

# **STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**



**Mayor Robert M. Eschbach**

**October 6, 2011**

## STATE OF THE CITY

October 6, 2011

### INTRODUCTION

Thank you all for being here and thank you to the Ottawa Area Chamber for again hosting this event. It is always a pleasure to be able to deliver the State of the City address before this forum. Actually, by ordinance, the Mayor is required to submit an annual report and I have always considered this address to be that report.

As I said last year, it is always difficult to cover all of the activities occurring in the city. It is even harder to recognize all of the people who help deliver city services and guide the growth and development of Ottawa. I usually try to squeeze in many of their names, but this year I thank them all collectively, both union employees and appointed staff. It is always a thrill to be surrounded by competent, hard-working people who aren't afraid to think outside of the box looking for a better way, and challenging me to refine some of my thoughts and ideas. So much of what has been accomplished has been because of them, so they deserve your thanks.

I especially wish to thank the Commissioners for their dedication. This year's City election may have been a first for the city. I don't know if it has ever occurred before that an entire Council ran for re-election and the entire Council was re-elected. I think we all share a common vision, and generally share common goals, though, of course, we differ from time to time as to how to reach them. My appreciation goes out to Finance Commissioner Wayne Eichelkraut, Public Health & Safety Commissioner Ed Whitney, Public Property Commissioner Dan Aussem and Streets & Public Improvements Commissioner Dale Baxter.

I would like to begin, as I usually do, by looking back at what has occurred on the economic development front, then talk a little bit about city services, some special projects that were completed this year, and finally City finances.

### RESIDENTIAL AND SENIOR DEVELOPMENTS

While the state of the economy has pretty much brought residential development to a halt nationally, seven new home permits were issued in Ottawa this past twelve months. However, there was significant residential related development in the City of Ottawa this past year. Major expansions are currently under construction at both **Pleasant View Lutheran Life Community** and **Ottawa Pavilion**.

## STATE OF THE CITY

October 6, 2011

Pleasant View's \$23 million expansion consisting of renovating the patient tower and building new assisted living residential apartments is now nearly one-half complete.

Ottawa Pavilion is approximately one third of the way through a \$17 million two phased construction project which will completely rebuild and redo its current facility – providing Ottawa's senior citizens and their families with yet another beautiful senior residential facility. Within the large, high ceiling central building of this new facility will be housed a unique Main Street setting – a beauty shop, spas, a family dining room, a game room and more all designed to look like stores along a small town Main Street.

Both of these developments partially replaced existing buildings and I am pleased to say that each one expects to create about twenty new jobs because of the expansion.

Two other housing developments were recently approved by the City. The first being a senior housing project planned for north Champlain Street by the **Stough Group**. This \$6 million project will include 60 rental units for seniors. The attractive brick buildings will offer affordable rents to local seniors with amenities such as a community center and fitness center.

The other project is the **MCT, Inc.** apartment complex next year and will expand an existing complex on Guion Street. This is a \$1.6 million project consisting of 16 new rental units.

### **INDUSTRIAL/COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

The primary new industrial project nearing completion is the **International Titanium Powder (ITP)** project in the Ottawa Industrial Park. This multi-million dollar project has created over 70 good-paying jobs and I am pleased to say that the company has had discussions with the City about further expansion of that facility in the near future, which will create additional investment and new jobs.

This year we also saw the completion of the **Ottawa Regional Center Express Care** facility. This over \$1million project resulted in approximately ten new jobs.

This year also brought the completion of a \$600,000 renovation of the **Southtowne Mall** to accommodate the consolidation of various State employment-

## STATE OF THE CITY

October 6, 2011

related offices. This restructuring of State offices brought approximately 25 new jobs to Ottawa.

The biggest building project currently underway is the new **Central Intermediate School**, which is expected to be completed and in operation by the first of the year. As I indicated in my presentation last year, the combination of FEMA funding and State Capital Development Fund money means the Ottawa Elementary School District will be able to complete the new building with minimum local tax dollars.

Other commercial development underway or expected to begin soon includes the **Advanced Auto Parts** store on East Norris Drive, and the **Pharmacy Stop** to be located north of the I & M Canal adjacent to Grieves Realty. Each of those projects involve investments of about \$1million dollars.

Finally, only a few days ago I was able to tour a unique new business located on East Dayton Road. This facility will serve as a retail outlet and distribution center for the **Bone Collector** line of products celebrating the culture of the hunter. Shoppers will walk among elk, deer, bear and other animals to peruse the Bone Collector inventory. These products are an offshoot of the very popular Mike Waddell's Bone Collector TV shows.

The facility also has a large warehouse and distribution center area, as well as work stations, corporate offices and impressive board room. Bone Collector's products ordered via the internet will be shipped throughout the country from this facility.

### Heritage Harbor Ottawa

Bucking the difficult economic tide, **Heritage Harbor Ottawa** has continued to move forward. A key step was the issuance last year by the City of Ottawa of \$2.5 million in Recovery Zone Bonds to extend water and sewer throughout Heritage Harbor. Not only did this federal stimulus funding program make the project very affordable for the developer, it also extended sewer and water to a point where the City now can connect to the Ottawa Industrial Park. And as part of this arrangement, Heritage Harbor conveyed the Jordan Block to the City.

## STATE OF THE CITY

October 6, 2011

Remaining bond funds were used this summer to help construct a new entryway to Heritage Harbor. The new entryway provides a grand boulevard perspective of the harbor and the Illinois River beyond, and makes an outstanding first impression for the new visitor. The roadway leads to **Tracy's Boat House**, the new restaurant with the creative and delicious menu at Heritage Harbor, and a new outdoor swimming pool.

