

The State of the City, February 2006

Good evening, members of the Common Council, colleagues and fellow citizens. Thank you for joining us tonight as I report on the state of the city.

I am pleased to report that the City of West Lafayette is in good fiscal condition as we begin 2006. Our budget was approved by the Department of Local Government Finance and is fully funded. Despite declining revenues and a municipal tax rate that is in the lowest 10% in the state, the determination of each department to manage resources carefully has allowed us to continue to provide the level of service that our residents expect. We have done that without reducing services, eliminating positions or reducing salaries. Instead, the efforts of each department continue to reduce our costs through best practices.

Public safety continues to be a priority for the City of West Lafayette. The Fire Department, under the excellent leadership of Chief Phil Drew, hired 2 additional firefighters in 2005, Ben Jones and Shawn Leuck, reflecting the department's commitment to provide the highest quality 1st Responder and fire protection. It was a busy year for the department with 2 major fires in the Village. We appreciate our mutual aid partners – the Purdue University, Lafayette and Wabash Township fire departments – who assisted our efforts in those fires. There were no serious injuries and the fires were confined because of the excellent response from our firefighters. We also appreciate the community support, especially from the Red Cross and Einstein Brothers Bagels.

2005 was a year of increased training opportunities for our firefighters. Twenty-six firefighters attended the Fire Department Instructors Conference in Indianapolis, taking advantage of classes in “structural building collapse” and “aerial/tower ladder operations”. The department also participated in the state Fire Marshall's Summit and Chief Drew was asked by the State Fire Marshall to be a member of the steering committee for the development of a state fire and emergency training academy. Brian Lancaster, our Fire Inspector, participated in a two-week course at the National Fire Academy. In May, a house and barn scheduled for demolition and made available by C.P. Morgan, were used for a joint training fire with the Battle Ground and the Wabash Township fire departments.

The Police Department continued to focus attention on neighborhoods in 2005, with proactive concentrated patrols to discourage vandalism and noise. During the year the department received 16,639 calls for service, down 7% from 2004. Despite that decrease, the department was busy with an increase in the number of major crimes investigated (33) and a corresponding increase in the number of criminal arrests.

Chief Dan Marvin and the department completed the first full year of working with Sheriff Anderson and the county on updating radio equipment and central dispatch, and completed the first full year of our K-9 program, becoming the host site for the Metro

K-9 Program. Officer Jeff Dunscomb and police dog, Fonske, have been invaluable resources in that program.

The department implemented an internship program, a Red Light Enforcement Program, and continued with numerous safety programs including Operation Pull-Over, Big Cities and Counties Grant Program, EVOC training, Project Child Safe and the Seat Belt Enforcement Program. Equipment and software for the parking enforcement program were also updated this year.

Planning and neighborhoods continue to be the focus of the Department of Development and Development Director, Josh Andrew. Released in June, the West Lafayette Strategic Plan update was the work of an excellent steering committee and one-hundred residents who participated in 3 public forums in the early months of 2005. A city-wide services survey was conducted as part of the planning process. Planning priorities included housing and neighborhoods, schools, city vitality and city services. These priorities, along with strategies to accomplish the outlined goals, are the roadmap for city departments in the coming year.

We remain strongly committed to ensuring our neighborhoods are vital and safe. That commitment is evident in the ongoing programs of code and nuisance enforcement, support for the not-for-profit New Chauncey Housing Inc., staff support for the Neighborhood Coalition, participation in the Community Issues Committee, participation in “Meet and Greet” and discussions with campus leaders through the VP for Student Services office. Following the strategic planning process, code enforcement was ramped up and included emphasis on the exterior condition of properties, including snow removal.

The difficult job of inspection and enforcement is handled by 5 staff members under the direction of Allen Grady. Safe housing throughout the city is the result of their hard work. I’d like to especially thank them all tonight. They inspected 402 properties (696 units), did 505 nuisance inspections and investigated 13 tenant-based complaints in 2005.

Last year, we once again invested Community Development Block Grant dollars for improvements in the target areas of the city. \$753,000 was used for curb and sidewalk replacement and curb ramps for accessibility on Columbia, Marstellar, Hayes and Lincoln streets; on the purchase, rehabilitation and resale of single-family homes, and for home-buyer assistance or repair assistance; on the purchase of property for a neighborhood park; and to help provide funding through our local public service agencies for 14 programs that assist low to moderate income families.

The Department of Development was also involved in many other development and redevelopment projects in 2005. The second year of the Sagamore West Implementation Plan brought additional improvements along the parkway in the form of new sidewalks, curbs and landscaping from Osco Drugs to the Village Bottle Shop. Continuing our commitment to use local firms and “in house” talent, gateways, lighting

and banner poles have been designed, and the permits are pending through the Indiana Department of Transportation. We were awarded a \$50,000 landscaping grant from INDOT and those funds will be used in the gateway project.

