

Mayor's State of the Village Address, Spring 2010

There is no question that 2009 was a tough year. It seemed that everything I read or watched mentioned the recession and the toll it was taking on the economy. From the federal government and large corporations to small businesses and households, everyone seemed to be impacted in some way, shape or form by the state of the economy.

Despite the worst economic climate this nation has seen since the Great Depression, we were able to remain on solid footing in Canal Winchester. The past year has been challenging yet rewarding. We watched our spending and lived within our means. We found new ways of getting the job done and ways to do it with less.

I am happy to share that we ended the year in a positive financial position. Despite a \$917,000 shortage in income tax collections for the year, we managed to carryover \$2.6 million in our general fund, up \$50,000 from 2008. This positive standing can largely be attributed to strong internal controls by staff. They deserve everyone's praise for closely monitoring the village's budget and making a commitment not to spend more money than the village was able to bring in during the year.

Much of Canal Winchester's economic uncertainty in 2009 stemmed from an agreement between the Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO) and Waste Management, one of the village's largest employers and a significant source of income tax revenue. Last year SWACO announced it would require waste haulers to transport 100 percent of the waste they pick up in Franklin County to SWACO's landfill. In anticipation of this loss, the village reduced expenses in every one of its departments during 2009 and trimmed its 2010 operating budget by nearly an additional one million dollars. Fortunately, these cuts were able to be made without major impact to the services our residents have come to expect.

Although negative economic news still seems to dominate national headlines, we have many positive things to look forward to in Canal Winchester during 2010. Early this year, the much-anticipated Diley Ridge Medical Center - a desperately needed service in our area - is expected to open its doors. The campus will include a 35,000 square-foot emergency and diagnostic center, which will feature a 24-hour, full-service emergency room, an imaging center, a clinical laboratory and women's health services. A 46,000 square-foot medical office building offering specialty and primary care physicians will be located adjacent to the emergency center. Future development at the Diley Ridge Medical Center could include an ambulatory surgery center, additional outpatient services, an expanded medical office space, and even a full-service hospital.

Also expected to open in the first half of the year is the Manifold & Phalor machine shop. The custom metal fabricator will operate a 30,000 square-foot facility on Busey Road in the Canal Pointe Industrial Park.

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In anticipation of additional development around Canal Point Industrial Park and the Diley Ridge Medical Center, work has been done to expand the infrastructure in the area. Dove Parkway has been extended further west and a new road, Robinette Way, has been constructed opening up an additional 53 acres of land for industrial development. Rutherford Drive is complete and now connects Dove Parkway to Howe Parkway, a much needed link that improves traffic flow in the area. Eichhorn Drive has also been widened from Diley Road West to the Diley Ridge Medical Campus.

More road improvements are on the agenda for this year, as part of the village's 2010 street program. Among the upgrades are the resurfacing of Washington Street and Old Creek Lane, the reconstruction of Hocking Street and general pavement maintenance in selected areas.

We also expect to be awarded funds from the Ohio Public Works Commission during 2010 for Gender Road improvements at Winchester Boulevard and Fox Hill Drive, with construction beginning in 2011. The project will include additional turn lanes, minor widening, new traffic signals and a backup traffic light system at Winchester Boulevard in case of power failure.

Future road improvements may be decided by a new thoroughfare plan, a study which forecasts the traffic flow to, from, and around the village. The plan, which was last updated in 2005, is reviewed as needed based on growth in the area. The new study, done by Village Engineer EMH&T, estimates traffic flows between now and 2030. The report also suggests what areas will be main thoroughfares and recommends how these areas should flow. The updated plan will go to Village Council this year for approval. In addition to road improvements, several other projects were completed throughout the village during 2009. One such project was a new bike path located on Groveport Road that connects the Gender Road and Winchester Boulevard bike paths. With this new section, the village now boasts 4.5 miles of contiguous bike path for public use. Another park project soon to be complete is a skate park in front of Roger Hanners Park on Groveport Road. Slated to open this spring, the skate park will include nearly 4,000 square feet for area skaters to enjoy.

To help prioritize future park development, the village collaborated with the Canal Winchester Joint Recreation District this past year on a survey. The survey is the result of a larger effort of the Parks Advisory Committee, created to evaluate current park and recreational facilities and make recommendations for future development. So far the committee has reviewed park components, met with other communities to learn about their park and recreation programs, and received input from the public through the survey. The village plans to use the survey responses as a guide to help prioritize the future development of our parkland.

