

## **2017 State of the City Mayor Brian Traugott**

I have had the honor of giving several of these State of the City remarks, and I find that they are ideal when it comes to gauging what we have done and what we want to do. The speeches are both a scoreboard and a game plan.

There is no doubt that 2016 was a year of many successes for Versailles, and with the future looking bright, I am proud to declare that the state of the city is strong.

It's strong because of the Council members sitting around this table. Thank you for your willingness to sacrifice your time and talents – and sometimes your sanity – to serve this community we all love.

Our city is strong because of the professionalism of our department heads and their leadership and willingness to continuously improve.

It's also strong-because of the city employees who show up every day to provide public services and who do so in such a seamless manner that we must sometimes remind ourselves to not take them for granted.

Most importantly, our city is strong because of the 9,100 plus people who live here and who, in ways large and small, make our community truly second to none. I couldn't be more proud of all that we've done together.

Highlighting success is good, but knowing this council and department heads as I do, they would prefer the time I focus on this to be a little like my workouts: Short, sweet, and leave you breathless. They believe, as I do, that the

best way to celebrate what we've done is to look ahead and decide how we can build upon these accomplishments. It has been said that it's easy to steer a ship when the sea is calm, and I can certainly attest to that. We must not let this lull us into believing the seas will always remain calm, however. It's our responsibility to strengthen this proverbial ship even more before an inevitable storm hits again.

Our first priority – the first priority of any government – is public safety. In Versailles, I'm proud to say that 2016 was very productive on this front, and that positive momentum will continue through this calendar year.

Our fire department, for example, applied for and received a SAFER grant from the federal government that will allow Chief Wainscott to finally provide the four-person crew that is mandated for firefighter safety. This grant will cover the cost of three additional firefighters for a two-year period. This fulfills a long-term goal of the department, and I'm pleased that within a matter of weeks, our shifts will be fully staffed.

Progress continues on construction of a training tower at Station 3. We still have \$121,000 that was awarded from the State Fire Commission, and we will have a ground-breaking after resolving some small details.

The City has also applied for grant funding to purchase a new ladder truck for our fire department. With a multi-story hotel soon to be built and the recent fire at McCauley Feed fresh in our memory, a reliable ladder truck with a longer reach becomes much more critical.

At the urging of the Fire Chief, I am also proposing consideration of an ordinance that would require Knox boxes at certain commercial structures. Making it possible for first responders to access these facilities after-hours in an emergency will better protect property and reduce the likelihood of damaging doors to gain entry when fire alarms are triggered.

With that in mind, our fire department has started responding to all calls for emergency medical services within the city, meaning that run volume has increased tremendously. The staff is handling this change well. Our firefighters are trained EMTs as well, therefore we are providing the best service for our taxpayers.

On the police side of the public-safety equation, the past twelve months have proven transformative. We recently unveiled the Versailles Police App for smart phones, which is providing citizens with information and which also allows them to provide tips to law enforcement while maintaining their anonymity, if they wish.

Chief Fugate purchased additional body cameras this past year in order to continue increasing the number of officers wearing these devices. This provides another level of protection for police and public alike.

Recognizing that heroin use is ravaging the lives of so many Kentuckians, including many in our community, the Versailles Police Department has entered into a Drug Task Force with other law enforcement agencies in our Judicial Circuit. This provides added manpower to investigate and charge these reprehensible dealers who are profiting from this deadly addiction.

At the same time, Chief Fugate has applied for funding to equip our officers with doses of Narcan, the medicine used to revive victims of opiate overdoses and which has saved countless lives. This protects our own officers who might come in contact with these new more potent opiates.

Later tonight, I'll ask the Council to approve spending funds to equip bait cars. These vehicles are modified in an effort to make it easier to catch persons who break into vehicles or attempt to steal them. These crimes against property will not be tolerated.

The biggest news for this department is the recently proposed purchase of the old St. Leo School as the location for a new state-of-the-art police station. This will allow the city to control the destiny of a gateway location into downtown and provide the first brand new station our department has ever occupied. This facility will be extremely energy efficient, architecturally appealing, and will provide adequate space tailored to the needs of our department. To this end, I have signed Executive Order 2017-2 creating the Committee to Design and Construct Versailles Law Enforcement Building. Councilwoman Miller, who has spent countless hours pursuing this project, will co-chair the committee along with Chief Fugate.

