

Mayor's State of the City Report, 2014, (Feb. 7, 2015)



It is once again time to share with you a reflection on the accomplishments and challenges we have faced together this past year. With a true sense of pride, accomplishment and optimism for 2015, I again present to you the annual *State of the City* report. This report will be the last one for my second term as your Mayor. The time has certainly flown by. When I look back, almost eight years ago and think of all the strides we have made, it is truly mind boggling. We have come such a long way and accomplished so much. As I considered whether or not to run for a third term, I reflected on past accomplishments and thought of the accomplishments yet to be. I made the decision to seek a third term. With your help and support and the diligence on our City Council and full effort of our staff, we will accomplish even more.

I have always looked forward to this time, when I could share with all of you, the highlights of the progress we have made together over the past year. We are blessed to live in this special place. Not only are we fortunate to be in a most beautiful part of our State, but our strategic location offers businesses unique opportunity to grow and prosper, this is to say nothing of all the advantages of small town living and simply being able to know your neighbors. Even with all these advantages, it takes people to accomplish all that we do. We are blessed with having a city work force that thinks of you, our citizens first. The untiring efforts of the City's staff, on your part, are what helps us accomplish so much, even when resources are limited. While this is important, we couldn't even hope to accomplish what we do without you, our citizen

volunteers. A City "slogan" we came up with a few years ago says it all: "*Neighbor Helping Neighbor*". I want to thank the many of you who serve your fellow citizens by your time spent serving on City committees or boards, by those who help with youth activities, the ones who volunteer for church boards and committees, those who volunteer at our schools, the many who spend time working with the underprivileged or the elderly or the handicapped, all of you who show concern for your neighbor, or who simply stop and pick up a piece of litter you see blowing down the street. You are what makes Taneytown special, Thank you for this great town!

This past November we elected a new administration in Annapolis. We sent 58 new delegates to the House and twelve new faces to the Senate. The complexion of our County's Board of Commissioners has changed too. Now, I know many may be thinking, "*So what, politics is politics, nothing will change*". One could argue that this skepticism is well earned. Maybe it will prove true, but I have just returned from the annual Maryland Mayor's Association (MMA) meeting in Annapolis where I had the opportunity to visit one on one with the Governor, and Lt. Governor, our Senators and Delegates, and I can tell you there is an electricity in the air, a sense of optimism that I have never experienced in all my years in local government. It is more important than ever to reach out to our representatives and let them know of your support and to also let them know your needs and opinions. I'm convinced they will listen.

All that optimism aside, we are still struggling with another year of sluggish economic times. The hard realities of running a city will not be much easier in 2015, than they were in 2014. During the past several years, your City has struggled to keep pace with the ever increasing demand for City services and ever demanding

state and federal regulations. We have kept pace, and this may very well be the highest achievement of your City Council, to date. Nevertheless, all of us have felt the increasing pressure of rising water and sewer fees, and pressures from new state & federal demands on our finances. We have been able to “hold the line” each year on property tax increases but this is becoming more difficult with each year’s budget. We are currently evaluating the most recent revision in the county property assessments and it appears that we may have had further property deflation. We will continue to do our best.

Each year your Mayor and City Council gather, along with various department heads to discuss upcoming projects and the overall direction the City will take. This occurs prior to budgeting time, which has already begun. Our semi-annual retreat, this year was held on January 24th. We discussed a lot during our session. One area of prime concern was the interest in sustaining the downtown business growth that has occurred since “Streetscape”. To accomplish our goals for a vibrant downtown all the stake holders will have to work together. This includes private citizens homeowners, land lords, the business community, other interested parties and your Council, working together to make our downtown a destination point. We are looking at ways of improving building maintenance, to encourage retail development, particularly at the street level and ways to hold accountable those who look to maximize their profits at the expense of their neighbors.

As is my custom, I have solicited the input from our department heads and City Manager in preparing this report. As I have previously mentioned, you as citizens, are truly blessed to have such a talented group of employees at our service. Municipal government is unique in that it is the government closest to the

people; it is the first point of contact when there are needs to be met.



