

**STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**  
**Van Wert Mayor Don Farmer**

Mr. President, administration members, council members, and the citizens of Van Wert, it is my pleasure to report to you that over the course of the past year, through our joint efforts, we have made some major strides forward. Last year during the State of the City address goals were set for the coming year. They were:

1. Work again within the budget restraints as we know revenues exist today.
2. Continue the efforts over the next few months to begin the certification process for the 1,600-acre mega site at the north edge of our community.
3. Create an attitude and appearance in our community that is attractive to individuals, new business and industry that look to locate here so that our workforce is able to find jobs with a livable wage.
4. Promote a positive and cooperative dialog between council, administration, and our community that will help create a better Van Wert and reflect that image to the outside world.
5. Continue to improve our main arteries such as the reconstruction of west Main Street.
6. Set a schedule for the improvement of the secondary streets within our city.

I am pleased to report that we as a group have been able to accomplish most of the goals established.

### **The Budget**

1. We have seen relief from the budget restraints as experienced over the past few years. Our carryover going into 2013 has improved. With a reserve fund of \$270,943, a general fund carryover of \$656,532, the return of \$500,000 to the general fund advanced to the JRS account this year, \$150,000 inheritance tax to be received this year, and an unexpected \$75,000 from a class action suit. When we consider all of these sources of revenue for the year we will have \$270,943 in our reserve fund. With the beginning carry over and the other sources of revenue, our unappropriated general fund account will amount to \$1,381,532 in 2013. During the economic turn down of the past several years our department heads and employees have done a great job of conservation and cost savings measures that are responsible for the major portion of the improvements we see today.

### **The Mega Site**

2. Efforts were intensified at the beginning of 2012 to get the mega site back on track. With the cooperation of ODOD and, in particular, ODOD Director Christiane Schmenk, we were able to get relief on a natural gas line that enabled the mega site to move forward. We truly appreciate the help that her department and people have given to this administration and the City of Van Wert. The infrastructure will be completed this year. The rail spur from Bonnewitz Avenue to Marsh Road is the major portion of the infrastructure to be completed. Once finished extensive marketing efforts will be made by both the State of Ohio and our local economic development office to market the site. The site represents a long-term endeavor to attract a major industry to our community. The options on the property give us until 2022 for that marketing effort. It is important to note that once the rail spur is complete there will be immediate benefits to our community. Both

the plastics recycling and metal recycling plants on our north side will have use of the rail. In addition the property north of Towne Center with rail running on the south side will open the possibility of a new 100 acre industrial site.

### **Appearance of Community**

3. Through the efforts of this council, our code enforcement office, local and state funding we have been able to remove several abandoned structures in our community. This is a long-term process but it will continue through 2013 and beyond with approximately 7-10 structures planned to be removed this year. The Home Guard building has been secured to remove a major safety issue. We continue to see improvement with our downtown area thru the efforts of the Mainstreet office and the cooperation of the City and County. We are currently in the process of an overall plan of improvements for Downtown that will allow us to apply for another improvement grant in the near future.

### **Positive Attitude**

4. Efforts of cooperation between the private sector, council, administration and many groups make Van Wert more attractive to business and industry and it is important for that cooperation to continue. The cooperation of the Chamber of Commerce who recently moved downtown, Mainstreet, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Community Improvement Corporation, The Revolving loan board, and the many volunteers is greatly appreciated in their efforts to improve our community. The Economic Development office with our new director Cindy Leis, her assistant, Darlene Meyers, and the Ohio State Extension office will play an important role in the future of Van Wert. However we ask that all of our community members join their efforts and reflect a positive attitude. It takes all of us

working together to achieve our goals. That cooperation will make Van Wert more attractive to others and a better place for all of us.

### **Main Artery Improvements**

5. During the construction season this year we will see the re-construction of West Main Street from Shannon to Fisher Avenue with funding from the Small Cities Grant Program and the Van Wert City Street fund. During the 2012 we were awarded another Small Cities Grant for the re-construction of the rest of West Main Street from Fisher Avenue to the City limits. That construction is scheduled to be completed in 2015. When West Main Street is finished the main arteries of our community will be complete. At that point we will have the funding to look at our interior streets and set priorities for their improvement.