We have had another successful year on the economic development front. This Council approved the proposal to streamline our economic development operations for all three governmental bodies and continue our successes. While Craig McAnally's contract has lapsed, John Soper is providing services to new businesses interested in locating here and those that currently call Woodford County home. He has taken the issue of workforce development seriously and is

currently coordinating a first – and hopefully annual – Industry Day where high school students can learn about manufacturing jobs within Woodford County that provide a good standard of living.

More Than a Bakery is under construction and will soon start operations. They've already proven they are going to be a great corporate citizen by showcasing their generosity in many ways. They will begin with 160 employees and quickly get to 310. Yokohama, a longtime industrial resident, has received incentives to add an additional 134 to their payroll.

Another new project, the Holiday Inn Express, should break ground within the next two to three months. This will give us the overnight lodging many have asked for over the years and will provide significant revenue for our Tourism Commission.

There still exists a world of potential on the Edgewood property. Conversations continue about how best to use the 118 acres of proposed industrial land, with the primary user still being an agricultural-industrial complex. A new and improved Bluegrass Community Hospital still hangs in the balance, as well. Hopefully the litigation surrounding it will prove to be more speed bump than roadblock.

In addition to these aforementioned examples, we have seen a steady increase in the number of new small businesses opening in Versailles, and we will continue providing support to these enterprises in the future.

It's common sense, but a government cannot be effective unless it is also efficient. That is what the citizens of Versailles deserve and what we constantly

strive for. As such, I was proud that the audit report for the City of Versailles, which was presented in December, was as good as it gets.

City Clerk Allison White's oversight of our revenues and recordkeeping and her and other department heads making sure our budget stays on track throughout the fiscal year, led to that flawless report from the auditors. We're aware that these tax dollars belong to all citizens, which is why we manage them conservatively. Our budget situation is in great shape as a result and should stay that way for the foreseeable future. In an attempt to better understand our long-term outlook, I am following the advice of Councilman Kerkhoff and creating a Task Force to examine our revenue projections until 2027; this group will also look at financing our necessary capital expenditures over the next decade.

Keeping in line with a long-term priority of mine, we are continuing our move toward more energy-efficient operations. This past year we have updated our HVAC units downstairs in City Hall and will be moving to programmable thermostats throughout. Public Works Director Bart Miller has shepherded a grant application to replace outdated windows at City Hall, which are more than 90 years old; and in the very near future, we will examine proposals to modernize our downtown street lights and the lights in government owned buildings. We will continue to work with KU as they move towards LED street lights.

The second year of the Versailles Youth Council has proven to be a success. Chaired by Matti Springate, the Council consists of many bright and engaged Woodford County High School students who are committed to taking an active role in their government and community. This council will be renewed for the 2017-2018 school year.

Department heads and I have spent many hours over the past several months reviewing and updating our personnel policy, with assistance from the League of Cities. The Administrative & Legal Committee will soon have a draft of that policy, and after their review this Council will be asked to consider the recommended changes. After that, I will ask the Council to approve retaining the services of KLC to review and rewrite our code of ethics to make Versailles a Certified City of Ethics, joining only 14 other cities in the entire state that have achieved this status.

The City of Versailles' obligation relating to the bond for the construction of Falling Springs Rec Center expires in FY 20. In anticipation of that, I will propose escrowing funds for major repairs of that structure. We will begin with conservative amounts and once that bond is retired will reevaluate the funding level. We know that we will need to expend funds to maintain that gem of an asset, and we should do so responsibly and with foresight.

I am also renewing our efforts to have a discussion about merged government by asking the Council to again consider an ordinance that creates a commission to study a unified government. I don't know if this type of government is right for Versailles or Woodford County, but I would like an independent commission to examine it. The worst that could happen is that we realize more opportunities to work together and provide more efficient services to our respective constituencies. My hope is that the county will participate this time. I believe that it is imprudent to not consider the potential savings and opportunities to make government operate leaner.

