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Nappanee State of the City 2022 Together

As we enter 2022, I would like to challenge all of us to persevere, with patience, the course set before us. The past two years have definitely tried our patience, strained relationships, and threatened both our physical and emotional well-being. As we continue to weather this once-a-century pandemic, reflect on 2021, and look forward to 2022, I want us to focus on what we have accomplished, and will accomplish, TOGETHER.

Nothing defines Nappanee more than our resilience. When faced with challenges, Nappanee businesses and residents rise to the challenge each and every time. No matter how many times we get knocked down, we get back up, brush ourselves off, and make ourselves stronger by going through adversity together. The strength of our community has, and always will be, the caring and compassionate concern for neighbors in need. It is this sense of “togetherness” is what knits us together and propels us forward to something better.

Together with the Clerk-Treasurer and Council, the city continues to maintain balanced budgets and manage tax rates. Since 2016, the combined fund balances of the three largest tax-supported funds (General Fund, Motor Vehicle Highway, and Parks) have increased over \$6,000,000, while combined tax rates for the same funds have dropped from 1.62% to 1.45%. Thanks to solid financial leadership in the Clerk-Treasurer’s office, the oversight provided by a capable Council, and the discipline of dedicated department heads, the City’s financial future is in good shape. As we look forward to 2022, we are financially set to invest in some exciting capital improvements.

Together with our City Departments, Nappanee continues to provide vital services to our community and sets the stage for future growth. 2021 was a year of transition for a few City Departments as long-time Chief of EMS, Jim Sumpter, retired. Jim oversaw the growth of the EMS department and was instrumental in Nappanee moving to a full-time paramedic service. With the departure of Jim and the ongoing process of merging Fire and EMS, Don Lehman moved into the role of full-time Fire Chief. Steve Heckathorn continues as Assistant Chief, overseeing the daily operations of the EMS.

Together with the local builders and contractors, our Planning Department saw significant growth in the number of permits and estimated construction costs. As Don Lehman transitioned from Planning to Fire, Todd Nunemaker was hired in June to become our new City Planner. Residential

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Construction saw 16 permits for new homes and 68 permits for additions and remodels, representing approximately \$6,000,000 in new assessed value. Commercial Construction saw 13 permits for new buildings and 47 permits for additions and remodels, representing approximately \$21,500,000 in new assessed value. The Planning Department also implemented online and self-service features that allow contractors better access and more flexibility for obtaining building permits.

Together with the downtown businesses and local residents, the Water Department completed the installation of new water mains along US 6 West, SR 19, West Centennial Street, and North Locke Street. Although construction was not as smooth as some, including the city, would like, we are pleased to have the new pipes in the ground, new sidewalks installed, and new pavement in place. While there is still some final restoration to take place this spring, we are pleased to have our city back together again. As we look to the east, we see the construction of the new water tower nearing completion at the airport. This tower will enhance overall water quality for the entire city and provide the necessary fire protection for the industrial growth occurring near the airport.

Together with the residents along Woodview Drive, the Street Department continues plans for reconstruction of this road from SR 19 to Oakland Avenue. The engineers are currently coordinating the construction plans with the various utilities along the corridor to make sure the work is scheduled effectively. Actual construction of the roadway is planned for 2023. Together with Kosciusko County and residents along Jackson Street and CR 1350, we are also preparing for the extension of Jackson Street. Not only will this project improve safety and provide better access, but it also opens this area up for additional housing development. Engineers are currently working on plans, and we hope to start construction this summer.

Together with Beacon Health, we are pleased to have a new, state-of-the-art medical clinic across from NorthWood High School. Together with Beacon and our other health partners, Goshen Health and Lutheran Health, Nappanee residents have access to high-quality medical options.

Together with local businesses, our economic development and redevelopment commission continues to work with existing and new businesses to grow and expand. In 2021, we welcomed Hoosier Coatings, Thingamabables, and Three Little Birds. In the heart of the RV capital of the world, we were pleased to see the expansion of Showalter RV. We also watch with anticipation as work continues for InTech Trailers and the remodeling takes shape for Neighbors Mercantile.

Together with our developers and builders, we were able to see several new homes built in 2021. Residential construction continues in Blackstone, Heritage Farms, Miller's Orchard, and Craftsman Village. As these housing developments reach capacity, we look forward to expanding our residential inventory with new subdivisions and housing options to meet the demand for our growing businesses.

Together with the Park Department, the city is constructing permanent restroom facilities in Stauffer, South, and Recovery Parks. South Park is also in the process of a complete renovation

to restore this neighborhood park, including exciting new equipment, an inclusive play area, a new basketball court, a new pavilion, and walking a path. Partnering with the school, a new restroom, locker, concession, and storage facility is being built in Wellfield Park. Construction for these projects is scheduled to be complete by this summer.

Together with several key partners in education, healthcare, faith, and non-profit organizations, the Mental Health Task Force continues to bring awareness and education to the community about the importance of emotional well-being to our overall health. The correlation between our mental health and physical health is critical to overall wellness. The task force continues to work on partnerships that connect people to the resources they need. As we work on bringing more access to mental health counselling in Nappanee, we encourage you to reach out to your families, friends, churches, and neighbors, or check out bewellindaina.com if you are struggling with mental health issues.

Together with our regional partners, the South Bend-Elkhart Regional Partnership recently received an additional \$50,000,000 grant from the Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative, also known as READI. This funding through the Indiana Economic Development Corporation is similar to the funding the region received in 2015 with Regional Cities Grant that encourages public-private investment to improve economic growth, attract talent, and add additional amenities to our communities. The Wa-Nee Vision 2020 was partially supported through Regional Cities. Although several projects are already identified for the new READI funds, we will look for opportunities to tap into this funding source as we contemplate future projects in Nappanee.