Other exciting developments include the Cottages at Heron's Landing – a unique, new Illinois Riverfront development designed to attract visitors to Ottawa and Heritage Harbor -- and the just completed four unit Heritage condominium. The Heritage Harbor marina continues to be a successful operation – attracting watercraft from all over the nation.

### **JOB RETENTION AND GROWTH OF EXISTING BUSINESSES**

While we have experienced significant new development, I believe the big story this year is the strength of many of our long-time businesses and industries. Many are thriving in this recession era.

For example, **U.S. Silica** is currently completing a \$35 million expansion to its processing plant. This will increase the company's capacity to deliver frac sand to the natural gas drilling industry. U.S. Silica is expanding its workforce to man the new production facilities and, when completed, will have brought over 30 new jobs, most of them being union jobs. The Ottawa plant is considered the "crown jewel" of all of U.S. Silica's production facilities.

Similarly, there is good news at **Pilkington's** glass production plant. The completion of the west water tower clears the way for Pilkington (PNA) to begin planning for its next phase of redevelopment. As part of its ongoing commitment to the Ottawa community, the company has authorized preparation of design plans to renovate the batch plant facilities at a total project cost exceeding 10 million dollars. The Ottawa facility is considered well known throughout Nippon Sheet Glass (its parent company) as its most shining example of community partnerships and plant success. By the way, in the last two years the Ottawa Plant has added 30 new employees.

## STATE OF THE CITY

October 6, 2011

There is a lot of creativity and aggressive business savvy being exhibited by local firms. For example, **MBL**, which manufactures automotive belts, has expanded its production at the Ottawa plant to include belts for snowmobiles. I am told that plant now controls over 90% of the industry production of those belts. Consequently, the company has hired new help, including five technicians and additional office staff, and is running at near capacity.

**LMK Industries** on Chessie Lane has expanded its facility with an addition and expects to maintain and expand its workforce.

At the other edge of Ottawa on West Norris Drive **Performance Pipelining** is renovating its facility and advises us that business is good.

Some other local businesses and industries are adjusting to new technologies. For example, even though there have been drastic changes in the film industry, **H R Imaging** has adapted to new digital photographic technology and is adjusting to what the current customer demands.

We have also been advised that **Clover Technologies** is doing very well, **Sigma Graphics** is at capacity, **Stevenson Transfer** has expanded and **Jim's Formal Wear** has acquired another chain and now employs over 74 people in Ottawa during peak season. **B & B Electronics** is also about to expand its facility.

In preparing these remarks, I recently learned that both Clover Technologies and U.S. Silica were purchased by Golden Gate Capital, which seeks out companies that show potential for growth. This development can provide additional capital to allow even further growth of these companies.

One other bit of good news, I believe, has to do with the City's largest employer, **Ottawa Regional Hospital and Healthcare Center**. As you know, Ottawa Regional is working on a merger plan with OSF (St. Francis, Peoria). At a time when small-town hospitals are facing more and more challenges, and some are closing or cutting back on services, I think that this proposed merger is good news for Ottawa and will result in continued accessible quality healthcare for the community.

## STATE OF THE CITY

October 6, 2011

### NEW COMMERCIAL TIF

Well, I just guided you through a look back at the past year. Now let's look forward and talk about some new ways the City is working to promote economic growth. We have two new tools in our economic development arsenal.

As you know, over the years, the City's TIF districts have been very powerful economic development tools. This year, the City decided to implement a new commercial TIF in the vicinity of the vacant big box stores (Value City, K-Mart, Walmart) on the north side to provide additional incentives for redevelopment in those properties.

Typically, TIF's would not be used where major improvements already exist. However, because the big boxes have been empty so long, with their assessed valuations actually decreasing, the City Council felt it important to move in a new direction. As has been explained to the school districts and other taxing bodies, the real estate taxes that are currently received by those taxing bodies will not be affected. Only the incremental (increased) real estate taxes resulting from the development of those properties will pass to the TIF. However, we believe that could be significant enough to prompt redevelopment of those big box properties.

**The Bill Walsh Group** has already committed to purchase the Value City property and will make a substantial financial investment to redevelop the site as a beautifully landscaped state-of-the-art auto dealership.

### PORT DISTRICT

Seeking to provide Ottawa with yet another economic development option, the City pursued the creation of the Ottawa Port District late last year through the Illinois General Assembly. Thanks to the efforts of State Representative Frank Mautino and former State Senator Gary Dahl, the legislature passed the bill – which was signed into law by Governor Quinn in February.

The seven member board has been appointed by the Governor (4 members) and me (3 members) and I expect the District to soon become operational. Although not a taxing body, the Ottawa Port District will be able to use revenue bonds to finance a wide variety of economic development projects. The District will also be able to team with the

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

City to increase certain grant opportunities, particularly federal brownfield clean-up grants.

### **OTTAWA INDUSTRIAL PARK**

A key part of Ottawa's future economic development efforts is the Ottawa Industrial Park located along U.S. Route 6 just west of the intersection with Rt. 71 on the northeast corner of Ottawa. The Park is home to International Titanium Powder and several other businesses.

The City of Ottawa is in the final stage of securing a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration toward a \$4 million expansion of the park. The next 150 acres of the industrial park will be developed with roads, water and sanitary sewer extensions, drainage and a new rail spur. The purpose of the upgrade is to accommodate the expected expansion of International Titanium Powder and to attract new industries, including those which use titanium as a critical ingredient in their manufacturing processes. City staff has been working for several years on this project as has the staff at North Central Illinois Council of Governments. We expect to get a decision in the very near future from EDA.

