

Composing these remarks is honestly one of the favorite things I get to do. It is fun to look back over the past year and see what has been accomplished, and think about what is coming up in the year ahead.

Let me start the first part of my comments by saying 2017 has been another year of great successes. People are working well together, things are getting done, and government is operating in a way that every citizen of Versailles can be proud of.

Tonight I will break down the discussion by function of government, and briefly discuss our achievements and lay out a vision for 2018.

I'll begin with public safety, which is one of the primary functions of local government. Versailles Police Department has had a good year. Progress on the new police station – while maybe slower than we would like – is occurring and ground should be broken in March. It should be reiterated that this is an investment that is intended to last decades. Cutting corners and reducing functionality to save dollars would be unwise and lead to more costs in the future. This administration and this City Council have proven that they are willing to make the tough but necessary decisions for a better future instead of kicking the proverbial problem cans down the road that would cost more in the long run. Chief Fugate has been involved with every detail of this project and is to be commended for his commitment to quality and affordability.

In another important law-enforcement matter, the police merger has been renewed, and the final execution of the document should occur any day. This new agreement gives the stability our law enforcement officials deserve and guarantees a high level of service for all of Woodford County for the foreseeable future. The opiate problem continues to take too many lives and lead to other societal problems such as theft and other crimes. While our struggle continues, it is worth noting that we have the lowest drug overdose death rate of local citizens when compared to all of our surrounding counties, and we are the only county with a reduction from 2015 to 2016, the last full year these statistics are available. There is no question that increased awareness from RAW has had an impact. While the battle to eradicate this epidemic must take place on many fronts, including education and treatment, local law enforcement has taken great strides to ramp up drug enforcement. We are seeing results from this new approach to enforcement, and the long-term implications should be extremely positive. In fact, in 2017 Versailles Police issued about 320 drug charges in Woodford County. The long and short of it is that if you are here to sell these poisons to our residents, you are not welcome, and you will be caught.

Recently our police officers started carrying Narcan in their cruisers. Maybe not surprisingly it was used during the first couple days of the new policy. We will continue this policy not only because saving a life – regardless of circumstance - is the right thing to do –but

primarily because some of these potent drugs can affect our officers by absorption through the skin or accidental inhalation, thereby requiring a dose of this lifesaving medicine themselves. Another change we intend to implement this year is creation of a community service officer. This person would be responsible for attending functions in our elementary schools, conducting neighborhood meetings, and assisting in providing resources to those fighting drug addictions, among other things. I believe we have identified some savings to more than offset the costs of this position.

In another measure that directly affects those officers on duty, we continue the process of providing all of our officers with body cameras, and currently more than 75% of patrol staff are equipped with this technology.

Our fire department continues to improve its already exemplary service to our community. The response time, from dispatch to arrival, for all calls averaged just less than three minutes in 2017. Considering that our call volume has increased dramatically in the last three years, this response time is remarkable and shows that our community is well protected. It is also a testament to the dedication and professionalism of our Firefighters.

The three firefighters hired with the SAFER grant are on board and performing well, bringing us into compliance with the two-in two-out OSHA rule for firefighters. The concrete pad has also been poured for the training tower and Chief Wainscott and Fire Department leadership is using a more cost effective approach to complete main structure construction by the end of March. This training complex will provide our department with the much needed ability to train our personnel with multiple hands on scenarios. Training Firefighting personnel is a primary mission of our Fire Department leadership. Department personnel are currently given thousands of training hours to prepare them for all hazards they may encounter.

We are actively exploring options for the purchase of a Ladder Truck. This addition to our firefighting equipment is needed to enhance our ability to serve both our citizens and our business and industrial customers.

Our Fire Department is planning to implement a business survey program to help them operate while protecting their customers. This survey program will be available to our residents as well upon their request. Our department is also continuing to expand the countywide smoke detector program. The continuing goal of this program is that every resident has the basic protection of smoke detectors.

I also hope that we can reach an agreement on a Knox Box ordinance this year, at least with language to require new structures to be equipped with this device so that property damage is reduced when an alarm is activated and our crews respond.