BUDGET: Each year, your Mayor, with the help of City staff and by approval of City Council, is charged with preparing a balanced budget to fund the services you have come to expect. During a time of sluggish economic conditions, the task is doubly challenging. For all of my tenure as Mayor, now we have cut expenses reduced and delayed capital improvement projects and “walked the tight rope” between the positive and the negative. We are at a point where we need to upgrade certain systems. Our computer’s server is badly out of date. The system we use to determine water/sewer usage is over twenty years old. The radios in some of our police cruisers need to be upgraded to a digital system in order to be able to communicate with other county law enforcement teams. All this costs money. We received welcome news from the Governor an week or so ago, when he informed local governments he increased funding in his budget for road repair and related items HUR’s). Police Aide assistance is also fully funded in the budget. There is some optimism that additional new housing construction will begin this spring. So, things are truly a bit more promising as we look toward 2016. Still, we are challenged to fund the City’s services without the burden of imposing more taxes on an already overtaxed citizen base. I know I speak for the City Council when I offer my commitment to do my best to “hold the line” on increased taxes, once again.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Nancy McCormick is our

Economic Development coordinator and Main Street Manager. Angelo Zambetti is her Council Liaison. The mission statement she has adopted for her department says it all: *"To retain, procure and increase business, employment and revenue for the City of Taneytown by developing partnerships and community commitment"*. Some accomplishments we can be proud of, during this past year include:

- 1) Brought two new businesses to downtown – The Rusty Nook and Reminiscent ReMix Nutrition Store. .
- 2) Worked in concert with CC Hospital Center to bring a Primary Care and additional doctor services to Taneytown.
- 3) Provide training and resources for new and current business that will enhance employee's skills and knowledge through Miller Business Center, CC Chamber and Maryland Main Street Program.
- 4) Continued and increased attendance with monthly networking breakfast, we have had as high as 102 this year- smallest was around 30 (due to weather, average is 60 attendees.
- 5) Worked in tandem with tremendous volunteers who helped create two successful Taneytown events. Wine, Art and Jazz Fest raised over \$2500 for our local Caring and Sharing Ministries. Our Harvest Fest/Tails of Taneytown was again a great success and we raised \$500.00 for Humane Society and \$500 for local Caring and Sharing
- 6) Procured a \$50K Community Legacy Façade grant that can be applied this year to both commercial and residential, if approved by Maryland Historical Trust.
- 7) Taneytown was one of 12 Maryland municipalities who received the American Express total "Small Business Promotional

package” that included – tote bags, flags, banners, and giveaways to promote their “Shop Small” national effort.

8) Part of a municipal team effort in close association with the County EDC, who championed the Carroll County Downtown partnership for promotional purposes. We now have banners and billboards throughout Carroll County,

9) Continued to improve the value of the Taneytown Record that will generate new visitors and residents to Taneytown; circulation is around 6000.

10) Continued to build relationships and partnerships with organizations, groups and individuals that will promote goodwill and increase visibility in a positive way to people in and outside of Taneytown.

Our Main Street group is also partnering with the Parks and Recreation department to co-sponsor some events this coming season.

Taneytown, again this year was awarded the prestigious “Banner City” designation (4th year in a row) by the Maryland Municipal League (MML) which recognizes cities and towns throughout the state for their contributions to the improved lifestyle of their residents.



Parks & Recreation: Visiting with our Parks & Rec Department head is always a pleasure. Bob Mitchell brings a great deal of enthusiasm to his job and it shows in his accomplishments. Diane Foster is the Council Liaison. The Parks and Recreation Department has made many strides in the past

year. The maintenance of our facilities is of utmost importance to providing the citizens of our great city the best possible parks and recreational experience possible.

