

2014 State of the City

It is a privilege to welcome you all to city hall tonight for our 2014 State of the City address. On behalf of our elected officials, councilwomen Cindy Dobbins, Elaine Call, and Diane Quance, councilmen Jeff Gross, Charlie Smith Mike Klondaris, and Jerry Frush, and Clerk Treasurer Lynne Christiansen, and **all of our department heads, we welcome those in attendance!** (List dignitaries and representatives from various organizations.)

We also welcome those listening over the radio and those viewing the first ever web broadcast from city hall.

Before I begin, I would also like to acknowledge our **local community partners.** Strengthening those relationships generates synergy that sustains our entire community. Those partnerships include, Kosciusko County Government, The Town of Winona Lake, Warsaw Kosciusko County Chamber of Commerce, Kosciusko Economic Development, Orthoworx, Kosciusko County Community Foundation, K21 Foundation, Ivy Tech, Work One, and to all of the rest, too numerous to mention here. In a close

community such as ours, made up of many friends and neighbors, relationships bind our common goals.

Also thanks to our state representatives Dave Wolkins and Rebecca Kubacki as well as state senator Ryan Mishler and our Congressmen from the United States House of Representatives Marlin Stutzman and Jackie Walorski, and United States Senators Dan Coats and Joe Donnelly

The benefit to our Warsaw Community, of these solid, working relationships, is immeasurable. Those relationships are fundamental to the state of our city!

In 2012 our Council collaborated to adopt a Strategic Plan of Action for our four-year term as your elected officials. The council prioritized six strategic goals as guideposts to responsible city government; somewhat of a blueprint to our future. Moving into our third year representing you, I feel our accomplishments in 2013 and our goals for 2014 represent the current State of the City through our eyes.

As we move ahead tonight, lets start with **Strategic goal #1-Growth Management**

Perhaps the most important initiative our council and planning commission embarked upon in 2013 is the updating of our comprehensive plan. Engaging Bradley Johnson with Ground Rules, Inc., the city committed to updating our 1998 Comp plan that had become out of date and ineffective. The preliminary version of the plan was presented last week to our Plan Commission.

This updated document will guide land use and transportation planning. Extensive public input guided the formation of this initial draft of the Comprehensive Plan. A strategic annexation strategy will also be developed and presented with the plan. Further scrutiny and refinement should produce an adoptable document later this spring. The end result will give clarity and consistency to growth and planning for the next five years.

We also completed the very successful **Ball State Visioning Charette** this past summer. The purpose of the exercise was to simply allow our citizens and community partners to look at different areas in

Warsaw and “imagine” how they might look in the future. Public participation was overwhelming with many individuals and organizations participating. The ideas were plentiful.

The next step is creating sustainable projects from those ideas. **Alleyway façade improvements** are now a reality as a result of the charrette. Follow-up group meetings and meetings with individual developers continue to generate project quality solutions. To me, the charrette demonstrated community input setting the direction of community growth... the city simply acts to facilitate community desire.

Another of our growth initiatives was engagement into the Stellar Community designation process. This planning rich initiative, involves a housing, transportation, and economic development focus. Substantial funding is awarded to two communities each year. With the adoption of our comprehensive plan later this spring and with the momentum of the charette inspired projects, we anticipate application for the 2015 Stellar Communities initiative!

Lets move onto **Strategic goal #2 Business Retention and Expansion**

The city continues to utilize abatement and Tax-increment Financing to facilitate business retention and expansion right here in Warsaw. The expansion of Winona PVD utilizing TIF financing is an example of the mutually **beneficial use of business personal property tax**. We hope our legislative partners in Indianapolis can recognize the importance of local incentives as critical for success in many cases. Our city uses these tools responsibly and effectively to nurture growth from within our community.

Our industry partners critically rely on collaboration with our education partners, to develop and **advance workforce development** initiatives to strengthen the unskilled, skilled, and professional pool of employees locally. For example:

- Enrichment of primary and secondary STEM education.
- Continuation of secondary vocational education seamlessly into community college level vocational programs.
- Technical education programs relevant to local industrial needs.

- Graduate and undergraduate programs specific to the local industry.

We must continue to train our best and brightest to support o world-class companies right here in Warsaw! The continued availability of a reliable skilled workforce is the lynchpin to expansion and retention. The city also **supports the work of Orthoworx** to create an orthopedic specialty hospital with an emphasis on research and education. Community support of Orthoworx initiatives is crucial. It gives us collaborative strength and leverage to keep our City the Orthopedic Capital of the World, as technology and global change affects our orthopedic industry.

#3 Business Attraction is a strategic initiative that demands proactive planning to not only physically house a new industrial partner, but also provide a livable home for their employees.