### **Drugs**

6. Drug enforcement continues and will in the future. As I said last year it is one thing to loose our work force to other communities because of jobs it is not acceptable to loose them to drugs. This administration will continue to support the Police department in these endeavors.

### **Code enforcement**

7. We will continue to strengthen our legislation for code enforcement. Our Law Director and Council will be bringing new legislation forward that will enable the city to enforce code issues on a more effective and timely basis.

In addition we have seen many other improvements in 2012; we have a new elementary school that opened to complete our school complex, a newly opened preschool and kindergarten at the Jefferson School location.

Vantage Career Center has completed its renovation and offers a state of the

art educational facility as well as a valuable adult education program. The Teleflex building in our south Industrial Park was purchased by Miller Precision in August and is a thriving growing business. The grocery store in the Summit Shopping Center that has been empty for over 15 years will be opening soon as Ruler Foods. O'Reilly Auto Parts remodeled the building on Ervin Road once occupied by Universal Lettering; Universal has a new location in Vision Park. The Sears store has doubled its size with a move to its new location in the shopping center on Fox Road next to Fricker's. A new senior 32-unit apartment complex has been completed on Westwood Drive that will be opening in February. The Van Wert Inn on our north side is currently being remodeled into an 80-room assisted living facility with a public restaurant. Their plans are to open by June of this year. The Shell station and party shop on South Washington Street has plans of a new facility on the property that was previously Kennedy Kuhn Implement, with additional services being offered for their customers. That construction is planned this year. In addition, we are currently working with prospects that are considering Van Wert as a location, and a few of our local industries that are considering physical expansion.

Yes, we will continue our efforts to attract new industry to our community, but it is important that we keep open communications with our existing industry to maintain their current employment levels and an atmosphere for them to grow. Our business retention program gives us the opportunity to stay in touch with them for their needs and plans in the future. It affords also the opportunity to acquaint them with our local, state and federal incentives.

Our community has been blessed with many assets. A reminder of what we have is important. Our new school complex, new tennis facility, Vantage Career Center, the Niswonger Performing Arts Center of Northwest Ohio. Wassenberg Art Center (with a new faculty to open this year), both a YWCA and YMCA, Camp Clay, The Brumback Library, Van Wert Civic Theatre, Van Wert County Hospital and its Wellness Center, our Council on Aging, and the city park system that includes our concerts in the park. This year we will see a new ball diamond open at Jubilee Park, with a new refreshment stand. At Smiley Park we will see this year a new and improved refreshment stand that was lost to fire last year. Many of these assets have come about through private donations, fund raising and their labor. Our community is fortunate to have so many that contribute both time and money to make our community what it is.

With private efforts, a fund has been pledged by local business and individuals of about \$1.2 million for a continued capital repair and capital investment fund for a new Aquatic Center. Those funds will be set in a trust fund at The Van Wert County Foundation to guarantee the long-term existence of the center if the voters approve the construction. This May 6, the voters will have the opportunity to vote for the construction portion of the center. The center again will be a tremendous asset for our community, offering all ages a facility they can enjoy and another draw and invitation for others to visit our community.

2013 should be another year when we see growth, both in our business and industrial sectors. We will continue to maintain a budget that will reflect a continuation of the services our community expects. Continued review of the

budget will occur to insure that end. Accordingly, adjustments when necessary will be made. I have extreme confidence in our employees, department heads, council and the members of this administration for their concerns of budget and overall wellness of our city.

Before closing, I would like to thank everyone for their help and efforts through 2012 and look forward to their cooperation in 2013. When we work together, great things can be accomplished. My personal thanks go to Jay Fleming for his hard work and dedication to the City of Van Wert. We are fortunate to have his talent and skills for our community.

My special thanks to my wife, Nancy, for her continued love and support. She has been a great wife, companion, friend and soul mate for almost 55 years. She is, and has been, a great ambassador for Van Wert.

It is, and has been, my honor to serve this community as mayor. I look forward to the challenges that this year has to offer and will always strive to do what is best for the community and the people we serve. Hopefully, we can all view our glass as half full and not half empty. Let's all get excited about Van Wert. Thank you, and may God bless this community.