### **NORTH CENTRAL AREA TRANSPORTATION (NCAT) PROGRAM**

After nearly a decade of effort, we are almost to the point of launching a public transportation system to serve the people of LaSalle County. The City of Ottawa has taken on the responsibility of administering the system from LaSalle County.

Recently, the City received confirmation from IDOT of the awarding of \$1 million in state and federal grants to cover the cost of starting the system along with the providing of two new 12-passenger, wheel chair accommodating mini-buses.

The next step will be for the City to launch a Request For Qualifications process to find an organization which the City of Ottawa can hire to run the day-to-day transportation operations – leaving the City to largely serve as the fiscal manager.

## STATE OF THE CITY

October 6, 2011

### **BROADBAND**

During the late summer of 2010, the LaSalle County Broadband Initiative and its partners -- the City of Rockford, a group of small and rural counties in northwestern Illinois and Northern Illinois University -- received notice from the federal government that it had been awarded almost \$69 million in federal, state and local funding to lay a 900 mile fiber-optic network throughout the area.

Since the award, these partners have formed the Illinois Fiber Resources Group or iFiber – a not for profit organization that will build and manage the network to bring high speed, unrestricted broadband access to the area at competitive prices. iFiber has moved the project through environmental assessment of the fiber route to the current engineering and construction phases.

The City of Ottawa has been a strong proponent of this initiative from the very beginning. We are now exploring how to maximize the use of this network when it reaches Ottawa during the next year – including the possibility of ensuring both its availability to future industries interested in locating in Ottawa and also its reach to every corner of Ottawa via wireless connectivity.

### **DOWNTOWN AND THE GARDENING AND BOTANICAL ARTS BRAND**

Let's talk a little about beautiful downtown Ottawa.

Based on the research done by Destination Development International in 2008 and adopted by the City Council early in 2009, the **Gardening and Botanical Arts Brand** is the official economic development plan for downtown Ottawa.

An important part of the Brand is the ongoing effort to make downtown Ottawa a place where people want to visit, to shop and to do business. The most visible aspect of this effort has been the downtown beautification effort which has focused largely on the streetscaping in the 600, 700 and 800 blocks of LaSalle Street during the last three growing seasons. The 600 block of LaSalle Street by the courthouse was completed in late May of this year. It features as a pilot program - an automated watering system for the plants and tree beds and the hanging baskets. A major effort was made this year in partnership with Stephanie Stacy of Garden's Gate to improve the hanging baskets on

## STATE OF THE CITY

October 6, 2011

LaSalle Street. We have already met with Stephanie regarding the 2012 baskets and expect them to be even more beautiful.

An important part of this effort to create an attractive ambiance in the downtown is Ottawa's historic preservation and restoration program. The centerpiece of this program is the designation of downtown Ottawa as a **National Register Historic Commercial District** – a status which makes a 20% federal income tax credit available to owners of historic buildings to be applied against the cost of restoring their buildings. By the way, of the 196 buildings in the study area, 156 were judged to be "contributing," that is over 50 years old and maintaining significant integrity.

Other valuable historic preservation tools include a City façade improvement matching grant program and the Downtown TIF. By our count, at least ten buildings in the downtown have building façade restoration or improvement projects in the works. Some of these are the **Paglis** building on Columbus Street, the **B & O Title** building on West Madison Street, and **Bianchi's Pizza** (world famous) on LaSalle Street.

Several new businesses have located downtown in the past year include **Corner 230** restaurant, **Madison Street Living**, the **Blue Beaker** and **Kidz Palace**, both on LaSalle Street, **Ottawa Delivered** on West Jefferson Street, the relocated **Dancer's Shoppe** and relocated **Designed for You**. **Your Interior Motives** shop on West Madison Street and the new **Ottawa Veterinary Hospital** on Clinton Street across from Home Hardware and the **Robert Kuhn Studio** are also new to downtown. **The Zeller Inn** has new owners and has been reinvented, once again offering fine dining.

Perhaps another sign of progress was the meeting I had recently with a local business which is planning to close its facility on the outskirts of Ottawa in order to concentrate on its downtown branch. It appears there are now only two vacant storefronts on LaSalle Street, and one of those is under reconstruction.

Another significant step forward this year in the implementation of the downtown Brand was the start-up of two downtown festivals with botanical arts themes. The **Midwest Morel Festival** and the **Ottawa Two Rivers Wine and Jazz Festival** produced small profits and successfully laid the groundwork for bigger and better events next year. Both festivals attracted new people to Ottawa and introduced them to

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

downtown Ottawa. The wine festival was especially successful in attracting new visitors from the Chicagoland area.

The morel festival featured more than 300 people paying thirty dollars apiece to hunt morels in both instructional and competitive settings. Local mushroom hunters brought in 70 pounds of fresh morels to be auctioned at prices ranging from \$35 to \$65 per half pound. These robust market conditions should attract an even larger quantity of morels for auction next year and, of course, even larger sales commissions for the festival. A special thanks needs to go to the Ottawa Visitors Center for its organizational efforts and to Heritage Harbor Ottawa for its sponsorship and general assistance.

Despite the intense and unseasonable heat on Saturday, almost 3,000 people attended the inaugural wine festival. The event attracted 26 wineries from all over the State of Illinois and featured a music program head-lined by Shirley King, the daughter of the legendary B.B. King.