Finally, I am going to request an opinion from the Attorney General regarding the potential for term limits for the office of Mayor. The majority of the legal analysis indicates that it creates a qualification for office contrary to state law and the Constitution of Kentucky. If the Attorney General determines it would not be unlawful, I will recommend an ordinance to that effect. This would bring Versailles in line with Kentucky's constitutional offices and the United States' president. While I believe there is benefit to having a Mayor who has years of experience heading city government, I give more merit to the potential that fresh eyes could bring to this position.

In the public works department, Director Bart Miller and his staff have operated smoothly throughout the year, continuing extensive improvements to the wastewater collection system that will help reduce inflow and infiltration, completing the third of four phases. This year, they will begin the rehabilitation and expansion of the wastewater treatment plant – the largest project in the City's history. Councilman Roberts will continue as chair of the Council's Water & Sanitary Sewer Committee and will keep us apprised of the progress.

A few moments ago, I noted the planned police station on the north side of downtown. There are many other items on the list as well when it comes to the city's beautification and accessibility. There are the new Welcome to Versailles signs, which make a positive first impression to people entering our community. We have also applied for a grant to create a walking path along the U.S. 60 bypass and this year will construct a new sidewalk linking Cedar Ridge and Rose Ridge subdivisions with South Main St. and Falling Springs Blvd. We are also partnering with the Fiscal Court to build a much needed sidewalk along Simmons Street and

Huntertown Road. That project will positively impact many residents and get us closer to full walkability within our city.

We have an active group in Woodford County working with regional partners to promote an increase in the number and connectivity of trails, and that work should continue. I feel confident that this Council is willing to do our part to make that project a reality.

Many of the calls I get relate to nuisance code violations. Councilwoman Bradley has and will undoubtedly continue to hold me accountable on this subject. Late last year this Council took the appropriate action of creating a code enforcement board. This will put sufficient teeth into our enforcement of nuisance violations and help clean up Versailles. To further this goal, I will propose including necessary funding in the upcoming budget to employ a full-time code enforcement officer within the Versailles Police Department. That is the final step necessary to prove that we are serious about maintaining our attractiveness. I will instruct the code officer to make no comment on my taste in clothes.

On a related matter, I will ask the Council once again to consider enacting ordinances to regulate poultry within the city limits. We need to strike a balance so people who desire farm fresh eggs in their backyard do so in a way that minimizes the inconvenience to their neighbors.

Additionally, we should stand ready to enact an ordinance that mirrors the one proposed in Lexington that regulates the delivery of unsolicited materials in our yards and driveways. These are unsightly, unsafe to homeowners, and pose a threat to our storm water collection systems.

I will also ask the Streets and Stormwater Committee to consider enacting rules concerning city streets and rights of way, especially ones that strengthen the obligation of contractors that make cuts into them. We can no longer tolerate unsatisfactory repairs. I also want to see regulations implemented regarding dumpsters and storage containers as they relate to our rights of way as a means of improving vehicular and pedestrian safety.

On the issue of mobility, we will soon have complete connectivity between the Kroger shopping center and Versailles Center. This will help with the flow of traffic in that part of town. To assist with safety and accessibility, I am asking the Council to consider removing the option to turn left onto U.S. 60 from Market Place by the Kroger fuel center. It is an unnecessary hazard since a signaled exit exists 600 feet down the road.

I have worked with Paul Simmons and private engineers to reengineer the area between Wilson Avenue and Marsailles Road. The proposal that is included with your materials would shift the four lanes of U.S. 60, straighten the curve coming from the bypass onto U.S. 60, and change the signal timing. This would bring improved safety and convenience to this area of Versailles. Figuring out a way to incorporate an access road on the south side of 60 would be an optimal addition. This is by no means a perfect solution to this problem, but it is a proposal intended to generate discussion and hopefully a plan we can all support. Ultimately, it's the decision of the state Transportation Cabinet, and funds exist in the current road plan to get this moving.