Sagamore West has also seen an active year with private development that included the Hilltop planned development; additional redevelopment in Wabash Village with the construction of Havel Chiropractic and Dog-N-Suds; the opening of Chiccos in University Square; and the opening of Sigma Medical and Sherwin-Williams in Town Center. The Route 66 restaurant expanded, as did Wal-Mart, and Tower of Ivory Townhomes were completed.

Civic involvement along the Sagamore Parkway was also in evidence in 2005 as the Sagamore West Area Business Alliance organized the very successful Sagamore West Farmer's Market. This wonderful addition to the west side of the river not only provided us with fresh produce, but a community gathering place every Wednesday afternoon. I want to thank the members of SWABA, and particularly Larry Oates, for working to ensure the market's success. I'm happy to report that the market will again grace the Cumberland Athletic Fields parking lot beginning May 3.

Private investment through development and redevelopment continued city-wide in 2005. In the Levee/Village we had construction of Capp and Gino's, Chauncey Townhouses, Basham Apartments at Chauncey and Fowler, the Villas on Pierce Street, Panini's, State Street Towers, Puccini's, and the plans for Chipotle and the Irvine and Woodbury Apartments. Additional residential investment continued with the construction of new cottage homes at Westminster, the expansion of Greentree, construction of homes in Catherwood Gardens and St. Joseph's Court, and new phases of home construction in Arbor Chase and Amberleigh Village.

Our partnership with the Purdue Research Foundation and Purdue University resulted in exciting developments in the Purdue Research Park in 2005. Endocyte moved into new laboratory facilities with the completion of the Purdue Technology Center expansion in April. The Ross Enterprise Center is now home to not only Butler Engineering, and its 100 engineers, but the One Purdue program. Research Park Associates, the home of the International Health and Fitness Center, has begun construction on Phase II of their project, and CST/berger, a division of Stanley Works, moved its corporate offices to West Lafayette in July.

FuturaGene graduated from the Business and Technology Center incubator to space at Vistech I, and QuadraSpec announced expansion plans and their decision to remain in the Research Park. The construction and provision of fiber optics throughout the Park, made possible through the Certified Technology Park and the Technology Development Grant Funds provided by the state, are allowing us to be competitive in attracting and retaining these companies.

The University and the City also continued our partnership to address the transportation needs of the community for the next 20 years. After months of cooperative

planning and decision-making, design plans for the Purdue Area Transportation Plan were finalized in early 2005. Representatives from Purdue, the county and city staff received Statements of Qualifications from 11 engineering firms in December for Phase I of the plan. Design development and land acquisition will occur in 2006 and 2007, with construction slated to begin in 2008. The plan received the support of Congressman Steve Buyer and \$5.6 million from the Federal Highway Administration is included in the 2006 federal transportation plan.

The Public Works departments, which include Engineering, Street and Sanitation, and the Wastewater Utility, continue to manage and constantly improve services to citizens throughout the city. City Engineer, Dave Buck and Public Works Director, David Downey, work to renew our infrastructure while planning for future economic development.

Streets and sidewalks were a major focus for Public Works in 2005 with projects advancing on many fronts. After many meetings with the Indiana Department of Transportation and Atlas construction, an agreement was reached that allowed a temporary fix late in December for Lindberg Road. Material testing and additional survey work is ongoing as the parties involved work to develop a long-term solution.

Other projects that saw completion were the reconstruction of Kalberer Road; reconstruction of S. Salisbury that included new curbs and sidewalks and additional parking; the reconstruction of the Brown St. and Tapawingo Dr. intersection for traffic calming and speed reduction; the above mentioned Sagamore West sidewalk additions; and \$380,000 worth of street resurfacing (2.25 miles) throughout the city. The planning and design of projects that will continue into 2006 included: safety improvements to Sycamore Lane; the construction of Tapawingo South; Salisbury Street Safety Improvements (which will be discussed briefly tonight); and the reconstruction of Cumberland Avenue.

In addition to these many projects, the Engineering Department has directed a review of parking needs and standards in the Village. A committee composed of Village property owners, library staff, local residents, Purdue staff and students helped direct and provide input for the study. A final report will be presented in March.

The City's proposed annexation of 1173 acres has also involved staff from each city department. This process began in November but will continue well into 2006. Providing services and infrastructure to the annexed area will keep all of our departments busy in the coming years, but will allow us to be involved in the decision-making as growth occurs.