A major factor in the wine festival success was the City of Ottawa partnership with the Illinois Grape Growers and Vintners Association whose expertise and financial support were critically important. Speaking of financial support, the City would like to thank the festival's music stage sponsor, U.S. Silica, along with other key sponsors – Heritage Harbor Ottawa, Bill Walsh Automotive and First National Bank.

These new festivals along with more established and very successful ones sponsored by the Ottawa Downtown Merchants Association such as the Scarecrow and Ice Odyssey Festivals plus the Farmers Market have added a new sense of vitality to downtown Ottawa. I want to thank the Ottawa Downtown Merchants Association for its increasingly effective marketing of Ottawa's downtown.

By the way, city acquisition of the old Central School property would be a major boost to the City's downtown development plans and could provide the people of Ottawa with another beautiful riverside park and festival area. In April the city applied for \$5.8 million in federal Disaster Recovery "IKE" program funds - named after Hurricane IKE which caused the local flooding in 2008 - for the purpose of purchasing from the Ottawa Elementary District and then demolishing the now permanently closed school building. We are anxiously awaiting the results of this application.

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

### **IVCC OTTAWA CENTER**

One of the most important things to ever occur in downtown Ottawa was the opening last year of the Illinois Valley Community College Ottawa Center – the first satellite campus in the nearly 90 year history of the College. The Center was an immediate success and continues to thrive. As of this week, when compared with last year at this time, credit hours taken by students at the Center are up 33%. We are proud to note the Center is hosting an important partnership between IVCC and Northern Illinois University – one which was actually first announced in Ottawa last year by the President of NIU. I am referring to the opportunity for students completing the IVCC nursing curriculum to now seek their Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree from Northern Illinois University through classes at the IVCC Ottawa Center.

The City of Ottawa continues to support the Center. In addition to purchasing the building from Centrue last year and remodeling it according to the educational needs of the College, the City has this year put a new roof on the building and installed a new HVAC system. Both improvements will vastly increase the energy efficiency of the building and significantly improve our efforts to certify it at the LEED Silver level. A grant application is pending which will provide the funds to add wind and solar renewable energy features to the campus – which already features native plant landscaping.

By the way thanks to Jennifer Scheri and the IVCC Business Training Center for working with the City's Civil Service Commission to develop and administer entry-level testing for city positions.

I want to especially thank IVCC President Jerry Corcoran and the IVCC Board of Trustees for their vision in recognizing the educational value of the IVCC Ottawa Center

### **REDDICK MANSION**

The Reddick Mansion and Gardens anchors the north edge of downtown. The gardens are looking more beautiful than ever – thanks in large part to the volunteer gardening skills of Twila Yednock. The City has been working with its insurance company to cover the cost of repairing the lightning struck roof and removing the

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

damaged chimney – which was not part of the original residence. The City and the Reddick Mansion Association have also agreed to restore the mansion skylight as part of the roof replacement project.

At the request of the City, George Cary has just completed a very professional and detailed analysis of the Reddick Mansion and its restoration needs which the City Council and Reddick Mansion Board will be considering. Already, the decaying and non-original fire escape has been removed from the east side of the mansion, thanks to the work of City Commissioner Dan Aussem and his son.

Now I'd like to talk a little bit about the services we provide our citizens through a capable workforce and infrastructure.

### **POLICE**

The Ottawa Police Department continues to maintain its long time standing as one of the most professional and progressive law enforcement agencies in the area. Long standing, successful programs continue such as the Peer Jury, aimed at keeping young, first time offenders out of the juvenile court system, while newer programs have been instituted such as the Ottawa Police Department's Child Abduction Response (CART) Team, intended to create quick, structured investigative and search process meant to bring endangered children home safely.

At the beginning of 2011 a tragedy that occurred could have been much worse if not for the quick action of one Ottawa police officer.

On January 9<sup>th</sup> as one of the first officers on the scene at a west side hour fire, Randy Nelson located an elderly man lying outside of an open window on the side of the residence. The man told Nelson that his wife was still in the home. With absolute zero visibility in a heavy smoke, Officer Nelson entered the home through the open window and after several attempts, located an elderly female inside the residence and removed her to safety.

Unfortunately, the injured man later succumbed to injuries suffered during his fall from the window. However, due to Officer Nelson's heroic efforts, the elderly woman survived.

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

Officer Nelson was awarded the department's Officer of the Year Award, and on a national level the American Police Hall of Fame Life Saving Award.

In the latter half of 2010, Ottawa native Mary Magoonaugh was hired as a new Records and IT Support Manager. Additionally, in April of this year the Ottawa Police Department employed the first female officer in nearly six years with the hiring of Officer Stephanie Bickham. Stephanie has successfully completed the larger portion of her initial training and will be on the streets less than a week from now as a fully authorized Ottawa Police Officer.

In addition to the new hires, the Department also saw one retirement this past year. In December Officer Gary Cox, a favorite personality within the department and seasoned veteran with more than 23 years of service with the Ottawa Police Department, pulled the plug and moved onto greener pastures. The chief notes however, fear not, like the famed, yet elusive sasquatch, there have been sporadic sightings of Gary around town since his departure.

Elsewhere in the department, two Ottawa Officers were recently appointed to the Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System (ILEAS) Mobile Field Force, a law enforcement mutual aid program. The Mobile Field Force is basically a platoon of specialized police officers of various ranks, from various departments that train and deploy together in times of need.