Speaking of new infrastructure, I want to reiterate my support for the Northwest Connector Road. Losing the funding for this project in the state's

current road plan is a setback, but a proposal that has survived for well over 50 years can weather this. I believe it is the only solution that will improve mobility on Main Street and allow us to have a more vibrant and walkable downtown free from problems caused by traffic and idling vehicles. I strongly encourage our representatives in Frankfort to work toward finding a solution, and if they or the Transportation Cabinet can present a better option, I would love to see it.

When it comes to improving quality of life, the City Council has also taken great steps to help the most vulnerable within our community. The City purchased the Versailles.Care and Woodford.Care domain names, and our portal for services that are available to Woodford County residents in need will soon go live. This will highlight services that address everything from domestic violence and substance abuse to helping veterans and those who are homeless. I give credit to Susan Hughes with Bluegrass Community Action and Tony Hardin with the Ministerial Association for their tireless work on behalf of our most needy citizens.

During the upcoming budget cycle, I will propose that we provide some funding to the Court Appointed Special Advocates, CASA, who provide advocacy to abused and neglected children in the family court system. There were almost 90 substantiated cases of abuse and neglect of children in Woodford County in the last calendar year, and a majority were within our boundaries. CASA's entry into Woodford County would model its successful entrance into Bourbon County, with funding split evenly between the city and county. There are many CASA volunteers who live in Woodford County, but serve children in the Fayette County Court System. Let's allow them to serve children from our own community.

We all realize that quality affordable housing in Versailles, both for sale and for rent, is a needed commodity. We owe a debt of gratitude to Holly Weidemann and AU Associates for their work at the Versailles Elementary School and the affordable rental units in that adaptive reuse project. Also, at the end of 2016 this Council approved the rezoning to R-4 of 30+ acres off of Falling Springs Blvd to be used for an Anderson Communities apartment complex. We must continue to promote adequate and available housing for all income levels.

Another type of vulnerable creature is our 4-legged friends. During these recent periods of extreme cold, it is discouraging to drive by and see chained dogs in yards for extended periods of time. I will ask the Administrative & Legal Committee to look at proposing minimum care standards for domestic dogs and cats. They are God's gift for companionship and sport, and the least we can do is protect them from extreme temperatures and negligent care.

To many, downtown remains the community asset that needs attention to reach its full potential. We have wonderful merchants, restaurants and top-notch events, including the crowd-pleasing Spark Versailles event, the Fourth of July celebration, Twilight Festival, block parties throughout the summer and a well-attended and entertaining Christmas parade. Still, we lack a 'game changer.' That is why our attention this year should focus on this area.

The new police station will improve the entrance to downtown from the west, and McCauley Feed has made their corner look amazing. We have turned a gravel pit on Rose Hill into a useful parking lot through a successful public-private-partnership with Citizens Commerce. I believe we should look at touching up the Coca-Cola mural next door to City Hall as well as investigate sponsoring murals

elsewhere downtown. We have a tremendous pool of local artistic talent who would be eager to assist.

The budget proposal this spring will also contain funding for a part-time downtown events coordinator. This person will represent the City on all downtown event planning and execution. This position is not intended to take the place of the wonderful volunteers who make all of these successful events happen, but will serve as glue to hold everything together. Councilman Coleman has done a great job over the past few years with his active oversight of many of these events, but his new role will limit his time.

We are in discussions with a private entity to provide free Wi-Fi access in our downtown area. Councilwoman Miller initiated this project and it looks like it may become a reality with very little expense borne by the taxpayers.

Beyond these recommendations, I am also announcing the creation of a Downtown Planning Advisory Committee to be chaired by Councilwoman Dake. This group will look at strategies to improve our downtown and make it more attractive for residential and commercial purposes. They will examine the feasibility of establishing a downtown TIF district and seeing what else we can do to maximize our assets. We must also not lose sight of our vision to have a public downtown gathering place and improved permanent home for our farmers market.

Tonight I have acknowledged many successes and provided a litany of action items for the coming year. A vast majority of these items are such that opposition will be minimal, if at all. On those few things where citizens disagree,

we must make a concerted effort to debate our differences passionately yet politely.

Our state political system has gotten about as bad as that at the national level. We absolutely cannot allow those influences to dominate our local politics. This is something I realized a while ago that I needed to improve upon personally, and am now much more aware of the fact that good and reasonable people can have polar opposite opinions on a public issue - and neither side is evil nor corrupt.

