

State of the City Address

Good evening, everyone.

Thank you all for coming or watching via zoom.

I am honored to be here speaking to you tonight.

This past year has been quite a ride. I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I have learned a lot.

When I started down this path in my life, I was hoping and praying to make a difference here in the City of Tontitown.

I quickly learned it takes many people working together to get things accomplished.

There were and still are issues that need to continue being addressed. For example, our roads, traffic, water drainage, the issues with the landfill, bringing in new commercial business, continuing to grow in a positive healthy manner while honoring tradition with progression and keeping Tontitown family focused.

And I am very grateful for the team we have working here in the City of Tontitown.

Leslee, Luann, Pat, James and Chief Jenison have been extremely accommodating in helping me become adjusted in this new mayor position.

Our Department of Public Works Director, James Clark is a huge asset for the city. Along with Supervisor Charles Ward, Foreman Mark VanDyke and their crew, Scott Ardemagni, Steve McCamey, James Ireland, Philip Arends, and Robert Bogart. These men do a phenomenal job. They have a critical part in improving infrastructure, repairing water pipes, clearing icy roads and multiple other jobs.

In the last year they have accomplished the over lay of Pianalto Road, the paving of Ardemagni Road, repairing the bridge on Jevello, completed the hazard mitigation project in Barrington Heights as well as boring under Pianalto Road to alleviate flooding issues. Months were spent cleaning up after the spring floods.

Mr. Clark and his crew took delivery of almost 3.5 million dollars in fittings for water and sewer bond projects.

A house and property at the intersection of Barrington and Fletcher was purchased.

Trees have been planted in the park and along bushy creek in Barrington Heights.

If the city needs anything even after hours, I know I can contact any of these guys. Mr. Scott Ardemagni, will not hesitate to come and help. These men have a heart for this city, and I would like to personally thank the entire department.

Our Planning department with Mr. Mark Latham and Brad Spurlock is in fantastic shape. Both men were hired this past year and literally hit the ground running.

Brad is super-efficient in planning, and extremely knowledgeable when it comes to anything IT, which has proven to be very beneficial. He has implemented a new software program to give the citizens the ability to pay online.

Mr. Latham came highly recommended with 28 years of experience in Siloam Springs and 16 years in Highland, Illinois. Mark is working extensively with Northwest Regional planning, Senator Penzo

and Representative Lundstrum who is on the steering committee, to update our City's Comprehensive plan. We have currently had 1 citizen involvement meeting as well as a survey to get feedback to see what is important to our citizens. Mark instigated the storm water drainage survey, which we are now waiting results from Garver. Our hopes are that it will be able to be presented for Planning to vote on in April and if passes, will go to City Council in May.

As many of you know, Tontitown is currently building a new fire department. Chief Mark Ramsey and Captain John Buchan are working hard to make sure our fire department has adequate personal that is sufficiently trained to handle the needs of Tontitown citizens and our surrounding communities. As of January 1st of this year, they have added 4 full time firemen which allows them to provide 24 hour coverage. With 6 full time, 16 part time and 9 volunteer fireman this guarantees fire coverage for our city around the clock.

In the last year they have updated and purchased new equipment which will allow them to do their jobs more effectively. This includes a 2000-gallon multi aid engine. This gives us the ability to assist Springdale and other surrounding cities when needed.

The Tontitown police department has made great strides under the leadership of Chief Cory Jenison. With council passing an increase in officers pay, this will allow our police force to be competitive with surrounding cities.

This is the 4th consecutive year for growth in our police department which is a direct result in growing our patrol division. This has allowed for 3 detectives in our criminal investigation division. This allows the department to manage and solve cases in a timelier manner.

We also have a new canine officer. Officer Mango was brought on board, being purchased with money from seized drug arrest.

Chief Jenison went in to leasing contract allowing the purchase of 6 vehicles, bringing the fleet up to date and set for future rotation plans.

Our director of finances, Pat Pianalto, does a phenomenal job keeping the city budgets in order. Ending the year with 1million 5hundred seventy, three hundred eighty two dollars and .58 cents in our general budget. This is slightly lower than the previous year.

Over the past year we have had 40 new business including home occupations and food trucks open within the city. Just to name a few, Dairy Queen, No-bi-li Tea, Hancock Veterinary Clinic, and Koda and company.

2023 is looking very promising for businesses. Just in the past 2 months we have had Little Caesars, Torres Taqueria Restaurant and several other businesses open. We are also looking to the future with Auto Zone, car wash and several other potential business coming before the planning commission.

My vision for this year is to continue working on the City comprehensive plan, infrastructure, roads, storm drainage, the cleanup of trash, mud and debris on our city streets.

I would like to continue growth with commercial business and family homes. I would love to see a community center where families can gather. In the distant future, I would love to see a heritage district. I know that is in the future.

Thank you all for allowing me this time.

~ Mayor Russell