Together with private industry, we were able to improve our critical power and communications infrastructure. NIPSCO, Mediacom, CenturyLink, and Community Fiber continue to build out and improve aging systems. As we enter an era where connectivity and reliability are not just a luxury, but a necessity, we have worked on strengthening our relationships with these companies to provide better internet access and more reliable power to both businesses and residents.

Together with the Federal Railroad Administration, we continue to work on improving the safety of our rail crossings in the city. With the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Grant, we are working with our engineers, CSX, and the Mental Health Task Force to make physical improvements to our crossings to minimize vehicular accidents and to incorporate educational signage and media to help prevent suicide.

As you can see, there are many partners responsible for the success of our community this past year. Without all of us working together, there is no way we could have accomplished these achievements. As we look forward to 2022, I would like to update you on some anticipated work and ask for your assistance as we continue to shape our future together.

Together with the Street Department, the Redevelopment Commission, and INDOT's Community Crossings Grant, Miriam Avenue will be reconstructed this summer, between Stahley Drive and Derksen Drive. The project will improve drainage, add a sidewalk, add a pedestrian crossing at

US 6, and add a pedestrian bridge across the Berlin Court Ditch near the water tower. This will allow customer's at Newmar's Service Center to connect to our trails and amenities in Stauffer Park.

Together with the Parks Department, the Art Council, and the Community Foundation of Elkhart County, the Oakland Avenue Trail will be reconstructed, lighted, and landscaped, connecting Derksen Drive to Woodview Drive. The Art Council will be adding a new permanent exhibit with the sculptures currently located downtown. The exhibit will be called the "Tunnel of Love".

Together with the Redevelopment Commission and BID, we will continue to enhance the downtown. BID recently approved an increase in grant awards for façade improvements for all businesses and the Redevelopment Commission is working with the new owner of the Dietrich Building to improve the exterior of one of the largest and most prominent buildings at the intersection of US 6 and SR 19.

Together with our Economic Development Director, we will continue to work with existing and new businesses looking to expand or locate in Nappanee. With two new proposed buildings planned at the Airport Industrial Area and one new building planned for the west edge of town, we continue to see positive growth. Currently our Economic Development Director is a part time position, sharing responsibilities with the Chamber of Commerce. Moving forward, the city would like to make the Economic Development Director a full-time position. I plan to work with the City Council, Chamber of Commerce, and the Redevelopment Commission as we work on an effective transition plan for this position moving into 2023.

Together with our Emergency Services, we are developing plans and determining the location for a new fire station. Based on information received in our feasibility study, we are ready to actively plan for this new station. Our intent is to finalize the design by the end of the year and hopefully be ready to begin construction in late 2022 or early 2023. The new facility will provide for growth of the full-time staff of fire fighters and paramedics well into the future. As we continue to add full-time staff to the Fire Department, we will see better response times and better protection. We also hope the new facility can be used to help recruit and train the best staff in Northern Indiana.

Together with the Wa-Nee Schools and the Park Department, we plan to partner on additional improvements to Wellfield Park, including new bleachers, a press box, and additional parking. We also will be partnering with the schools by providing water and sewer infrastructure for future improvements located east of the existing high school. We appreciate our partnership with the schools as we work together to efficiently utilize funds and minimize duplication of amenities and services.

Together with all of you, we plan to update our comprehensive master plan. Many of the pieces that make up the master plan have been reviewed. Items like Vibrant Communities, the Parks Master Plan, the Asset Management Plans for Utilities and Streets, and the Housing Strategy are drafted. Now it is time to pull it all together and map out what the future of Nappanee will look

like, but we need your help. The components that make up our comprehensive master plan are Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Public Facilities, Economic Development, and Finance. For us to make this successful, we need to make sure the plan is representative of the overall community's vision. If you would like to serve on a committee, we ask for your help. Over the next 10-12 months we will be conducting several meetings and gathering public input for what residents, businesses, and guests want to see in Nappanee. More information about opportunities and updates will be provided in the coming weeks through our website, social media, and newsletters. We are excited about setting our future course together with as many of you as possible.

Along with the comprehensive master plan, we ask for your help with the various boards and commissions that serve the City of Nappanee. We are blessed to have some amazing people involved in leadership roles in these organizations, but we would like to have a list of interested individuals in place should there be any vacancies on any of these boards. To facilitate this request, the following is a list of current boards and commissions: the Board of Public Works and Safety, the Park Board, the Redevelopment Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, the Plan Commission, the Board of Aviation, the Building Improvement District, the Tree Board, the Electrical Licensing Board, the Memorial Day Committee, the July 4th Committee, and Miracles on Main and Market Committee. If you have any interest in serving on any of these boards or commissions, please provide us with your name, contact information, and reasons you would like to serve. You can drop off the information at City Hall, fill out a form on our website, or send an email to bmoore@nappanee.org. As positions become available, we will contact those on the list.

Looking back over the last six years, I am proud of the accomplishments we have made together. While we have achieved some pretty remarkable goals, may we never be satisfied and always pressing on to raise the bar and move the needle. None of this would be possible without the support of the many friends, family, residents, businesses, non-profits, churches, and organizations that make up this incredible community. My motto in 2015 is still my motto today, "Together, Building a Better Nappanee". It has been my joy and honor to humbly serve Nappanee and I look forward to working with all of you to see just how far we can go.

May God continue to bless Nappanee!