

Mayor's State of the Village Address, Spring 2009

It has been an honor to serve the residents of Canal Winchester over the past year. While I have called this vibrant community home for more than forty years, I can honestly say I have never been more proud of Canal Winchester than I am today. The magnitude to which our citizens and businesses take pride in their community and the dedication of our Village Council and the employees of our municipality still continues to impress me.

Although economic times are tough and many communities across the nation are facing hardship, it is with great pleasure that I report that the state of our village remains strong. Thank you to our Council, staff, residents and the business community. It is because of you that we are where we are today - together you make Canal Winchester an incredible place to live and work.

Our finances experienced another year of stable growth in 2008. The village ended the year with revenues slightly under disbursements due to a large debt pay down made in September, which allowed for a good beginning for 2009. The village will continue to exhibit a very conservative financial posture for 2009, keeping a close watch on the local and national economies.

In addition to working hard to maintain our solid financial standing, we saw many important projects come to fruition during 2008. Early in the year we launched our newly designed Web site, which offers more information, has a cleaner look and is easier to navigate. This site is constantly updated with new information, and I encourage you to check www.canalwinchesterohio.gov frequently to stay up to date on all village activities.

After a six year dispute over a 2002 Wastewater Service Agreement between us and the Village of Lithopolis, we were able to put our differences behind us and come to an amicable agreement between our two municipalities.

Canal Winchester garnered much attention this past year for the completion of its unique West Columbus Street reconstruction project, one of the only streets of its kind in the Midwest. The primary goals of the project were to replace deteriorated roadway and sidewalks, improve drainage and traffic safety, and enhance street lighting. These improvements were made while protecting several large diameter trees along the roadway that our Urban Forester and the Street Tree Advisory Board identified as desirable to maintain. Additionally, to protect the environment in the surrounding neighborhood, the village chose to use a pervious concrete on the street-side parking areas, which will improve drainage, reduce flooding and improve the condition of surrounding trees over time.

After several years in the works, ground was broken on the area's first 24-hour, full-service emergency center. The medical campus, designed to grow along with the community, is a collaboration between Mount Carmel Health System and Fairfield Medical Center. Construction on the 34,000 square-foot facility, which will be located at the U.S. Route 33 and the Hill-Diley Road interchange, began last October and is expected to be complete before the end of this

year. In addition to the emergency center, the campus will include a medical office building, which has already received great interest. Therefore the developer, Daimler Group, has already increased the building square footage by 15 percent, for a total of 47,000 square feet.

Nearly 20 years in the making, this past year we saw the milestone demolition of the former Parker's Marathon gas station located in the heart of downtown Canal Winchester. We worked closely with the Franklin County Commissioners, the Franklin County Treasurer and the Canal Winchester Main Street Program to have the vacant site cleared. During 2009 we will work with the Central Ohio Community Improvement Corporation and the Ohio Department of Development on the site cleanup process. These efforts will ensure a shovel-ready site for a new redevelopment project in the downtown area.

A mobile community watch program kicked off in the village during 2008, and in December, the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office set aside a community watch vehicle for use in Canal Winchester by the program's citizen observers. The purpose of this program is to deter crime as well as raise awareness and residential safety in the community through the commitment of local volunteers. With the help of the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office, which runs the community watch program, we have been able to increase the safety of our neighborhoods at little cost to the village.

Park upgrades began in 2007 thanks to the assistance of a Nature Works grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources for Walnut Creek Park. Upgrades consisted of a large multi-purpose field, an access road and a parking lot. Acquisition of the George Bareis Nature Preserve portion of the park was also funded through the Clean Ohio grant program administered locally by MORPC. This area includes leisure paths and creek access and is for passive recreation.

The park upgrades project continued in 2008 with Council approving concept plans for Westchester Park, Walnut Creek Park and James Kelley III Preserve. Phase I improvements at Westchester Park, which consisted of landscaping and the installation of a play set, is already complete. The dedication of James Kelley III Preserve also took place in 2008, and includes land previously acquired from Eastside Properties, Dominion Homes and Temple Israel. The area, which is intended for passive recreation, contains the covered bridge, creek access and leisure trails.

Music & Art in the Park kicked off the village's events for 2008 in May with attendance up from previous years. This year's Music & Art in the Park series took on a new format with each event having live music and activities tied to a different theme. Another successful event that surpassed attendance expectations was the Chamber's first Taste of Canal Winchester. The event made its debut with more than 400 guests! Winning top honors was the Labor Day festival, which also set attendance records and was awarded the Festival of the Year by the Greater Ohio Showmen's Association for its 2007 festival. The year's events came to a close with Canal Winchester's Christmas in the Village and Breakfast with Santa events. An estimated

2,000 people braved the cold and poor road conditions to attend the annual storybook Christmas celebration and tickets for the popular breakfast sold out well in advance.

Severe weather played a large role in 2008, with record snow, rain and wind making this past year one that's sure to be remembered. In March we saw the biggest single-day snow storm in Ohio's recorded history, with more than 20 inches of snow being reported in some areas of central Ohio. Following record snows, we had one of the wettest springs and early summers I can remember. September finished off the severe weather trend when remnant winds from Hurricane Ike swept through Ohio, doing millions of dollars of damage to Franklin County alone.