In May of this year, Officer Garry Johnson and Corporal Jeff Bangert, Ottawa's appointments to the ILEAS Mobile Field Force, deployed to southern Illinois for Operation Flood Fight to assist in maintaining order during the floods. Johnson and Bangert are also supervisors on the Ottawa Police Department's own Special Response Team (SRT), which to date had seen more than 60 activations for incidents such as drug related or high risk search warrant execution.

Although official crime statistics are still not yet available for the past year, a noted decrease in the number of calls for service from 2009 to 2010 leads one to believe that there was a proportionate decrease in actual crime. But, although 2010 seemed to go out like a lamb, 2011 seemed to come in like a lion, with a couple of more serious crimes thankfully not seen in Ottawa on a regular basis at all. These crimes,

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

however, were quickly, thoroughly and professionally resolved by our law enforcement officers.

Most recently, a Labor Day Enforcement Grant in the amount of \$2,500 was secured. This grant was used to put additional officers on the road during the holiday for traffic and DUI enforcement.

On a final note, the Ottawa Police Department, although outfitted primarily in blue, has been showing its greener side lately through the continued successful support of the Prescription Pill and Drug Disposal program, or P2D2. Educating the public about the dangers of disposing these drugs either in the garbage or by flushing them down the toilet, the program provides a site where drugs may be dropped off for safe disposal, no questions asked. To date, the department's P2D2 drop box has collected more than 1,500 pounds of prescription medications that otherwise may have ended up in our landfills, groundwater, waterways, and eventually, drinking water.

### **FIRE**

Fire Chief Jeff Newbury oversees the operations of the Ottawa Fire Department. The 28 employees of the Fire Department include a records clerk, and three shifts of nine men. All firefighters serve as Emergency Medical Technicians.

This past year the Fire & Police commission increased the hiring standards for new fire fighters. This has been done to prepare the department to become an Advanced Life Support Service. With these new standards in place we have begun to hire Paramedic level EMT's. This new hiring criteria and the continued education of our personnel has resulted in five (5) fire fighters reaching licensed Paramedic status and six (6) more firefighters who have completed the training through IVCC and are waiting to take the state Paramedic certification test. The goal of the department is to upgrade all of the 27 firefighters to paramedic level to improve the level of service to the community. These EMT's are licensed through the Illinois Department of Public Health and maintain their training through Ottawa Regional Hospital and Healthcare Center.

The department recently purchased two (2) Life Pak 15 cardiac monitors. The purchase was made possible through donations made to the department's first aid fund. The new monitors are a complete acute cardiac care response unit. These units also

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

allow for monitoring of end-tidal CO<sub>2</sub> which is the measurement of carbon dioxide in the blood. They also can send 12 lead cardiac strips to Ottawa Regional Hospital prior to the arrival of the patient at the Emergency Department.

Approximately 85% of the department's call volume is for medical emergencies both in the City of Ottawa as well as the surrounding Ottawa area. In addition to responding to 2,500 medical calls per year and approximately 450 fire calls, members of the Fire Department train both in the field as well as the classroom to enhance their skills and capabilities, logging over 240 hours per individual per year of training. The department has begun the construction of a new training site located in the former Advanced Asphalt property the City recently acquired. This site will allow for more hands on firefighting training. This will allow the city to save money in training costs by having the availability of pertinent training props at a local site.

The Ottawa Fire Department has been proactive in training its members to respond to County or Statewide emergencies as members of MABAS (Mutual Aid Box Alarm System) Division 25. Four members serve on the Hazardous Materials Response Team and six members serve on the Technical Rescue Team. An emergency generator and light plant is housed at the Main Station for deployment when needed.

The Fire Department participates in Fire Prevention and Education activities in the community which include visits to the schools, to clubs, and fire extinguisher training for various organizations. Fire and fall prevention programs for the elderly are offered at local assisted living facilities. Local businesses have capitalized on fire extinguisher and evacuation drill training for their employees.

The OFD makes regular appearances at local safety fairs and community events like Scarecrow fest, making contact with over 200 children at each event. The Ottawa Fire Department is one of the few fire departments in the area to offer an Office of the State Fire Marshal Junior Fire Setters Program. This enables the department to address children who may have been involved in behavior that not only endangers the child but our community as a whole.

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

The fire department is currently upgrading the emergency response vehicles with pre-emption devices to coincide with the replacement of the traffic control lights in downtown Ottawa. This will allow vehicles to travel more safely through intersections while responding to emergencies.

The Ottawa Fire Department, in cooperation with the City building official, is taking a more active role in code inspections. Currently the Fire Chief has begun a review and update of the city's Emergency Operations Plan. In cooperation with all department heads and City officials this will insure the city is complying with FEMA's National Incident Management System (NIMS).

The Department is currently working on a program to remind residents of the city's ordinance to make sure their addresses are visible. This program and public service announcement will be ready for the spring of 2012.

Through an Eagle Scout project by Matt Thrush and in cooperation with the department, the Fire Department enjoyed an upgrade to its memorial display. This can be viewed at the Central Police & Fire Station.

### **WATER PROJECTS**

The long awaited 500 thousand gallon west side water tower is ready for operation. Foundation work started last fall, then this spring the tower work started and continued through the summer. Painting finished mid September with the tower going on line the end of September. This \$1.3 million project was financed through bonds which will be paid by loans from the City's enterprise zone fund. Engineering for the project was provided in-house resulting in a savings of about \$100,000 in consulting engineering fees.

In order to meet fire flows for the new addition to Ottawa Pavilion the City installed approximately one mile of 12 inch water main down east Center Street. Not only does this water main improve the existing fire flows for the entire area, but allows for future development opportunities on the far east end of Center Street.