Design engineering by Greeley and Hansen continues on the Western Interceptor Sewer project. Plans should be complete early this year, with construction beginning as early as this summer. Progress was finally achieved, through the persistence of Dave Buck and David Downey, on coordinating the sewer project with the State's US 231 road

project. We have submitted a justification for INDOT approval and believe this to be the last step in gaining approval for construction coordination.

We also anticipate receiving approval this spring from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management for the renovation of the digesters at the Wastewater Treatment Utility. Construction should begin this year. The Western Interceptor and digester renovation are the final major projects in completing our long-term Combined Sewer Overflow Control Plan.

Work continues on developing the new stormwater ordinance required under the federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Phase II regulations. A fee schedule for new construction projects, plan review and construction inspection is currently being developed. Options for implementing and managing a stormwater utility were discussed in the fall and will continue this spring.

Supporting the stormwater and wastewater activities, the Street and Sanitation Department collected 338 tons of sand, dirt and debris from our 82 miles of roads in 2005, helping to keep the Wabash River clean. Six employees collected 516 tons of leaves - that this year managed to all come down over one weekend - and removed 32 dangerous or dying trees. Our lone mechanic services all city vehicles and repairs and constructs numerous pieces of equipment, saving the city countless dollars that would otherwise be used in the purchase of new parts and equipment. Our one traffic technician maintains all of our street signals and in 2005 replaced all traffic lights with LEDs, cutting our electric rate in half.

West Lafayette residents recycled 1,962 tons of recyclable material in 2005, our 15th year of the city recycling program. That collection generated \$92,809 in revenue and saved the city \$73,378 in tipping fees at the landfill. During the 15 years of the program, recycling has had an economic impact of \$1.8 million - from revenue generated and tipping fees saved.

The beautification of the city continued this year with Operation Releaf and the planting of 114 trees by the West Lafayette Tree Fund. Volunteers and city staff also pruned 1,003 trees. A city-wide street tree inventory was completed with the assistance of students at Purdue University and a Tree Steward manual and Street Tree Urban Forest Management Plan, written by Bev Shaw in the Department of Development, was adopted. Beautification efforts by city residents were recognized throughout the year with the Community Beautification Award. Another very deserving recipient will be recognized tonight.

The city's expanding trail network, under the skillful leadership of Park Superintendent, Joe Payne, continues to be well used and appreciated by our citizens. The Northwest Greenway Trail network was extended in 2005 east from Sagamore Parkway along Cumberland Avenue and southeast along Kent Avenue to a new trailhead park area at State Farm Insurance; south from Westminster Village to Sagamore Park Centre; and east from Cumberland Park along Kalberer Road to Soldiers Home Road.

Trees, shrubs and grasses were planted along the Cumberland and Kent trail, in Cumberland Park and along Kalberer Road.

Activity along the Wabash Heritage Trail corridor included dedication of the Wabash Heritage Trail Overlook (in cooperation with the Lafayette Rotary Clubs), reconstruction of the site for a new trailside park at the Wabash Pond, and continuation of tree planting at the Harrison Bridge interchange. A West Lafayette 2006 Bicycle and Transportation Facilities plan was prepared for use with a grant application request for funding to connect the riverside trail with the Trolley Line Trail in Happy Hollow Park, as well as to guide future development of the overall trail network.

Tapawingo Park continues to be a hub of community activity. Events occurring in the park this year included the Earth Day Eco-convergence, Taste of Tippecanoe, De-trash the Wabash, Wabash Riverfest and Dancing in the Streets. The Riverside Skating Center is enjoying another popular winter season, with attendance up 20% over last year. Additional riverfront activity will occur with the proposed Purdue University/community crew facility on the Burnham's site and the development efforts of the Wabash River Enhancement Corporation and their director, Stan Lambert.

The Celery Bog added a 10-acre parcel of land through a donation by Wal-Mart, while planting and vegetation management efforts continued. Benches were installed along the Cattail Trail and footpaths constructed along the wetlands.

Neighborhood park development included the completion of construction in Dubois Park and the purchase of new playground equipment for Lommel Park.

The Morton Community Center continues to grow as one of the centers of the community. The 11th Global Fest, the spring dance recital, "Seeing Jazz", and the Wabash Area Lifetime Learning Association classes were among the highlights of activities in 2005. Recreational programs and classes continue to evolve to meet resident demand. Grade school sports activities, in cooperation with the West Lafayette Community School Corporation, provide children the opportunity to learn to enjoy tennis, track, basketball, wrestling and soccer.

2005 was a productive year for the City of West Lafayette. We accomplished much while keeping our tax rate low, and made significant progress in addressing our pension obligations. We begin 2006 knowing another year of careful management will be necessary to accomplish the tasks set before us. With the help of excellent department heads, the Council and you, the citizens, we will continue to move forward to reach our goals. Together we can continue to make West Lafayette a great place to live.

Thank you.