff. He has prepared both water and sewer system annual reports reviewing production/treatment, consumption, billing, and financial aspects. The report will compare data to previous years, for analysis and planning purposes.

Building and zoning permits issued increased by 33% in 2019 vs 2018 (484 vs 363). The value of the work exceeds \$8 million dollars, \$4.6 million more than the previous year. The preponderance of the increase is the Trilogy Independent Living project valued at approximately \$6 million. The Trilogy project is about half completed and occupancy should occur later this year.

Other notable projects include the City School bus garage erection, Lisa's Ice Cream, Burger King remodel, and the Civista Bank project.

The positive effects of the City's Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) was demonstrated, yet again, with the erection of 3 new single-family residences.

Late in 2019 we reestablished the full-time Code Enforcement position, appointing Tim Pelsang, formerly the meter reader.

Nuisance complaint activity increased by 44% in 2019. Council's reaction was the adoption of several pieces of legislation to assist in the clean up effort.

In 2019 the City mowed 225 violation properties, up 50% from the previous year. The cost of the service is appended to the property owner's tax bill.

We continue to board-up and clean up properties, when other means of abatement don't work.

Council adopted legislation permitting golf carts to be operated on the City's streets in some circumstances.

Willard received a \$150,000 Reservoir Recreational grant. We will finish several projects there this Spring. Already completed and being enjoyed are a popular Kayak launcher, new stone on the trail around the reservoir, pavilion, picnic tables and grill, binocular viewer, paving of parking and driving areas, storage building, and enlargement/renewal of steps.

And, now, as a point of privilege, I would be pleased to share several accomplishments this past 4 years, that have made Willard a little better place to Live, Work, and, Play.....

2020 Will mark 40 consecutive years that Willard has been selected as a TREE CITY USA. We have retired CM, Paul Capell to thank for starting the tradition, in 1980.

And, what about the Ohio Flags of Honor weekend!!!!!!

You supported our establishment of the Community Reinvestment Act, to incentivize new housing construction and some remodel work. In the previous 10 years prior to CRA, Willard experienced 2 housing starts. Since CRA establishment 8 new homes have been or are under construction.

Our participation in CHIP program saw \$230,000 in funding rehab 4 homes, make repairs to 5 others, and help with rental assistance. We have been awarded \$300,000 for the current cycle.

You listened to people who encouraged us to make it easier to do business with us. The use of credit cards and auto pay makes it easier for customers to pay utilities.

Legislation you enacted addressed parking, fence construction, junk vehicles, allows the use of golf carts on some streets.

Our investment in technology has enabled us to remotely manage water and wastewater operations, eliminate third shift, reduce manned plant hours.

Your management team has embraced workforce development, sharing of resources, and reduced full time employee equivalents, while improving work practices.

Where appropriate, we utilize part-time employees rather than full-time. One such success is the transition of our utility meter reader to part time status. This was only accomplished by his positive attitude, utilization of technology and capital. The result is that meter reading process has been reduced from approximately 2 weeks to 3 days.

Modifying our street improvement focus from total street, curb, and sometimes sidewalk renewal to street resurfacing, with additional concrete and some prep work being done by our own forces.

The effect of that change has enabled us to “catch-up” by dramatically reducing the cost per mile to surface/repair.

These past 5 years we have paved 8.8 miles with City paving projects and an additional 4 miles of ODOT projects totaling 12.8 miles at a cost of \$2.9 m, or \$329,000 per mile.

For comparison, in the 6 previous years the City had spent nearly \$2M to pave 2.7 miles at an average cost of \$740,000 per mile.

By the Way, we have resurfaced 35% of our streets this past five years and plan to continue our rolling 3 year plan for street improvements, including water/sewer in the plan.

The practice of utilizing local contractors, when possible, and encouraging our own people to take on capital projects, such as water line renewals has save \$hundreds of thousands of dollars, enabling us to do more with less.

The GIS (Geographic Information System) alone saved the taxpayers more than \$200,000 to implement. You will read the details in the summary section of this report. It was championed by PW.

Building and Zoning permits increased by 1/3 in 2019, and the value of the work added \$8m.

Trilogy represented \$6m of that and is a welcomed addition to our aging population’s housing options.

We continue to clean-up, mow as necessary, and board up abandoned properties. Its effect is reflected in property value appreciation.

The \$150,000 recreational grant for our reservoir will be completed by mid-year, adding numerous improvements and opportunities at the reservoir.

Wages and benefits represent 41%, the largest spending category in our budget. We have implemented modest changes that have worked to encourage employees to be prudent stewards of the health care benefit. We added the Health Saving Account (HAS) option, and its popularity is increasing with our employees. The result of these changes and employee awareness has enabled us to eliminate a sizeable balance deficit in health care and lessen the annual policy increase.

Our Public Safety Telecommunicators were the first in the County to become compliant with the ORC requirement to EMD certified. We now provide instruction to the other County PSAPS for EMD certification.

Officer Slone implemented the successful Senior Watch Program to regularly check on those signed up.

Persistent, intensive police work has seen burglaries/B&E's and thefts from vehicles consistently subside from a high of 100/40/84 in 2016 to 45/5/11 in 2019. That's huge!

Assaults and domestic violence reports have similarly tracked from a high in 2016 of 52/53 to 27/30 in 2019.

In 4 years, we have literally experienced 100's of arrests, convictions and various sentences for drug related offenses.

Of course, as with every other community, there are still drugs and deals that happen in Willard.

However, it's been a while since I have heard us referred to as that Crappy little drug town.

Is it working? We were called to assist another community with a drug buy, bust. Turns out the dealer was a Willard person, who admitted it was too risky to buy in Willard.

We have reduced debt from 5.7M to 3.9M.

In 2019 we spent 1M less than we did in 2018, and continued with capital spending and infrastructure repair. Diminished LGF is a way of life. We cannot allow it to curtail our commitment to maintaining our path of improvement. It will take creative, energetic, fact-based

deliberation, but, our citizens expect us to sometimes, make difficult decisions on their behalf.

Every decision I make, I consider the sustainability of the decision. Your team I leave behind will/ can continue that.

When you hired me to this position, you suggested several specific areas that you expected to be addressed.

One of those alluded to employee development and succession planning.

I agreed to stay 3 – 5 years to address your expectations and promised to identify and mentor my replacement.

I reported on his progress, and recently advised you that that candidate was ready, willing, and capable of continuing the things that we have started...that he was a Willard boy, with Willard's best interest at heart.

I believe that I have demonstrated by example that a Willard boy, with Willard's best interest at heart, can be the catalyst for positive change.

I certainly respect your decision to advertise for my replacement.

I would be remiss if I didn't endorse my own succession plan for your serious consideration.

I am Proud to Call Willard Home.

Respectfully,

Jim Ludban