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

This \$570,000 project was paid primarily through a \$350,000 grant that the City was able to obtain through the CDAP Public Infrastructure program as well as a significant contribution from Ottawa Pavilion.

### **WASTEWATER TREATMENT**

The city's wastewater treatment plant project is now 95% complete. The total project cost of \$9.2 million, is funded largely through a \$7.7 million ARRA stimulus grant.

Now for more information that you ever wanted to learn about a sewer plant.

The project includes a new sludge dewatering facility, expansion of the grit removal system, a new final settling tank and river discharge pumps.

Also the project provides for improvements to the excess flow storage and treatment ponds.

We are also replacing a 55 year old electrical, aeration and flow control systems that were, frankly, worn out.

A new control building provides improved lab facilities, and central remote control systems for the plant. Eventually all remote lift stations across the city will be controlled from the plant. Also included is a new electric generator for power back-up in the event of a power outage.

Although it is valuable to received the stimulus funding, there was much extra effort and expense to document that all iron, steel and manufactured products met the "Buy American" provisions.

### **STREETS**

The City's 2011 street improvement program is about half complete. This year about three miles will of street be reconstructed, at a cost of \$1.5 million. Major work is being done on the east side on Green Street and on streets to the east, and on Marcy Street on the south side.

This year's asphalt overlay project will begin soon, and this year's brick street restoration is being done on Christie Street.

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

The last part of the street work needed to bring the Kohl's Distribution Center to town was just also completed this year at a cost of one-half million dollars, which was partially funded with an IDOT EDP (Economic Development Program) grant.

All in all, I believe the City has been very aggressive in maintaining and improving our streets.

### **FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT**

Being in the valleys of two major rivers that frequently overflow, flood -plain management is becoming ever more important. As I reported last year, the City was accepted into the community rating service program for floodplain management administered by Homeland Security's Insurance Office. Ottawa was accepted and rated at a level 5, the highest classification level achieved by any Illinois community. The result has been a 25% savings in flood insurance costs to our citizens.

Last year I also reported that Dave Noble and Mike Sutfin were both now qualified floodplain managers. Since last year, I am pleased to report that the City received the state-wide annual award for outstanding efforts in floodplain management. More exciting to me, Mike Sutfin was named as Floodplain Manager of the Year by the Illinois Floodplain Managers Association.

A few days ago the City's flood commission submitted its first annual progress report to the Council. The flood commission identified nine areas of flood mitigation concerns. The top three were the cleanup of the I & M Canal aqueduct, flood protection for our wastewater treatment plant, and elevating Green Street.

I am pleased to report that the Fox River aqueduct cleanup is nearing completion. Last month the Illinois Department of Natural Resources was able to focus a renewed effort to remove the debris piled at the aqueduct which was causing a flooding problem and threatening the integrity of the historic structure. With very limited resources and almost no budget, Dan Bell with IDNR has put an aggressive hands-on fix to the problem. It appears that within days the debris pile will be gone. The project does not involved dredging, however we are hoping that other funding sources will allow dredging in the near future.

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

As I noted earlier, the City is in the process of completing a major rebuild of our wastewater treatment plant. Unfortunately, because of the new higher floodplain elevations, the plant could be threatened by a very large flood. City engineering staff has been working with IDNR and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on a permit process and preliminary design criteria for a flood protection wall around the plant.

With respect to Green Street, when either the Fox or Illinois substantially flood, that street becomes submerged. We have also had a situation in the last few years where the Main Street bridge over the Fox River where flood waters had almost reached the bottom of the bridge structure. We are fearful at some point the bridge may have to be closed because of water and we do not want the east side to become an island. To address this, a preliminary hydraulic analysis for Green Street was complete this summer. We are hopeful this effort will allow us to apply for funding to complete the project at a future date.

I am also pleased to announce that the City recently was advised that Ottawa had qualified for and received a \$200,000 CDBG (federal) Hurricane Ike Program grant for 25% of the cost of buying out the remaining homes in the "flats" along the Fox River. We previously received a 75% FEMA Hazard mitigation grant for the \$600,000 balance of the cost. This means the City will be able to acquire and demolish those homes in the floodplain, and further expand and enhance Fox River park.

### **PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS AND RECREATION**

The City of Ottawa Playground and Recreation board has spent the past year balancing the recreational needs of the citizens with the need to wisely spend tax dollars.

Safe, comfortable, and convenient facilities have always been a priority for the Recreation board, and nowhere is this more apparent than the Lincoln-Douglas Complex area. Riordan Pool, under new management, was cleaned up, given new guard chairs and pool ladders, and the locker rooms repaired in numerous, small ways from new windows to new non-slip floors. Due to the improvements, the City of Ottawa Swim Meet was revived, and Ottawa High School hosted its first ever outdoor home

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

swim meet. Meanwhile, the City, the schools, the Ottawa YMCA, and concerned citizens met and formed a committee to study costs of constructing a new pool.

After approving the closing of the road between the adult softball fields, the Recreation Board financed the building of two shelters with the goal to create a new leisure area similar to that between Masinelli field and the Ottawa American Little League fields. Soon landscaping will complete the renovations, making the Ottawa Adult Softball facility one of the finest in the Illinois Valley.

The Lincoln-Douglas complex figures in the Ottawa Playground and Recreation Board's future plans as well. Just south of the pool, preliminary construction of the new tennis courts to replace those destroyed by flooding at Allen Park is underway. On the far east end of the park, a new regulation sized soccer field is nearing completion.

