

State of the City for Van Wert, Ohio

February 27, 2012

Don Farmer, Mayor

Mr. President, Council members, administration members and the citizens of Van Wert.

During the past few years our community has experienced a recession that has affected not only Van Wert but Cities, Towns and Villages across the entire United States. There has been a diligent effort on the part of the past administration, dept heads, and employees to work within a very tight budget to continue delivering the services that you our citizens expect.

We entered this year beginning on January 1 with a budget that again is lean but still providing those services. Revenues for the past months have remained flat while we all know expenses to deliver those services continue to grow. No different then your family budget when income stays the same but expenses are increasing discretionary spending must be kept to a minimum. We have a temporary budget for the City that after appropriations allows only \$150,000.00 in unappropriated funds for the rest of the year. This is not the type of balance for the year that we would like to see for unplanned expenses or emergencies. Departments have once again submitted budgets that reflect the basic needs for their operation.

During the next few months we will keep a close eye on the direction of revenues thru income tax collection. We need to have revenues increase while maintaining discretionary spending at bay. This need for increased revenue on the local level is magnified by the cuts to municipalities by the State of Ohio. These cuts are fazing in this year and the full impact will be felt in 2013. Speaking of the State of Ohio, the City of Van Wert has joined many other municipalities expressing our disapproval of any plan that would take control of collection and administration of the local city's income tax. If their intent is to reduce bureaucracy and reduce costs it would be better to allow the individual communities collect their state income tax. I'm sure we could arrive at equable fee for the service.

When an increase in revenue occurs it is not only a positive sign for the cities budget but we realize that means more of our community is back to work and our business sector is growing.

Our county has 1400 fewer people working today then we had at the beginning of 2008. That drop in the work force not only effects county and city budgets but has a devastating effect on our citizens with unemployment and underemployment. So our dilemma is how do we reverse and solve the situation for the good of our community.

In preparing this talk for this evening I took the opportunity to review my State of the City given in February 2004. At that time goals were set for the next four years. Those goals to name a few were 1. Maintain a sound budget. We were able to maintain a million dollar carryover for each of the four years 2. Pursue the development of US route 30 and 127. Towne Center became a reality 3. Improve the intersection of Bonnewitz and Washington St. and the reconstruction of North Washington Street from downtown to US 30. We now have an attractive and safer entrance to our community. 4. Build an expansion to the reservoir to meet future needs of industry and our citizens. The reservoir became a reality and also gave us an additional recreation area.

Therefore again we must set the direction of what we hope to accomplish as an administration and community.

- 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 1600 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 scheduled for 2013.**
- 6. Set a schedule for the improvement of the secondary streets within our city.**

The budget and job growth hinges on how we feel about our community and the image that we set for those people that look at us for either business or industrial expansion. There is a great opportunity I feel for Van Wert during the next four years. We have a new Chamber of Commerce director, a new Main Street director, a new Economic Development director coming aboard in the near future several new council members and this administration that are all on the same page. Let's make Van Wert happen.

However this cannot and will not happen without the support of each and every one of us as a community member. We all know what needs to be addressed. Simply repeating them over and over again accomplishes nothing. Suggestions and each of us getting personally involved to solve those matters will make Van Wert a better place for us and those that look at Van Wert for a new location.

We recently addressed the situation of trash in our community. We will be enforcing that ordinance with vigor. I have also asked our Law director to investigate legislation regarding abandoned homes and buildings in our city. This again is not unique to our town. It's my desire to have legislation adopted that will specify a definite length of time that a structure or building can remain in an

unusable state of disrepair. The legislation would require it to be returned to its original intended use in a specified period of time or a daily fine would be imposed thru our court system. I would hope to have legislation ready to present to council within the next 30 days.

It is much preferable if the individuals that are involved in such property take it upon themselves to remedy the situation. I would ask each one of us to step out our front door and ask these questions.

1. Am I a good neighbor in this neighborhood
2. What can I do to help my neighborhood that needs help to make the area more presentable?

Last year we were mowing in excess of 80 yards thru out the city. I feel very strongly that neighbors helping neighbors would help in this matter to clean up and make a better visible presentation and positive invitation to others for our town. If not, the city will be taking aggressive steps to remedy the problem. In the past when our citizens have come together on a common goal we have been able to accomplish great things. Let's come together teens, adults, community groups, churches and volunteers to make this happen, a cleaner Van Wert.

Tonight we will be taking the first steps to remove a structure at the entrance to our community at Lincoln Highway and N. Wayne Street. I appreciate councils support in this matter. This is the first step in the endeavors to create a better look for Van Wert not the last.

The last issue of priority is the proliferation of drugs within Van Wert. Again not unique to our community however I have assured our Police Chief and his department that they will have complete support in addressing the situation in Van Wert. I want Van Wert to have the reputation that if you are trafficking, selling, buying, or using, this community is not the place. We lose some of our youth to other communities for college or jobs but I refuse to accept the premise that we lose any part of our work force due to drug abuse. Recently the police department working with other law enforcement agencies has had success in this area. Their dedication, hard work and extensive investigations will continue with even greater success in the future.

If you have anyone son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter, family member or close friend that you know is involved in the drug situation, please, please secure professional help for them. With the type of drugs that is on the street today, professional help is the only answer and that help is available in Van Wert. Ignoring or letting the situation continue will in most cases have a very negative out come.

Our community has many great assets that make it a great place to live, work and play. I feel we are postured for great things to happen. We will see our new elementary school open this fall, Vantage's career center will unveil it great expansion this year. I know we will see new retail and service businesses open. Remember those people who have or will open those businesses have invested in our

community. They need our support as customers. Every dollar spent locally will multiply itself by about 7 fold in other income, and business within our community.

The existing commercial, industrial and professional sectors in our area are a vital part of our community. We are dedicated to keep a dialogue with them to discuss what the city can do so that those employment levels are maintained and grow. We will begin our business retention and expansion meetings with that sector in the next few weeks.

This is a time of opportunity for The City of Van Wert, we must do everything we possibly can to encourage job growth. Let's build on the spirit of cooperation to get the job done. Turn the negativism into positives and unite with common goals for the good of our community. Speaking for this administration, council, and the dedicated employees of Van Wert we are ready to do what is necessary to see Van Wert grow. I invite all of you to join us in this effort. I noticed a local business with this slogan on their wall. "We treat strangers like friends and friends like neighbors." What a great concept to adopt for our community. Let's see what we can accomplish working together.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and pleasure in serving as your Mayor for the City of Van Wert for the next four years. I look forward in working with this Council, administration and the individual citizens in an aggressive attempt to move Van Wert forward. I would like to also thank my wife Nancy for her daily encouragement for many years. I promise to represent this office with respect, honor, and pride for the people of Van Wert that have entrusted me with this position.

Thank you again for your time, may God bless this community and give us strength in these endeavors.

Don Farmer, Mayor