Some goals we hope to accomplish this year include renovations to Roth Avenue Playground. The City recently purchased +-40 acres of new parkland on Fringer Road. This parcel is adjacent the planned natural area/eco park, known as Bollinger Park, on Littlestown Pike. It has been my goal, for some time to begin development of the “passive park” area for the enjoyment of all. There has been a proposal from the Carroll County Astronomical Society to locate a public observatory on the newly acquired parcel. We are in process of annexing these parcels (currently beyond the City’s limits) so that development may proceed.

I need to again recall, the commitment and dedication that our volunteers show to the numerous sports programs in the City. With the size of the City’s sports programs ever increasing, the task of coordinating these programs is continually harder to accomplish. But with that being said, our volunteers tirelessly achieve this task, year in and year out and we all owe them a huge debt of gratitude. If it weren’t for all these wonderful volunteers giving countless hours of their time to our youth, we wouldn’t be able to tout that we have the best sports program in the county.

With that being said, our core base of volunteers handles this with the utmost dedication and commitment that is second to none. Thinking of volunteering? This is a great place to start!

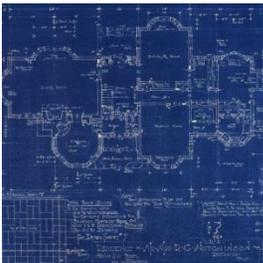


Public Works: The Public Works department is one department that touches us all. Rick Weaver is the department head and supervises not only the Utility Crew and the City's physical plant but the Waste Water Treatment Plant as well. Joe Vigliotti is the Council Liaison.

We have a couple of "capital projects" that have begun. In an effort to make sure the discharge leaving our waste water treatment plant is safe for the bay, we have begun an Enhanced Nutrient Management (ENR) upgrade of our facility. We hope to complete this work by 2016. Another project we have been working with for the past couple of years is bringing into production a new well (Well #17). Engineering "snafus" have delayed the completion of this project but I am pleased to say the end is in sight. Your Council agreed to purchase leak detection system, last year to help find undisclosed water line leaks and facilitate their repair. We have completed the inspection of our lines and found four leaks that have since been repaired. HVAC upgrades have been carried out on several city buildings, resulting in a more energy efficient city. MEA grants help fund this effort. We have applied for an additional grant through the Maryland Energy Administration that will convert about 95 street lights from the old mercury vapor type to LED. LED lights require approximately 50% less energy to operate.

One area I have talked much about and I am bit discouraged with is our recycling effort. Nearly two years ago we provided larger more convenient recycling containers for your use. However, after all this time, the dramatic increase in recycling that I had hoped for has not occurred. In fact our recycling numbers slipped a bit in 2014. Recycling pays. Every ton of trash that is recycled is

trash we don't have to pay the county a "tipping fee" for. I mentioned earlier, we, as your Council will do our best to keep from increasing taxes, but you need to help too. Recycling can be a huge help. Recycling is easy. The recyclable material can be mixed; it does not have to be sorted, as in the "early days". If you are unsure what can be recycled check our web site or give us a call (www.taneytown.org). The City is looking at ways to encourage more folks to participate in recycling, including a "Pay as You Throw" trash system (forced recycling). I know you would not think of asking your neighbor to pay for your water and sewer use, why ask them to pay for you trash disposal?



PLANNING & ZONING- CODE ENFORCEMENT:

Jim Wieprecht is the City's Planning & Zoning administrator and Code Enforcement officer. He is charged with working with potential and existing residences and businesses to ensure the City's building codes and statutes are followed. The Council Liaison is Mayor Pro Tem Carl Ebaugh.

Calendar year 2014 showed some gains in terms of construction. Of the 121 zoning certificates issued, 27 were for new homes, up from 19 in 2013. This is an encouraging increase; the new home zoning certificates do represent residential growth over that of the prior year for the third year in a row.

We saw continued construction activity along the Antrim Blvd corridor in 2013, with completion of work on the Sheetz site at the roundabout. The site of Highs Dairy Store at the Taneytown

Shopping Center had plans approved in 2014 to reconfigure access at the site which will include demolition of the former Movie Gallery building and will connect the shopping center to Antrim Boulevard when completed.