Although recent attention has been devoted to the area around Lincoln-Douglass Park, the Playground and Recreation board has not forgotten about the rest of the city. The board recently financed the purchase of property in the northwest section of the city where a new playground and park are planned. Additionally, the Recreation board is working toward creating a new dog park, with the help of The City of Ottawa, a generous \$10,000 donation from IAMS/Eukanuba/Brother's Country Supply, and the newly created Ottawa Dog Park Board, The Board is also actively pursuing plans to create bike paths throughout the city, and has just finished revising its comprehensive plan to identify underserved areas.

Just as important as the facilities are the youth and adult activities sponsored by the Ottawa Playground and Recreation Board. This year Ottawa Recreation's summer youth program offered supervisors at the parks, an Ottawa tradition unique among surrounding communities. Over forty camps and clinics taught skills from art to basketball to bowling to photography to sewing to volleyball to wrestling. Overall, Ottawa Recreation summer activities served almost 3,500 young people from Ottawa and the surrounding communities. And the Recreation Board continued to work with the dedicated volunteers of the youth leagues in the city to make sure that facilities were available for summer sports.

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

Ottawa Recreation's long tradition of sponsoring outstanding adult softball continued this year under the watchful eyes of new murals of June Gross and Roy Sanders. This year fifty-six men's teams and twenty women's teams vied for league championships in the summer leagues, while twenty-six men's teams and ten women's teams played in the fall leagues.

But there is more to adult recreation than softball. Again Jane and Rod Schomas volunteered their time to host dance lessons every Tuesday evening. Roz Sesto of Energy Yoga sponsored a free sunrise yoga class Saturday mornings in September. A favorite of our senior citizens, the annual Tea Dance featuring Class Act is scheduled for October 16 from 2-4 at the Knights of Columbus. Last year's dance was attended by over one hundred.

The nine appointed volunteer members of the Ottawa Playground and Recreation Board take their responsibilities seriously, and they are all dedicated to responsibly growing the facilities and activities in the city of Ottawa.

### **EMERALD ASH BORER**

An expected but still very unwelcome report was received just a couple of weeks ago from the Illinois Department of Agriculture certifying the presence of the Emerald Ash Borer or EAB in the City of Ottawa. The EAB has already killed tens of millions of ash trees in the Great Lakes states and will likely kill thousands of ash trees in Ottawa – damaging our beautiful urban forest and stressing City resources to remove a large number of diseased trees.

The City is mobilizing to manage this crisis. We just applied for a grant through a recently created grant program to develop an EAB Management Plan. The plan will include an inventory of the ash trees on public property to discover the extent and location of the EAB, the education of the public about the EAB epidemic, possible treatment of some trees, and the removal and disposal of the dead ash trees. It is also our intent over time to replace the ash trees – on public property at least – with new trees on a one to one basis. Still, the years ahead will be challenging for Ottawa – now in its 13<sup>th</sup> year as a Tree City USA community.

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

### **ITEP GRANT**

Speaking of trees, one really positive thing to happen to Ottawa's urban forest this year has been the implementation of the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) grant received two years ago for \$338,000 to be used to plant trees along the state and federal highway entrances to the City. A portion of these federal funds was used to plant 959 trees last Spring. More than twenty different varieties were planted with most trees being 2.5 inches in diameter. Interestingly, each of these 959 tree locations had to be engineered to IDOT specifications. IDOT staff even went out to the nurseries and hand tagged each tree selected for planting in Ottawa. Because the purchase price of trees in quantity is relatively low at the moment, nearly half of the grant funds are still available for planting more trees next year. We are exploring with IDOT if the funds can be applied to an ash tree removal and replacement program.

### **OTTAWA VISITORS CENTER**

The Ottawa Visitors Center has welcomed over 7,000 visitors thru its doors over the past 12+ months and is poised to partner with the city and take the lead on the development and implementation of its botanical brand marketing ad campaign scheduled for spring of 2012. It continues to work with numerous event planners and provides graphic design, web listings, radio ads, banners, billboards and other promotional support for tourism related fests and activities. The OVC also works closely with the Ottawa Chamber by providing company relocation packages promoting the belief that every visitor is a potential investor or future resident.

### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

Members of the City's Special Events Committee continues to promote and support many of our annual events. The LaSalle County Cruisers 13<sup>th</sup> Cruise Night, the Music in the Park series, the Founders Day Picnic and Scarecrow Festival are among the most popular events enjoyed by our residents. The Downtown Merchants Ice Odyssey in December was held for the second year and the SEC was pleased to be able to help sponsor that event which included live ice sculpting demonstrations. The weather conditions and temperatures remained perfect for the display at downtown

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

corners of over 30 ice sculptures which were still being enjoyed (and photographed) over a week later. We're looking forward to this year's event which will have some special features.

A new challenge for the Special Events Committee last November was taking over the organization of the "Festival of Lights" parade. In keeping with the Gillette's long established holiday tradition, the parade remained non-commercial and non-political and the number of spectators was comparable to previous years.

The "Music In The Park" summer series just finished its' 11<sup>th</sup> season of offering live musical performances at Washington Square. This years' series remained rain-free for all seven Saturday nights and it seems our residents and visitors continue to enjoy the ambiance of Washington Square. The "Legacy Girls" and the "Rhythm Rockets" were new to the series this year and the committee welcomes suggestions for other "new" groups to consider for the 2012 series.

The Committee continues to encourage local groups and individuals to submit ideas for new events to apply for funding to help with a public event of their own creation.