The development of the **Warsaw Tech Park** has gone from idea to action. An agreement was reached between the city and West Hill Development LLC in October 2013 that creates a blueprint for land acquisition, infrastructure development, and facility

construction. This partnership expands existing industrial land into recently annexed property, all now designated as a Certified Technology Park by the State of Indiana.

By May 1, the **road and infrastructure** to service four industrial sites behind Ivy Tech will be complete. By the end of the year, a **50,000 plus shell spec building** will be ready to market. Local and state incentives are embedded in the district to stimulate development and sustain growth. Future phase 2 roads and site development will continue to the 90 acres to the west.

Site development, while critical, cannot sustain growth without a **livable community.**

Our council and city departments are focused on continued improvement of our great city.

For example, we are working hard to protect our greatest natural asset, our lakes. The establishment by ordinance of the **Warsaw Storm-water Utility** now gives us oversight and control of issues that can and do affect lake water quality.

Utility infrastructure improvements are also requisite for business development. Our **wastewater utility**, this

past year consolidated all treatment into the north facility. The Boggs treatment site was closed and converted to a pump station, sending wastewater out north.

Future wastewater capacity and conveyance are currently being studied as growth patterns emerge, creating greater demand, specifically the industrial expansion at the Warsaw Tech Park.

While many communities have the benefit of owning all of their utilities, Warsaw relies on **private utilities** for service. Fortunately, these private utilities also recognize the growth and increased demand for services. Indiana American Water, NIPSCO, and multiple communication fiber network providers have spent millions of dollars in current and future upgrades in Warsaw, benefiting our residential, industrial, commercial, and educational partners.

Critical fire protection services are also planning to expand. The necessity to protect a larger, more diverse service area has dictated the growth to a **new third station** south of the city. Site development and manpower and equipment feasibility studies will continue this year.

Our trail system is continuing to progress from the **Ride Walk** master plan created in 2012. Krebs Trailhead Park was dedicated this year and will provide a link from Winona Lake to downtown.

West Center Street was completed from West Market Street all the way to Zimmer and the Chinworth Bridge Trail, providing a great connection from the west side all the way out to Zimmer, the CCAC and Chinworth Bridge Trailhead.

This year, **Winona Avenue** from Argonne Road to Smith Street and up McKinley Street to Krebs Trailhead Park will be completed. This completes a significant portion of the east portion of the trail system and sets up the final eastern link to downtown, that of Market Street.

The **Market Street** connection has been designed to include a safe, off road ten-foot side path for both bike and walk from Krebs Trailhead Park to Ker Park and onto Fibley Field. The plan is also to widen Market St. to accommodate parking on one side and intersection improvements, which will be designed to facilitate a traffic calming effect. The city will seek project funding from multiple sources and while the

project will begin in 2014, exact completion timelines will be contingent on phasing and funding sources and may not be completed all at once.

Another project slated for 2014 is bridge reconstruction with the addition of a pedestrian lane on 300 North near Madison School. The city is partnering with the county on the bridge. The completion of a safe, off road, side trail from Sheldon Street to Madison School and the Warsaw Tech Park will also be designed. DNR and other funding will be sought and once again, project timelines will be contingent on those resources.

Connectivity improves livability and the need for both business and recreational links into and out of our community has been a long identified issue for our community.

Our Airport continues to work with the FAA to expand our east west runway. This, designed to improve access under variable conditions for our corporate pilots. To accomplish this, power lines to the east must be relocated and lowered as well as the extension

of the runway on both the east and west ends. The slow federal process continues on with actual improvements not slated to begin until 2015 or 2016.

Another very viable link to our community could be in the form of high-speed rail from Columbus Ohio to Chicago. The city has partnered with communities in three states to raise funds for an environmental study, necessary to be considered for federal funding. While there are no guarantees, this step is critical for consideration.

#4 Downtown

Our city government welcomed the community to an open house of our new city hall last spring. In addition, in 2013 the city completed work on the plaza as well as the Orthoworx funded remodeling and occupancy of the third floor. This completes the restoration of the bank building, which, along with our beautiful courthouse, anchors our downtown district.

First Friday and Farmers Market continue to bring activity to the district and several new restaurants

improve variety to a good menu of options for both dining and relaxation. The Chamber and WCDC have joined together and have given renewed direction and oversight to downtown events. This past year downtown, in addition to First Fridays and Farmers Market, we saw the Optimist Car Show, the KCVelo bike race, two great Friday night events by the Chamber, and a great summer series of events at Central Park that generated some great evenings downtown.

This summer, our downtown will “come alive” with some lifelike guest sculptures thanks to the Lakeland Arts Association, promoting the Arts in our community. It will be a great downtown summer! The city is also looking at projects to connect our downtown with our parks and lakes. This was one of the action items in the original **Hyatt Palma Downtown Study** that we are working towards. The old Indiana American Water pump station down by Center Lake on North Buffalo will be torn down this spring.

