

Mayor's State of the City Address, Spring 2011

I'm told the recession officially ended in mid-2009, but for many its effects still linger. During 2010 the state of the economy continued to challenge our community and pushed us to focus on what was most important.

Thankfully, we stayed on top of the economic crisis from the beginning in Canal Winchester. The strong commitment Council and staff made to reduce expenses over the past three years has left the city in a comfortable financial position.

While many governments are struggling financially, I'm happy to report that Canal Winchester remains fiscally sound. From 2009 to 2010, there was a slight increase in cash balances. Additionally, revenue exceeded expenses in all major budget categories, and our general fund had increased by \$580,000 by the close of 2010.

Despite the sluggish economy, a number of local companies expanded and several new businesses were welcomed to the community in 2010. The Diley Ridge Medical Center opened its doors on March 16, filling the need for a healthcare facility in the area. The center treated more than 16,000 emergency patients through the end of the year, and became the first Gold LEED-certified healthcare facility in Ohio.

Another local success story is Manifold & Phalor, which celebrated its grand opening in December. Manifold & Phalor now operates a 30,000 square-foot facility in the Canal Point Industrial Park and employs more than 30 people. The machine parts manufacturer attracted national attention when the Wall Street Journal reported on expanding manufacturing operations.

Other new and expanded businesses in the community include:

- Buckeye Spine & Rehab, Diley Ridge
- Cardio Vascular Specialists, Diley Ridge
- Central Ohio General Surgeons, Diley Ridge
- Central Ohio Pulmonary Disease, Diley Ridge
- Central Ohio Sleep Medicine, Diley Ridge
- Diley Medical Group, Diley Ridge
- Diley Ridge Family Health, Diley Ridge
- Fairfield Cardiovascular Associates, Diley Ridge
- Fairfield Medical Center, Diley Ridge
- Fairfield Medical Center Physician Specialists, Diley Ridge
- Firestone, Winchester Boulevard
- General Surgical Associates, Diley Ridge
- Goodwill Collection Store, Gender Road
- Infusion Services/Wound Clinic, Diley Ridge
- Mid Ohio Pulmonary & Sleep Associates, Diley Ridge
- Mount Carmel Outpatient Laboratory Service Center, Diley Ridge
- Nowstalgic Toys, Trine Street
- Ohio ENT, Diley Ridge
- Ohio Orthopedic Center, Diley Ridge
- Ohio Physical Medicine & Rehab, Diley Ridge

- Ohio State School of Cosmetology & Barber School, Gender Road
- OSU Dermatology – Canal Winchester, Diley Ridge
- Phoenix Physical Therapy, Diley Ridge
- PPA Graphics, Thrush Drive
- Spectrum Home Services of Central Ohio, Howe Industrial Parkway
- The PainCare Center, Diley Ridge
- Transformation Weight Loss & Nutrition Center, Diley Ridge
- Vascular Services of Ohio, Diley Ridge
- VESL, Diley Ridge
- Winchester Tea Room, High Street

In addition to new businesses, 2010 brought with it the community's first skate park. Located in front of Hanners Park on Groveport Road, the park features nearly 4,000 square feet of ramps, obstacles and grind areas for skaters to enjoy. Other park updates completed in 2010 included drainage and parking improvements at Walnut Creek Park.

Several roads were upgraded as part of the 2010 street program. East Hocking Street was reconstructed and improvements were made to Washington Street, Old Creek Lane, Villages at Westchester Section 3, and Winchester Village Section 2.

Major work to Gender Road is on the agenda for 2011. This project will be done in two phases, with Phase I construction slated to begin this spring and be completed this fall. Phase I includes:

- Adding a left turn lane on Gender Road at Winchester Boulevard
- Adding a traffic control median on Winchester Boulevard
- Installation of a new traffic signal at the Gender Road and Winchester Boulevard intersection
- Installation of a new traffic signal at Prentiss Drive and Winchester Boulevard
- Adding left turn lanes and a new traffic signal at the Gender Road and Fox Hill Drive intersection

Phase II of the Gender Road project will be done in conjunction with the City of Columbus. This Phase will be designed during 2011, with construction expected to begin in 2012. Canal Winchester's portion of the project consists of a multipurpose leisure path and a slight widening of the paved road between state Route 33 and Winchester Pike to accommodate a turn lane. This will make it easier and safer to access businesses in that area.