Dr. David Gray Adler, a Professor of Government at Boise State University, published a list of five suggestions to follow to improve our civic discourse, and I think they should be the foundation of all discussion regarding our government. Number 1, we should stop political labeling. He characterized this as establishing self-fulfilling prophecies. If you label someone's beliefs a certain way, you get hung up on that detail instead of the substance of the discussion.

Second, he suggested that we listen more. To do otherwise, he said, is arrogant, and he noted that sometimes listening to an opposing side leads us to change our minds and other times strengthens our own positions. Either of these results is acceptable.

Third, he said we must respect facts and not distort the other side. Alternative facts and hyperbole play no role in constructive discussions.

Fourth, he counseled that we should avoid the politics of destruction. While elected officials often discuss and decide upon very important issues, politics itself is not a war and shouldn't be treated as such. We don't want

to ruin any opportunity to form alliances on later issues on which we might agree with a prior political foe.

Lastly, he wrote that we should avoid ideological rigidity and allow ourselves to compromise. All of us - to a person - want to see Versailles be the best that it can be. We might not agree on what that exactly means, and even if we do, we would likely have some disagreement on how to get there. That does not undercut the need to work together if we want to accomplish great things.

Now that the sermon is over, let's get to work tonight, and when it is time to give this speech next year, I hope I have to take twice as long listing our accomplishments!

## ACTION ITEMS FOR 2017 FROM BRIAN TRAUGOTT'S STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

- Construct fire training tower at Station 3 (core drilling is completed and project is moving forward.)
- Purchase new ladder truck (grant is being considered by proper funding agency; if that isn't successful we will examine other options.)
- Knox box ordinance (Police & Fire Committee will consider)
- Continue purchasing body cameras for police (Chief Fugate will do as asset forfeiture funds are available)
- Equip police officers with Narcan (Chief Fugate has applied for funding)
- Equip "bait cars" to assist with stopping car break-ins (Council may approve tonight)
- Proceed with construction of new police station (Executive Order 2017-2 created committee to handle details of this project)
- Make Industry Day an annual event (John Soper & EDA are working with local manufacturing firms and school district)
- Analyze future revenues and expenditures (Executive Order 2017-3 created a Task Force to accomplish this)
- Improve energy efficiency (grant is being considered by proper funding agency; larger plans will continue by Mayor & department heads and appropriate funding will be requested in budget)
- Update personnel policy (Administrative & Legal Committee will review and recommend final document to Council)
- Certified City of Ethics (will begin immediately upon adoption of revised personnel policy)
- Escrow funds for Falling Springs repairs (will be included in budget recommendation)
- Unified Government Commission (Council will consider ordinance)
- Mayoral term limits (Attorney General opinion is requested)
- Begin work on WWTP rehab & expansion (Water & Sanitary Sewer Committee and appropriate staff will oversee)
- U.S. 60 bypass walking path (grant is being considered by proper funding agency)
- Sidewalk on Old Dry Ridge Road (grant has been approved and construction will begin in the spring)
- Sidewalk along Simmons Street and Huntertown Road (grant has been approved and construction will begin in the spring)
- Full-time code enforcement officer (will be included in budget recommendation)
- Urban poultry ordinance (Administrative & Legal Committee will consider)
- Ordinance restricting unsolicited materials in driveways and on lawns (will mimic actions of Lexington's Urban County Council)
- Rights of way ordinance (Streets & Stormwater Committee will consider)
- No left turn from Market Place onto U.S. 60 (Streets & Stormwater Committee will consider)
- Reengineering of U.S. 60 from bypass to Marsailles Road
- Continue discussion of Northwest Connector Road
- Woodford.care website (Mayor will work with Brian Hawker to finalize)
- CASA funding (will be included in budget recommendation)

- Affordable housing
- Animal care ordinance (Administrative & Legal Committee will consider)
- Explore possibilities to improve existing mural and create new ones
- Downtown events coordinator (will be included in budget recommendation)
- Free downtown Wi-Fi
- Downtown Master Plan (Executive Order 2017-4 created the Downtown Planning Advisory Committee)