



PHIL JENKINS
Mayor
pjenkins@nappanee.org

State of the City 2019

One Day at a time!

Tonight, I deliver to the residents of Nappanee, the 2019 State of the City. It is with much thankfulness that I stand before you to share our successes and chart our course for a stronger, more resilient, and more attractive community. As I was preparing this speech, a phrase from a popular hymn came to mind... "Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow". As we look at where we have been and plan for where we want to be in the future, we can all be thankful for today...right now, for that is all we are guaranteed in this life.

So, as we look back at 2018 and present our goals for 2019, let us not forget that we must live in the moments we are given. We need to make the most of everyday...encouraging, building, and investing in those around us.

2018 will be remembered as a year of transformation as several projects and initiatives were started, completed, or saw significant progress. From collaborative, multi-agency capital improvement projects, to infrastructure improvements, to private investments, Nappanee witnessed significant progress.

In February, we were notified that we were awarded \$2.3 million from the Federal Highway Administration for reconstruction of Woodview Drive, from State Road 19 to Oakland Avenue. We are currently working with the engineers on a design that will improve drainage and safety, as well as add a continuous pedestrian path along the entire stretch of road. While not scheduled for construction until 2022, we are actively working on the planning and look forward to the implementation.

In March we officially launched the City of Nappanee website. Thanks to the efforts of our Director of Community Outreach, Brooklyn Moore, and Digital Hill, we have a communication platform and resource center for use by both residents and guests. Being able to share our message digitally allows for greater collaboration and coordination with other entities in Nappanee and the surrounding area. This new platform has allowed us to offer online payments for our Utilities and hopefully, expand to other departments soon.

Embrace the Place

In April, just one year after announcing the Community of WaNee Vision 2020 capital campaign, the committee achieved its goal of raising \$5.75 million dollars to transform social services in our community. Phase one of that project was the building of a new soccer field at Wellfield Park to serve the Northwood Soccer League and NorthWood High School. As phase one reached substantial completion in October, the second phase, a new Boys and Girls Club, broke ground on the former high school soccer field at Nappanee Elementary School.

In addition to being part of the Vision 2020 project, the new soccer field was also part of a multi-project infrastructure improvement that included two new production wells at Wellfield Park and the reconstruction of a two-block section of North Nappanee Street. With the addition of the two new water production wells, we have increased our capacity for continued residential and business growth. We were also able to leverage the well project and obtain a grant from the State Revolving Fund to start replacing our oldest water service lines and reduce the chance of lead contamination. Through a nearly \$520,000 Community Crossing Grant through INDOT, we were able to reconfigure and improve Nappanee Street, adding storm water improvements and sidewalk to the neighborhood.

In May, WaNee Superintendent Dr. Scot Croner, Police Chief Steve Rulli, and I met with several State agencies to discuss the WaNee School's proposed school safety referendum. In November, the referendum was approved by the district residents. This referendum provides for an additional School Resource Officer and mental health counselling in our schools. While we cannot prevent all tragedies, we are taking active steps to reduce the likelihood of an event occurring at our schools.

In June, the Nappanee Art Council installed their first major project downtown. Art in Bloom was well received and added a renewed vibrancy to the heart of the City. In late fall, the apple orchard was completed and became the first permanent installation along the Art Path.

In the fall we started up the new Combined Sewer Overflow treatment plant, allowing us to increase the capacity for wastewater treatment. We are continuing to work with the contractor and engineers to bring this project to final completion. As soon as the weather is warm enough this spring we will have a public open house at the new facility.

We also continue to work on our TIF management plan, identifying potential uses of our TIF revenue for quality of place projects, utility infrastructure, and economic development. Two projects identified in the report and supported by the redevelopment commission include the purchase of the building at 253 W. Market Street for an Art Gallery and Community Art studio and streetscape and roadway improvements for the US 6 East Corridor, encompassing Oakland Avenue to Miriam Street and Walnut Street to Stahly Drive.

The police department received a federal grant of approximately \$117,000 for the purchase of new radios that include technology necessary to communicate on the new national network platform for first responders. Elkhart County will be making upgrades to their communication towers and equipment that is scheduled to be in place by May of 2020.

New and expanded businesses in 2018 included Newmar's expanded service center along Stahly Drive, Sammlung Platz on Tomahawk Trail, Tri-State Crush at the former ADM mill, US Rod at the former Ameritrans Facility, the Pretty Cakery and Hartman Suites apartments in the downtown, Perfect Twist Pretzel and the Dutch Kernel in Coppes Commons, and Good Vibes next to East Lake Fitness.

As you can see 2018 was another strong year for Nappanee, and we have a bright hope for 2019. We anticipate more growth of our corporate boundaries, improvements to our infrastructure, enhancements to our built environment, restoration of our parks, and more focus on both physical and mental health.

We are currently working on two annexations that will enlarge our corporate limits and provide land for more businesses. In addition, we are having conversations with property owners neighboring our current city limits to explore the possibility of future growth. Knowing where we can grow will help us prioritize the extension of services to those areas to be more proactive in our planning and zoning efforts.

We continue to monitor and assess our current infrastructure. Asset management plans are critical to ensuring we can sustain our current systems and have adequate funding to expand as needed. We currently have an asset management plan in place for our streets and we are actively working on creating a similar plan for our water and wastewater systems. This year we will also analyze our sidewalks and fiber infrastructure to develop a plan to improve physical access as well as improve digital access. Energy capacity and reliability are critical to growing our economy. We are working with NIPSCO to upgrade our power systems to provide more reliability and greater potential for business growth.

Our built environment will continue to improve as existing buildings are renovated and new businesses and residences are constructed. We look forward to more public/private improvements in our downtown. We will also look for innovative ways to improve efficiencies at our City-owned facilities to save on overall energy costs.

The Park Board will be completing their work on a 5-year master plan in the next few months. We will use this information to implement improvements to our parks throughout the City. The improvements to our parks is one of my top priorities in 2019. We will look at all possible funding sources available to incorporate as many of the projects over the course of the next few years. As part of the plan, we will be looking at connecting all our parks with a pedestrian path that will loop through the City and connect to existing trails.

In addition to the added physical health opportunities the parks projects will bring to the community, we would like to provide continued awareness and resources for improving overall mental health. As part of the Vision 2020 project, we are partnering with the WaNee Schools, Nappanee Boys & Girls Club, and Family Christian Development Center, and the Elder Haus to

improve access to resources to people of all ages to improve community wellness. Through our website, we hope to begin a dialogue that leads to more education and more action to improve overall well-being, links people to necessary resources, and reduces the stigma of mental illness and addictions.

We will continue to strengthen our partnerships with local, county, state, and federal leaders to ensure Nappanee has input in decisions at all levels. Collaboration with regional organizations is critical to Nappanee's future. Strong relationships regionally will bring greater resiliency and talent attraction that is key to a growing and prospering community.

In closing, I would like to challenge all of us to do our part to make Nappanee the best it can be. I am and always have been excited about the future of Nappanee. Let us live each day like it was our last and let us encourage and uplift those around us to be the best they can be. Life is too short to not enjoy the journey. Let's continue to build a better Nappanee, one day at a time. May God continue to bless Nappanee!