On the Code Enforcement front, we logged in 123 code violation cases, resolved 117 cases, and sent 78 formal violation notices along with numerous written warnings, code reminder notices, and follow-up letters. We also continue to assess fines for violations, often collecting them when properties change hands, we do eventually collect fines from the owners or controlling parties of properties in violation, offsetting a portion of the department's operating expenses.

The Planning and Zoning department continues working to ensure that Taneytown remains current with State required actions and reporting regarding planning. Our Community Comprehensive plan was last updated in 2010. Numerous requirements from the State have changed since that plan was adopted, and discussions began in 2014 on updating the plan. While the plan update may continue to start with a vision of our City's future, how we work towards that vision has become increasingly driven by environmental constraints not part of the picture when we last updated the plan. Work continued on analyses of environmental impacts of growth, most notably those affecting our watersheds and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.

Jim Wieprecht continued serving as Taneytown's representative on the Carroll County Water Resource Coordination Council (WRCC). The WRCC is a group of County, Municipal, and Health Department officials working together to provide a mechanism for cooperative problem solving of critical water resource management issues facing the County and Municipalities. In 2014

this group brought closure to a project over a year in the making; an agreement between all eight Municipal governments in Carroll and the Carroll County Board of Commissioners to enter into a joint National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit (NPDES permit) and agreement to share costs for mandated storm water quality improvement projects, with the County contributing significant capital costs for these municipal projects along with engineering and project management contributions. To the best of our knowledge, no other jurisdictions have achieved this level of cooperation and coordination between municipal and county officials regarding NPDES compliance where each local government owns its own storm water infrastructure.

Please be on the lookout for comprehensive plan topics on our Taneytown Planning Commission agendas in 2015! Planning Commission meetings are open to the public. The Commission generally meets on the last Monday of each month, and their agendas are viewable before each meeting on our website (www.taneytown.org) by clicking on 'find an event' from the home page.



POLICE DEPARTMENT: One of the City's biggest assets is her police department. Chief Bill Tyler heads this Department and Rick Hess is the Council Liaison. We are fortunate to have such a well-run and professional force at our service. Our officers continue to be recognized as diligent defenders of all our citizens. Community outreach plays a major part in our department's success. Once again we hosted Youth

Police Academy to open doors to those interested in law enforcement as a possible career. This involved our officers teaching classes and communicating with a group of fine young citizens and the program was a success. We have already planned the dates for this year's Academy. The first session begins on March 9th. Please check our web site or with the Police Department for further details. Our officers are also involved in a program that teaches drug awareness to elementary and middle school students over the course of the school year

The Department, in an effort to encourage our citizens, initiated a "give back" program, whereby citizens who were in compliance b properly wearing their seat belts were pulled over and given a \$5 gift card to Dunkin Donuts. This project was paid for with confiscated drug money. Upgrades to in car computer system have enhanced the speed and accuracy of every traffic stop.

Our Department is currently staffed at 13 officers including our Chief, Bill Tyler. The Departments focus continues to be on community policing. We welcome your input and look forward to your participation in 2015.

(Total calls for service 2014- 6013

335 adult arrests

25 juvenile arrests

1024 state citations, 443 radar citations and 1422 warnings issued)



TREASURER: Last year we separated the position of Clerk/Treasurer into two positions, Clerk and Treasurer. Bobbi Jo Cutler-Fout is the City's treasurer. Bobbi Jo came to us from Maryland Public Television (MPT) and brings a wealth of experience that should prove valuable to the City. During her first full year she has been active in organizing systems and defining operating procedures. The Treasurer's job is an important one. She is responsible for the lifeblood of the City. It is up to the Treasurer to insure the financial operations of the City proceed efficiently and accurately. The annual audit, budget preparation, grant management, capital project accounting, fund management and balancing the "check book" are just some of the things the treasurer is charged with.

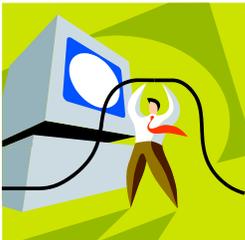
Since Bobbi Jo has been on board she has continued to grow in knowledge of the job through training and experience. We look forward to more efficient and cost effect financial management with Bobbi Jo leading this department.