It has been a productive year on the public works front. Bart Miller continues to lead this department with the utmost professionalism. Construction began in earnest on the wastewater treatment plant upgrades, with an estimated completion date in the fall of 2019. This investment will serve our customers for decades without need for further significant expenditure. The final rate increase that was necessary to pay for this project, which will also modernize our technology, reduce spillages into Glenn's Creek, and bring us into compliance with the Clean Water Act, will go into effect next month. While this poses an inconvenience to some, it still keeps our rates in line with other central Kentucky cities. In fact, as of November of last year, our sewer rates were 4% lower than the average of the cities with a population greater than 2,500 in the Bluegrass Area Development District. As a source of additional funds for capital improvements, and to negate the requirement that rates be raised again in the near future for collection improvements, this Council wisely implemented an Impact Fee to be assessed against new construction. These new customers, who haven't had the burden of paying for existing improvements, will contribute to the cost of those improvements which will specifically benefit them. This protects the equity that long-time residents have in our system. I appreciate Councilman Roberts' leadership of the water and wastewater committee during this process, as it involved a lot of technical material and number crunching. Just as our sewer rates remain competitive with other localities, our water rates continue to perform very well. In fact, our rates for water are 11% below similarly sized cities in the Bluegrass ADD. Investments in our water and sewer infrastructure, while not glamorous things to talk about, are imperative. Recent events with infrastructure problems in Lexington and other communities illustrate some of the problems that can arise when system improvements are delayed.

With that in mind, stormwater issues are being addressed in part by the recent transfer of over 4 acres of property on Bellview Avenue to the City of Versailles. In addition, the Planning & Zoning Commission agreed with our recommendations and improved the language in the subdivision regulations relating to surety requirements by including stormwater improvements in the calculation; doing this will minimize the risk of taxpayers holding the bag on new development infrastructure. City officials, along with our contracted stormwater engineer are partnering with County Engineer Buan Smith and Planning Director Pattie Wilson on a comprehensive update of the technical details of stormwater management.

As far as the rest of public works goes, our cemetery continues to operate efficiently and provide tremendous service to families during their most difficult times. I still believe we should look into constructing an urn mausoleum at Rose Crest Cemetery to provide yet another option for memorializing cremains.

Our streets continue to be well maintained, and the Council supported blocking left turns out of Market Place by the Kroger Fuel Center, thereby improving a dangerous intersection before a fatal accident occurs. On a matter that affects all city streets, we enacted an extensive and comprehensive ordinance regulating utility work in our public rights-of-way, strengthening the requirements that utility companies repair our streets and sidewalks to the way they found them. Finally, we will also continue monitoring statutory and regulatory changes to make it more cost efficient to convert our street lights to the more efficient LED variety. That will remain a goal of mine until it is completed.

Our economic development operations, under the leadership of John Soper and the rest of the EDA, continue to see successes. A lot of what we all do here is understandably linked to other areas of our operations, and economic development generates the revenue needed to not only provide necessary services, but also those extras that the citizens of Versailles have come to appreciate.

Our newest large-scale business, More Than a Bakery completed construction of their \$50 million facility and began production last year. They will double their current employment to 100 within the first few months of this year. We are still excited that they chose us, and I was encouraged to find a quote from company head Bill Quigg detailing how he lived in Versailles for two years before the final decision to locate was made. He quickly learned what we all know – that Versailles is second to none in quality of life and friendliness.

Our existing manufacturing firms had an equally exciting year. Quad Graphics invested \$70 million in their Versailles facility in the last two years and added 100 employees. They anticipate continuing to expand their investment at this plant. Ledvance invested millions into their operations and transferred some employees from their Winchester facility. Yokohama has invested \$4.4 million in new equipment at their Versailles location and is in the processing of adding 130 new employees. Ruggles Sign continues to excel in the sign making industry, bringing positive attention to Versailles by being a global player in their industry as well as expanding their workforce. They are rapidly adapting to a changing storefront retail environment and we look forward to continued success. NSG is also continuing to go strong and providing very high paying manufacturing positions. They have recently added a new production line for heads-up display windshields that keeps the plant relevant with the latest technology. These and other economic gains have proven that Versailles and Woodford County can and do attract private capital. Making sure our workforce is equipped to fill these positions, the focus continued on workforce development. The inaugural industry day where high school students were exposed to the jobs available in our community was a great success and planning for this year is well underway. The fall of 2017 also saw a Teacher Industry Day, where our high school faculty members were given tours of local manufacturing plants so they

too can know what possibilities exist for their students. Bridge The Gap, which is a diverse group of private citizens, education professionals, and government leaders, continues to work to tear down all barriers to employment for people willing to do the work. In that vain, we conducted a successful expungement workshop last year where lawyers were provided to determine if people with criminal records were eligible under the new laws and get the process started for them. More than forty participants met with attorneys or took the GED pre-test at this event. Look for more programs like this in 2018.