As the result of another survey done late in 2008 where residents expressed interest in a college in Canal Winchester, the village was approached by representatives from Ohio University. In October the university held a public forum at the community center to see what programs Ohio University offers that might be of interest to residents and to explore the potential need for classes in Canal Winchester. The university is now monitoring types of classes people from the Canal Winchester area sign up for online to better gauge interest in their programs.

Also at the request of community members, Council adopted an ordinance placing restrictions on groups and individuals peddling and soliciting funds in the village in October. Our community garnered national media coverage in USA Today and strong interest from local media outlets

regarding the do-not-knock list developed in conjunction with this ordinance. If you're interested in being added to this list, forms and decals are available at the village's municipal building.

As I mentioned earlier, our staff continues to monitor expenditures, making sure the village is using tax payers dollars wisely. I'm sure many of you are also trying to reduce your spending, often looking for inexpensive and close to home options for shopping, dining and entertainment. Many area retail establishments offer affordable options, and by supporting these businesses, you will be pushing money back into the local economy.

We are fortunate to have many established businesses in our community, which help provide a strong tax base for the village. I'd also like to welcome some new businesses and congratulate those that have expanded during the past year, including:

- AK Athletic (Howe Industrial Parkway)
- Diley Ridge Medical Center (Diley Road)
- Doctor Whitt (Diley Road)
- Fairfield Timeshares (Diley Road)
- Grapevine Pizza & Café (Winchester Boulevard)
- Manifold & Phalor (Busey Road)
- Mount Carmel Health Providers (Diley Road)
- Nationwide Childrens (Diley Road)
- Nifco (Dove Parkway)
- Ohio State Schools of Cosmetology & Barber (Gender Road)
- TS Tech (Dove Parkway)
- Winchester Square Medical
- Offices (Gender Road)

There are also several opportunities available for free entertainment within the village, such as spending time at one of the village's parks or attending a community event. Our events continue to grow in popularity, with record-breaking attendance at all of our celebrations once again last year. I encourage anyone who hasn't been to an event recently to check one out this year. I also hope to see everyone at the community's newest festival, the Canal Winchester Blues & Ribfest!

Another exciting item on the agenda for 2010 is the Village of Canal Winchester's transformation into the City of Canal Winchester. In Ohio, villages become cities when they have 5,000 residents. While we reached this population mark a few years ago, our city status won't be official until after the 2010 census results are finalized. Although there are some additional responsibilities that come with being a city, we'll embrace our new title and do our best to become one of the finest cities in Ohio.

To help ensure we continue to exercise all the powers of local self-government to the best of our ability, our charter is reviewed every ten years. This year is a charter review year, and therefore, I have appointed five members and Council has appointed six members to serve on the Charter Review Commission as dictated by the charter. Before the end of this year, the commission members will communicate their findings to Village Council and make any recommendations for revisions to the charter.

Speaking of communication, the village added social networking to the mix as another way to keep residents informed. We launched a Twitter account and Facebook fan page in November, which we've been using as another way to help keep residents and the broader community in

the loop about village events, services and projects. If you're not already a fan or a follower of the village on these sites, I hope you'll consider becoming one.

Another project that was completed during 2009 was the installation of new water meters throughout the village that transmit information to a laptop in a village vehicle as staff drives by. The meter reading is then stored in a computer, which eliminates the need to individually scan each meter. The new system has several benefits, including being more convenient for home owners, giving more accurate readings, having a stronger range and reducing reading times.

One project still underway is the restoration of the Interurban building. Thanks to help from students at Eastland-Fairfield Career & Technical Center and donations from a few area businesses, exterior work on the building was completed last fall. We are now focusing on the interior of the building with the assistance of Main Street Canal Winchester, which has sold park benches to raise money for some interior work. Without any dedicated funds for the project, we will continue to look for donations of funds and services to refurbish the interior. Watch for news about the dedication of a historical marker for the Interurban building when a date is set later this spring.

2009 was a busy year and there is no doubt 2010 will be as well. While I expect 2010 to be hard, I am cautiously optimistic that the worst is behind us. In the meantime, the village will continue to exhibit a very conservative financial posture, keeping a close eye on the local and national economies. Additionally, we will monitor the budget closely during 2010, making adjustments as needed and implementing additional cost-saving measures when possible.

I feel deep pride for the soon-to-be City of Canal Winchester and look forward to a promising year ahead! Canal Winchester truly is a great town.

Sincerely,

Michael Ebert
Mayor of Canal Winchester