CLERK: Clara Kalman, was prompted to the position of City Clerk, after the separation of the two positions. The Clerk takes care of the administrative day to day functions of the City. It is the clerk's responsibility to conduct elections and to monitor Board terms and record the Council minutes. She is also the Human Resources person for the City. Clara was a huge help, as we spent a good deal of time updating our employee handbook. Clara developed new procedures for tracking leave so the earned time off is

accurately reflected. Clara is also responsible for monitoring the ethics statement required by Council and other Board members and submitting these to the state ethics board.

I have mentioned that this is an election year. The Clerk sees to it that those interested in running for elected office receive the proper instructions on completing the application and ethics form and the election board is properly seated and functioning. She makes sure the election results are received and recorded accurately and the results announced.



Information Technology: . The City hired Dan Dennis to head the new IT Department about a year and one half ago. During this time we have made great strides in bringing the City's information technology up to date. We still have much to do but the innovations so far have saved considerable tax dollars. Some things we have been able to address this past year include;

- A restructured city network which has allowed us to share one internet connection
- To better protect the City's IT we have implemented a Hardware Firewall. The firewall sits in between the City's LAN and our modem, protecting our network from intrusions. All of the City Water Customers can rest assured that their data is secured, along with the City's sensitive data.

Some goals for 2015 that we will be working on include;

- Creation of a wireless infrastructure for the City Offices of Taneytown

- The Water Billing Software Package we use has many limitations, as I have previously mentioned. The company that produces the software has done little iterations to the software package. This is why we are looking at other offerings so we can bring our software up to date.

The updating of the City's web site is still an important consideration. My goal is to modernize this web site so it will be even more user friendly. When we complete our work, one should be able to go to our web site and virtually do anything that they can do through a visit to City Hall, i.e.: pay water and sewer bills, parking tickets, zoning violations (all without extra user fees) They should be able to access the many and various forms for zoning approvals, rent a pavilion in the park, and offer input to our city Staff, Council and Police. Another positive step was to offer social media links to the City. We are on Facebook (Main Street & Police Dept. have their own sites too!) & Twitter, be sure to visit and be sure to "Like" us!



CITY MANAGER: This position requires that the day to day operations of the City are handled in a professional and expedient manner. Our City Manager, Henry Heine is the one that holds all our departments together. It is Henry's job to implement the plans for the City as directed by the Mayor & City Council and carry all this out within our budget. It is Henry's job to be the interface, the voice, of the City to various county, state and federal agencies and to be the final point of contact for everyone else.

A project for the future and one I mentioned last year is our Fiber Optic network. Fiber Optics was installed at City Hall, Police Department and the City Annex. Fiber Optics will provide the City with a direct connect to County Services such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and the police will have connectivity to the State Police Information System. We are currently working with the County for their help in extending this network to our industrial areas.



In closing, together we have completed another “big” year! For me personally, the experience of my heart surgery a little over a year and one half ago seems but a distant memory. I feel great, thanks for your concern!

Your City continues to seek ways to provide the essential services you have come to rely on in the most efficient way possible. Please let us know of you concerns. Council holds regular meetings twice a month. Our regular Mayor & City Council meetings are held on the second Monday of each month and a Council workshop is held the Wednesday preceding this date. These meetings are open to the public and you are encouraged to attend and participate. Additionally, The Planning and Zoning Board meets on the last Monday of the month. These meetings are also open to all. If you have questions with new building, zoning issues or business expansion the Board would welcome your comments.

One glad piece of news is that the *Taneytown History Museum* is reopening at their new location at 340 East Baltimore Street. Stay

tuned to their web site for opening details and volunteer opportunities (www.taneytownmuseum.org)

All our accomplishments this year are a result of your support. Thank You. I look forward to another great year in the best small City in Maryland: Taneytown, "The small town with a big heart".

James L McCarron, Mayor