There are many other developments that showcase our community's economic diversity and success. Frontier Nursing, for example, has acquired the old Methodist Home and the Brook Golf Course and is beginning their investment to reuse both of these properties. Although this property isn't in the city limits, serving as host for their nursing students is a great honor for this community and they are a welcomed addition.

The recent opening of the Versailles Brewing Company and the upcoming addition of Spark Community Café illustrate that new and innovative concepts are well-received by our local and regional population. The first adds our community to the growing list of those with their own microbrewery, while the café will provide great food with a social-conscience bent.

From country cooking to gourmet burgers, from fantastic breakfasts to affordable lunches and delicious dinners, Versailles is fast becoming one of the premier dining destinations in Kentucky.

The recent sale of the shopping center where Kmart is housed, meanwhile, threw us all for a loop with a purchaser that came out of nowhere. It remains my position that the space in that shopping center is best suited for retail based on the current zoning and adjacent use and see very little light in the gap on that stance. I remain optimistic that Lifepoint will soon be able to begin construction of their new facility on U.S. 60 and am grateful for what they have done for this community and their willingness to exercise patience and keep their investment here for the foreseeable future. Later in this meeting we will recognize them for their new achievement as an accredited chest pain center

Tourism remains a key focus of the City of Versailles. Councilman Kerkhoff, as chair of the Tourism Commission, is relentless in the pursuit to promote Versailles, Midway and Woodford County as a tourist destination. The Holiday Inn Express opening later this summer is huge for this. It is projected to almost quadruple the revenue of the Tourism Commission, and it will make us a credible trailhead for the Bourbon Trail or Horse Country tours, and provides a place for Woodford County merchants and proprietors to market their establishments to a captive audience. In an effort to further promote Woodford County, and especially Versailles, even more, I am going to request a summit of interested parties on how we can best move

forward. I have been working on a plan to promote Versailles, but it just isn't complete without County and even Midway involvement. Cross promotion helps us all, and this is one issue where lines of ownership aren't drawn and we should work together so we can all benefit. The Tourism Commission should be the catalyst to get this moving, and Ken and I have discussed at length what our next steps should be.

Little else has gotten as much attention in 2017 as downtown Versailles. The Downtown Planning Advisory Committee – affectionately known as DPAC – continues to examine numerous ways to improve our downtown. Councilwoman Dake and her dedicated committee members have expended much energy into exploring ideas, proposing innovative improvements such as the soon to sprout rain gardens on Lexington Street, and soliciting a wide array of input. The thing I'm most excited about is the beginning of a long-term plan to work with Parks & Recreation to maximize the space in Big Spring Park. Creation of this committee, which was done as part of this speech in 2017, has paid tangible dividends. As far as private capital goes, the investments made at the Amsden Building and the opening of the Amsden coffee shop, mercantile exchange, and ShopTwentySomething were a tremendous addition to the South Main and Court St area. Late last week the alcohol license was issued for the Amsden Tavern, which will be opening in the coming weeks. I cannot thank Alex and Emily Riddle enough for taking their chances with this building and am happy to see their investment paying off. Also on Court Street, Councilwoman Miller is leading the charge to partner with the Riddles and others in their new venture with the Methodist Church buildings. Mrs. Miller has long promoted the idea of an outdoor pavilion and event space, and possibilities are looming in this area. I am still committed to increasing the number of downtown murals and am working with our signature industries on a concept to promote Versailles and Woodford County through a downtown outdoor art display. This Council approved the contracting of an events coordinator to help with the organizing and promotion of our many downtown festivals. Elisha Holt with Charismatic Media has hit the ground running and has already planned most of 2018. The VMA – City of Versailles Friday night block parties will return this year, as will the Chamber of Commerce's Twilight Festival on August 25, Art in the Park on May 25 and 26, and the Art in the Park sponsored Fall Festival on September 22. I am excited about building on the many great events and am appreciative of the numerous volunteer hours that go into making each one of these possible.