### **EAST SIDE RESIDENTIAL HISTORIC SURVEY**

This year, the City's Historic Preservation Commission conducted a historic building survey on Ottawa's east side. Remarkably, of the 297 structures surveyed, 94% were classified as "contributing", which means they were over fifty years old and still had integrity. The Historic Preservation Commission is now exploring the option of establishing the east side neighborhood as a National Register Historic District.

### **OTTAWA RADIUM GIRLS**

A tragic yet inspirational chapter of Ottawa history was recognized with the dedication of the Ottawa Radium Girls Memorial on Labor Day weekend. The bronze statue of a young woman depicting a Radium Girl surrounded by beautiful flowers, plants and trees memorializes the personal sacrifices of these young women and their fight for workplace safety. This \$85,000 project was completed without the use of City of Ottawa tax dollars thanks to the generous cash and in-kind contributions of many

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

donors. I would like especially thank David Raikes and Laborers Local 393, the Miller Group Charitable Trust, Dr. Carl Soderstrum, the Coalition of Labor Union Women and United Auto Workers Region Four for their special generosity. A special thanks also goes to the Laborers Local 393 members and other building trades members who provided a great deal of in-kind work to build the memorial site.

### **ART BY THE RIVER – THE MARY FANNING PROJECT**

The talent and creativity of the late Mary Fanning has added to the quality of life in Ottawa – primarily through her sculptures which dominate the landscape in Allen Park along the Illinois River. These remarkable sculptures were created thirty years ago from steel girders salvaged from the demolition of the Hilliard Bridge which spanned the Illinois River for half a century. The giant red and yellow sculptures are now proudly featured on the outdoor sculpture register of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC.

The restoration of both sculptures and the relocation of the red sculpture were accomplished once again with an outpouring of public financial support along with a great many in-kind contributions of work and material from private companies and organized labor. The painters union, for example, prepped and repainted both sculptures saving over \$25,000. And again, an \$80,000 project was accomplished without the use of tax dollars. Special notes of appreciation need to go to Peg Breslin for leading the effort and to Kathryn Gibbs, the sister of Mary Fanning, for providing many kinds of support and assistance.

### **FINANCES**

The city's total budget this year was about \$40 million. The general corporate budget, which basically is the fund that runs the city, with the exception of the water and wastewater departments, was \$14 million. Almost one third of that revenue comes in sales taxes. As of today, we appear to be on target with our sales tax projections, as well as our other revenue sources.

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

This year there was no pay increase for appointed staff, about 29 employees. In another cost-saving measure, the Council did not appoint a Deputy Fire Chief following the retirement of Chief Duback and the promotion of former Deputy Chief Newbury. Similarly, we continue to operate the public works department with one less administrative position than in the past.

The City also realized some significant cost savings recently. We have saved about \$105,000 on electricity so far this year through an agreement to purchase power with First Energy. While speaking of energy, I should note that the City is in the midst of administering a \$135,000 federally funded energy conservation grant. The grant was awarded for two purposes. First, to encourage home builders to include extra energy conservation features in the new homes they are building. The second purpose is to provide incentives to owners of historic buildings in the downtown Ottawa Commercial Historic District for the installation of energy efficient windows, HVAC systems, lighting and insulation. We were able to pass along these funds to local builders and property owners.

Two economic challenges we continue to be concerned about are funding of our employee pension plans and, potentially rising and volatile healthcare costs. To date, the city has been able to fund the various pensions at the amounts recommended by actuarial calculations.

And as for healthcare, although statistics show that nationwide healthcare costs increased 9% over the past twelve months (in spite of plan design changes that include high deductible plans and reduced benefits), I am happy to announce that the 2012 premium equivalents for active and retired city employees will decrease by about 5%, while continuing to maintain a very low deductible and out-of-pocket, with the only plan design changes of those being mandated by Federal healthcare reform. This decrease is a result of a 4% reduction in claims experience and a slight decrease in Blue Cross administrative fees.

And one final long-term financing challenge of the City Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO's) in Ottawa. As I explained in more detail last year, about one-third of the City has storm water and sanitary waste water flowing in the same pipes, which overflow into the river when it rains extremely hard. US EPA has mandated that

## **STATE OF THE CITY**

**October 6, 2011**

combined overflows to the rivers be severely cut back to help protect the quality of water in the rivers.

Our “long term plan’ has been submitted to IEPA for its review and comment. When the final determination is made, the City expects it will be required to spend between 15 and 26 million dollars over the next 10 or 15 years to solve the problem. We haven't figured out where those funds will come from, but will be exploring all options.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

Ottawa has always been a community with a strong element of volunteerism. For example, volunteers have for years helped maintain Ottawa’s many parks. However, during the last few years, volunteers have played an especially critical role in the beautification of downtown Ottawa. Each of the many plant and tree beds in the streetscaping on LaSalle Street are maintained by a volunteer gardener who treats these beds as if they were part of their own yards. I would like to thank Sue Coughlin for her invaluable role as the coordinator of this vitally important volunteer force.

Also, I extend my thanks to the hundreds of men and women serving on City committees, boards and commissions. Much of their work is not so physically visible, but nonetheless is essential to the workings of city government and the providing of amenities to our citizens.

### **CONCLUSION**

Two weeks ago, at the Illinois Municipal League Conference, in Chicago, I met a gentlemen whose law firm recently tried major case at the downtown Ottawa courthouse. He spent about ten days in Ottawa and remarked how beautiful the city was, how friendly the people were, how he enjoyed the downtown so much, and even how courteous judges, clerks and local attorneys were. I hear these sorts of compliments about Ottawa all the time. It makes me feel good about Ottawa and all of you, as involved citizens, should be proud to be a part of what makes Ottawa great.