The City of Columbus will widen pavement along Gender Road between Winchester Pike and Lehman Road. This will allow for a center turn lane and a new traffic signal at the intersection of Gender and Lehman roads. A sidewalk may also be added.

A low-interest loan from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency will allow several updates to our sanitary sewer system. Three projects are planned, all of which will begin construction in February and be completed by fall. Upgrades include:

- Manhole rehabilitation and new sanitary sewer lining for approximately 12,000 feet of sewer mains that were originally installed as far back as the 1930s. These lines are located in older neighborhoods as well as one small section at the intersection of Gender Road and Old Creek Lane.

- The replacement of four raw influent pumps and the primary screener at the wastewater treatment facility.
- A new sanitary force main at Winchester Village to replace a deteriorating piece of infrastructure.

Also on the topic of sewers, Council enacted an ordinance in 2010 to keep damaging items from being flushed into the sanitary sewer system. This ordinance included provisions that required some businesses to install and maintain a grease trap. We've already begun to see the positive effects of this ordinance through reduced maintenance on our sewer system due to grease.

A new agreement with our waste hauler, Waste Management, went into effect in September. The new contract raised base rates by \$2.13 per month, which is the first increase we've seen in several years. Our rates remain low compared to other communities.

The other notable change to our agreement is how recycling is handled. Recycling can now be dropped off at a recycling site, where residents can deposit all allowed recyclables into a single bin. There are currently two recycling sites: Waste Management's facility at 1006 W. Walnut Street and downtown next to the Interurban building and the public parking lot. A third location is being constructed and will be announced soon.

The city's historic Town Hall building recently received some updates in the form of new storm windows and minor repairs. The new windows fit the historical character of the building but are more functional and energy-efficient.

Another historic downtown building received attention when the Interurban Depot was recognized by the Ohio Historical Society and honored with a historical marker. Many guests attended the dedication event where they learned about the marker program's history, the significance of the Interurban station, and the restoration and future use of the building. During the event the Bovings, child passengers from the last Interurban run, recalled their experience on the train and shared memories from their adventure almost 80 years ago.

Exterior restoration of the Interurban Depot is complete, with renovation of the interior expected sometime in the future. The restored Interurban Depot is expected to eventually house public conference space.

The historical marker dedication ceremony wasn't the only Canal Winchester event that made headlines in 2010. The first-ever Canal Winchester Blues & Ribfest entertained more than 20,000 guests during the two-day street festival. Attendees enjoyed a full lineup of live blues music, locally crafted item and art, children's activities and a beer garden. Of course, the festival would not have been complete without the world-class ribs and a variety of other food options. The second annual Blues & Ribfest is expected to be even bigger and better, with more food and rib vendors, additional arts and crafts, and expanded children's activities.

I'm proud to have the Blues & Ribfest and other excellent events to showcase our community. The popular Labor Day Festival and several of our smaller events again hit record attendance this past year. I expect this trend will continue as more people take notice of our great city.

Events aren't the only thing growing in Canal Winchester. The 2010 census counted Canal Winchester's population at 7,101 residents. This is 2,101 more people than the 5,000 resident requirement to be declared a city. We've been preparing for this status change for a long time, and other than a few state mandated changes, our local government will continue to operate the same way.

In preparation for our new city status, we appointed a Charter Review Commission, which made recommendations for revisions to Canal Winchester's charter. Proposed charter amendments were then placed on the ballot and approved by residents. These changes go into effect April 29, 30 days after our village was declared a city by the Ohio Secretary of State.

I am pleased with the way our resilient community has stood in the face of challenges and I am enthusiastic and optimistic about the opportunities that lie ahead. Though times remain tough, improvements are being made every day. We entered the recession a resilient community and I believe we have emerged even stronger.

I look forward to starting a new chapter as the City of Canal Winchester with each of you. You have my commitment that we'll embrace our new title and do our best to become one of the finest cities in Ohio.

Here's to our new future as the CITY OF CANAL WINCHESTER!

Sincerely,

Michael Ebert
Mayor of Canal Winchester