Youth involvement continues to be a priority of this administration. The Youth Council was reconstituted and is meeting. As in past years, the members of this year's Council are extremely bright and give me optimism for the future of this great community. Expanding opportunities for youth activities in Versailles remains a focus, but it has its challenges. If you ask 100 people what can be done to provide activities for the youth, you will get 101 different recommendations. As someone who grew up in Versailles, I remember the challenges of

finding a place to hang out or find something to do. An idea was presented to me recently of a makerspace in Versailles. Loosely defined as a recreation center with tools, this would be a place where tools are shared between business and youth so students can actually use these expensive items to create and engineer things. Many of these advanced tools would otherwise not be available to a young person outside of school hours, so this would provide that opportunity. This would need to be a collaborative effort, but with the increased focus on S.T.E.M. education in the United States, it is worth pursuing. The Community Activism class at the high school is planning an event – Activate Versailles – to be held downtown on March 23 and 24. It is always enjoyable seeing what this class comes up with every year. For the younger kids, we need to expend some resources for playground equipment that is accessible to children in wheelchairs and also have sensory playground equipment for children with autism or similar conditions. We should explore earmarking extra funding to Parks & Recreation for this equipment.

Lots of other issues that don't fit neatly into any of the aforementioned categories are out there. We have once again applied for grant funding for a walking path on the U.S. 60 bypass on the old railroad bed owned by the city. We applied for an additional grant to replace the sidewalk on both sides of Lexington Street between Locust and Main St. The sidewalk has been completed on Old Dry Ridge Road, providing a safe route for residents of Rose Ridge and Cedar Ridge to get to the existing walking path on 33. The Hometown Road sidewalk project is still proceeding, albeit much slower than anyone expected due to bureaucratic red tape. Magistrate Mary Ann Gill has shepherded this project from a thought to a soon to be reality, and her commitment to this safety-improving project should be applauded. Our code enforcement board has been operational for a full year and is taking their charge seriously. Our police department continues to issue citations where necessary and strongly encourage the owners of these blighted properties to take responsibility and maintain them. There was a committee meeting today to discuss the much anticipated animal ordinance that will regulate the keeping of chickens within the city limits and hopefully prohibit roosters. Also included in that ordinance will be language to establish clear minimum standards of care for our domestic four-legged friends.

There's been another change in this community that hit close to home for me, and that is the recent demolition of the old Middle School. Like many of you, I am a former student who went there and hates to see it its current fate. With that in mind, I applaud the commitment of this Council to seek to preserve the character of Maple Street, and talks are ongoing to make sure that neighbors and the property owner are treated fairly and consistently.

I am working with Magistrate Gary Finnell on a redesign of the island at the entrance of Merewood subdivision and the U.S. 60 bypass. We are exploring options to approve the appearance of that public space with plantings that are easy to maintain.

A large issue that the Finance Committee and I are pursuing – we’re eating it like you would an elephant, doing it one bite at a time – are our options for attracting a third internet and possible second cable television provider into Versailles. This is a complex undertaking that will require a large amount of community buy-in. Our long-term goal is to guarantee that every property within the city limits has access to fast, reliable and affordable internet service. I would like to request that the Finance Committee also reexamine the options for providing public Wi-Fi access in our downtown district. On a related internet matter, the Woodford.Care website is up and running, and changes and additions have been made to it since it went live. There has been an abundance of community discussion regarding unmet needs of people who are struggling in Woodford County. I have spoken with some of the local providers and I’m going to work with this City Council to assess these needs, inventory our resources, and develop any needed plan of action. There are a lot of groups doing a lot of things, all with good intentions, and this approach will allow input from a diverse array of sources and be able to sort through resources, data, and anecdotal examples of the system working or not working. Councilman Mike Coleman has volunteered to head up these efforts. I have also spoken with Rick McQuady, the affordable housing specialist for LFUCG, and he has agreed to attend a large meeting of interested local officials to better our understanding of options to pursue policies that improve availability of this product and allow more people to stay in Versailles at prices they can afford. In an effort to reduce the transmission of diseases among drug abusers and protect innocent citizens from contamination, this Council approved the Harm Reduction Syringe Exchange Program. The Woodford County Health Department, which does a fantastic job promoting community health and providing individualized services, had this program up and running last week. Finally, I intend to renew our commitment to CASA in the upcoming budget proposal. Ninety abused and neglected children in our county would benefit greatly from this service, and the \$20,000 we committed is a small price to pay for that.