This past summer, the council approved a **new downtown parking ordinance** designed to improve **customer** parking, allow for more convenient **employee** parking, and for the first time, designate

space for downtown **residential** parking. Not an easy task! Signs will be going up this spring to better designate these areas and we will continue to modify this ordinance as needed. We thank all for their support and patience.

Along with parking signs, **way-finding signage** will be erected this spring to guide our guests to the downtown district, our parks, and other points of interest. This should be a great addition to our city and provide a nice welcome to all of our visitors.

#5 Communication and Process

I mentioned at the top of this address the importance of communication and collaboration amongst our community and industrial partners. Even more critical is the flow of information to our citizens.

Not being centered in a television media market, our city relies on a communication network of local media (print, web-based, and radio) for timely dissemination of public information. We much appreciate the responsiveness of our local media to get important news out when time is critical.

We continue to disseminate public information via public meetings, **city website**, frequent columns, and media reports. Our intention is to be open and transparent. Face to face communication is the fundamental of public meetings and with our new spacious council chambers, we are all happy to welcome anyone to attend our meetings. The schedule is posted along with the agendas on www.warsaw.in.gov

#6 Neighborhood Revitalization

Nothing is more important than livable neighborhoods. We have engaged several initiatives to improve the quality of our neighborhoods. Before I list those, I have to express what I feel is the basic foundation of livable communities and that is **citizenship IS FUNDAMENTAL to community**; every homeowner serving his neighborhood, every landlord serving his tenants, and every city employee serving our citizens. We will do our part.

In 2014, the **Warsaw Housing Authority** and Housing Opportunities of Warsaw will continue to make available, programs for owner occupied housing improvements and provision of rental assistance to

qualified families. These longstanding programs will continue, but will struggle to meet the overwhelming needs that exist.

The city will also serve our residents with trash, recycling, and lawn debris services as we have in the past. Please be mindful of the rules and utilize KC Recycling Depot for disposition of appropriate materials. Our council will continue to organize cleanup days with KCSWMD, but will rely on neighborhoods for assistance.

Late last year, I convened a citizens group to look at creating greater efficiencies and cost savings for trash services. We expect to review options and make changes in 2014. As expected, this will require some adjustment on everyone's part. Our citizen committee has done an excellent job of representing your needs and I am confident the change will create cost savings with a minimum of adjustment.

In 2014, we will initiate a rental registration program designed to identify our rental-housing inventory and, pending current state legislation, eventually develop a rental inspection program, designed to protect landlords and tenants alike.

Our **Husky Trail** federally funded road project continues in the engineering and right of way phase this year. We hope to see construction begin sometime in second half 2015.

We thank the legislature for increasing road improvement funding in 2013 and 2014. While our list of projects is overwhelming, we will allocate funds as available to resurface those roads in need of repair.

Before I conclude, I want to acknowledge the passing of two individuals who served the city. The first, **David Beall** who served our as our airport manager for 13 years, lost his battle with cancer. He served our city well; garnering Airport of the Year honors in 2006, and was given the prestigious AAI Person of the Year for 2013, posthumously. We will miss Dave.

Second, I wanted to acknowledge the passing of **Mary Ellen Jordan**. **Mary Ellen simply had an architectural vision that blended our heritage with our future.** You can see that right here in this building and many others around the county. We all will miss her.

With loss, there comes gain. I was fortunate to be able to replace David with an energetic new airport manager Mr. Nick King. Nick returned to his Warsaw home and quickly made his mark overseeing an overwhelmingly successful **first annual Warsaw Airshow** last summer... look for an even bigger and better number two this summer!

So, what is the **state of our city?**

As we have just discussed, we are making progress on many fronts, but challenges remain.

Revenue sources are being challenged both by the legislature and the sluggish economy. Our council has worked hard to pass a budget that meets the needs of our community but is mindful of the downtrend in funding... We are increasingly at risk for continued loss of revenue...we are diligent to maintain reserves and spend wisely. With many communities hampered by large revenue losses from tax caps, the discussion is turning to reduction of services and layoffs. While we are not yet to that point, we are constantly searching for efficiencies and cost savings, our trash service being a prime example.

Your elected officials, your department heads, and all city employees, with the **immeasurable assistance** from our community partners, will continue to follow our strategic plan of action to

Manage growth,

Protect our assets,

Improve livability,

Collaborate to maintain a viable workforce,

And keep our neighborhoods strong.

We thank our citizens, businesses, and corporate partners for their community spirit of cooperation and shared responsibility! **THAT IS TRULY WHY WE CALL WARSAW HOME!**

Thank you and good night!

Mayor Joseph M. Thallemer

2/18/2014