Fortunately, we have a capable public works crew that sprung into action immediately during each weather event and worked diligently to keep streets clear, grass mowed and limbs and other storm debris cleaned up. We should also be thankful that the village was able to recoup much of the costs associated with the severe weather in 2008 through assistance from the Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

I would be remiss not to mention the several businesses that located or expanded their operations in Canal Winchester during 2008. While there were a few businesses that downsized or closed their doors, we fared much better than most communities. New and expanded businesses in 2008 included:

- Meijer (Hill-Diley Interchange)
- AK Athletics (Howe Industrial Parkway)
- Burger King (Gender Road)
- Dollar Tree (Winchester Square on Gender Road)
- Safety Occupational Testing Services (Howe Industrial Parkway)
- Miss Marci's Sweet Treats (High Street)
- Anytime Fitness (Winchester Square on Gender Road)
- Tobin Merritt Associates (Howe Industrial Parkway)
- Dr. Tobin Chiropractics (Howe Industrial Parkway)
- Garden Herb Shop & Radiant Living (W. Waterloo Street)
- Culligan Water Systems (Howe Industrial Parkway)
- Altercare of Canal Winchester Rehabilitation Center (Thrush Drive)
- Mr. Rooter (mobile truck)
- Fastenal (Howe Industrial Parkway)
- Radio Shack (Gender Road)
- AT&T (Gender Road)
- Delmar's Baja Mexican (Winchester Square on Gender Road)
- Need to Bead (Gender Road)
- Allstate Contractors (W. Waterloo Street)
- Lannie's Signature Soups (High Street)

The success of our local businesses provides a valuable tax base to our community and they are a contributor to our solid financial status. We have seen significant economic development

in the recent past, with several other projects slated for completion in 2009. Much of this development has taken place around the Hill-Diley Road corridor, with an estimated \$40 million of investment expected in this area between late 2007 and the end of 2009.

Another contributor to the village's well being is the local school district. A major factor in the success of the Canal Winchester School District's future will be the outcome of its operating levy, which will be on voters' ballots in May. I encourage you to learn as much as possible about what this levy means for the schools and the effect your vote will have on our community.

In line with our economic development efforts, the village conducted two focus group sessions with business and community leaders, developers and public officials to better understand their perception of Canal Winchester. This group offered insight on what the village is doing well, where it could improve and what it should consider for the future related to development.

In addition to feedback on economic development, an important resident outreach initiative was undertaken in late in 2008, when a comprehensive community survey was sent to the more than 2,500 households located within the village's corporation limits. The purpose of this survey was to learn what residents think about community services, future initiatives and life in general in Canal Winchester, with results being used for planning in 2009 and beyond. Demonstrating how involved our residents are in their community, we received a response rate of over 30 percent. This is more than six times the average response rate for mailed surveys!

Speaking of planning, much preparation has already taken place for this year, with several initiatives slated for 2009. One such project is the highly anticipated completion of the Mount Carmel/Fairfield Medical emergency center expected to open by the end of this year. The center will have access to ground and air transport services and will be staffed by emergency medicine physicians, emergency-trained nurses, ER technicians and support associates. The campus will also offer a clinical pharmacy and laboratory, imaging services and a 50,000 square-foot medical office building for specialty and primary-care physicians.

Also planned for 2009 is the projected completion of the Manifold & Phalor facility in the Canal Pointe Industrial Park on Busey Road. Phase I of the custom metal fabricator's facility will include 30,000 square feet and 32 employees. If demand dictates, this site could eventually be built out to include up to 120,000 square feet.

Businesses in the Diley Road area will soon be more accessible to people traveling from the north, thanks to a road widening project that will extend Pickerington's portion of Diley Road from two lanes to five lanes. Canal Winchester widened Diley Road within its corporation in 2007, in anticipation of the additional development in this area.

Canal Winchester's 2009 street program will consist of pavement work in several different neighborhoods. The largest portion of the project will be in section 1 of Winchester Village, which will be milled and overlaid with spot curb replacement. Additionally, High Street south of Waterloo to Franklin Alley will be milled and overlaid, the Villages at Westchester will have

several streets crack filled and the pavement will be reconditioned, and Winchester Trace will undergo pavement reconditioning and have the remainder of the pavement repairs completed. Depending on bid amounts, it may also be possible to perform an additional pavement reconditioning project in Ashbrook Village and on Washington Street.

Also on the agenda for 2009 is the formation of a Parks and Recreation committee who will work to renew the contract between the village and the school district so that the joint recreation district can continue into the long term. The contract will give the joint recreation district direction as to what they can do financially as they move forward. The committee will also recommend what updates should be made to parkland within the village. In the meantime, the village is working on the following improvements to its park system:

- Shelter houses, grills, an expanded walking trail and fitness stations at Westchester Park
- Multi-purpose fields, more parking, tennis courts, shelter houses with concessions and restrooms, a tot-lot, expanded leisure paths, a Frisbee golf course, an outdoor amphitheater and a possible pedestrian bridge connecting the park to the elementary school campus at Walnut Creek Park
- A gazebo and expanded leisure paths at James Kelley III Preserve

Reflecting back on everything we've accomplished over the past and looking forward to projects on the horizon makes me realize just how far we've come in such a short time. We are now seeing the result of much of our hard work.

Thanks again to each of you who help make Canal Winchester the extraordinary place it is. I look forward to a very bright 2009.

Sincerely,

Michael Ebert
Mayor of Canal Winchester