Lastly, the administration of government is what ties everything together. We could do nothing if not for the strong financial management of the city, and Clerk Allison White is to be commended for keeping us on the right path. Our recently completed audit was without flaw, and our fund balance – our version of a rainy day fund –increased by almost \$700,000. This is a testament to the strength and integrity of our four department heads and their ability to manage their budgets. We completed a comprehensive update of our personnel policy this year, including changes that benefit both employee and employer. Included among these changes is the guarantee that a veteran that meets the minimum qualifications for the position and applies for the vacancy is guaranteed an interview. They have earned the right to be able

to sell themselves and their qualifications. Integrity and transparency are buzzwords we hear thrown around every couple of years, especially even-numbered years, but they are guiding principles for this administration and Council. We recently became one of 18 cities in the state of Kentucky to earn the designation as a Certified City of Ethics. This was yet another example of the integrity and transparency of this administration and Council. We painstakingly reviewed every facet of our code of ethics, added many additional provisions to criminalize decision-making for personal interest, and pretty much restricted our current and future Mayors from having any financial interests other than the City of Versailles. We hold ourselves to the highest standards of integrity here, and rely on actions instead of words to convey that to Versailles residents.

The Attorney General recently issued an opinion in response to my request about the legality of term limits for the office of Mayor. This is an issue with obvious positive and negative implications, and I would like to see the Administrative & Legal Committee analyze and weigh the consequences and make a recommendation to the full Council.

There are a few other city management points I would like to make. We have had the foresight to begin putting away funds in an escrow account to pay for repairs and capital improvements at Falling Springs, for example, and our decision a few years ago to hire our own IT person has continued to save us money each year and improved our technology services across all departments. That is a key reason why we will soon be accepting credit cards for utility payments at City Hall. I am proud to say that our city employees received a 5% salary increase this year for the first time since I've been here, and department heads showed true leadership by accepting a lower increase. We are truly blessed with the finest employees of any city in the state of Kentucky, and they deserved this adjustment. In addition, we are spending less city tax dollars on employee health insurance this year than last without sacrificing any coverage and, for the fourth year since I've been here, our unemployment insurance assessment has been \$0. I continue to monitor the pension situation through my work with the Kentucky League of Cities and am optimistic that a solution can be reached in Frankfort. There is no doubt that Kentucky state government has a revenue problem that needs to be addressed, and hopefully our state leadership is courageous enough to do the right thing. We need a solution that doesn't bankrupt local governments and realizes the importance of the commitment made to our current public employees and public retirees. The original proposal would not have achieved either goal. I am pleased that Representative Kay has represented Versailles well and been an outspoken advocate for public employees and local governments.

Three weeks ago was Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and while it was a chilly march down Clifton, Rose Hill, and Main, it is always inspiring to reflect on the progress we have made as a

nation and community, and to do some soul searching on how we could do better. In an effort to broaden outreach efforts, I am asking the Administrative & Legal Committee to work on a position description for an assistant for minority empowerment. Councilwoman Bradley and I have discussed this idea and I look forward to seeing this put into place. Over thirty-six hundred Woodford County citizens are classified as minorities. This newly created position would work to make sure all minorities are receiving equal access to local employment, civic affairs, and entrepreneurship. We need to make sure that all citizens are able to enjoy the fruits of this unheralded economic growth. This would not be an enforcement office or a place to field complaints, only to make positive improvements on the path to true equality.

As a sort of pep talk for the Council and department heads, I was inspired by a recent column by my very favorite Herald Leader columnist Paul Prather. In this column he recounted the paradoxical commandments which we have all probably been exposed to. These commandments have wrongly been attributed to Mother Theresa and have been traced back to a Harvard undergraduate named Kent Keith. It would do us all well to look at some of these again. One of them reads "If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway." Another is "What you spend years building might be destroyed overnight. Build anyway." Also "Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you have anyway." Paul sums this all up at the end of his column by saying "Do right because it's right, regardless of what others do and regardless of the outcome." At the risk of having one too many quotes, I was also reminded of these words from President Kennedy: "There are risks and costs to a program of action. But they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction." I applaud this body for their continued willingness to do what is right and not worry about political consequence.

Good advice to kick off this year that will be filled with amazing opportunities...and probably a few challenges.

Last year I closed these remarks by condemning the tone of the political climate at the national and state level, and encouraging us to do better at home. I cited an article on public civility by Dr. David Gray Adler that contained five things we should all do to improve upon this climate. This being an election year, I feel even more compelled to make that plea. Negative attacks on someone's character should not be welcomed in this community. There are plenty of issues to debate without demeaning a candidate or their family. May we continue down this path of polite – yet passionate – discussion and debate of the issues relevant to the citizens of Versailles and set an example for the children of this community that you don't have to tear someone else down in order to build yourself up.

God Bless everyone who works to improve this community, and I look forward to another successful and productive year in the City of Versailles.