

HUNTINGBURG STATE OF THE CITY

August 17, 2015

Mayor Denny Spinner

Members of the Huntingburg City Council, Clerk Treasurer Dippel, city employees, distinguished guests and citizens of Huntingburg, welcome to Old Town Hall. I especially want to welcome my wife Shari and other family and friends who took the time to be here today.

This is my fourth opportunity to deliver a State of the City address as Mayor of the City of Huntingburg. In preparing my remarks for today I reviewed my comments from a year ago. I presented a challenge to our citizens, to the city employees, and to myself. I asked all of us in the coming year to make Huntingburg the best Huntingburg we could be. I said that we needed to face the challenges before us, but we needed to remember all the things we are doing right. Today I am proud to say my call to action was heard. Huntingburg is a stronger community because of the hard work and commitment demonstrated not only by our city employees, but our citizens in the past year.

As I addressed you a year ago, it was a time of great anticipation. We were just weeks away from learning whether Huntingburg would earn the designation as a Stellar Community from the State of Indiana. And on August 14 we did in fact become a Stellar community. This would not have been possible without the hard work, positive leadership, and vision of a committee made up of citizens who truly love Huntingburg and the community as a whole

This was a proud moment in our history. We competed with the best communities in the state and were not lacking in any area. We did not get this designation because we NEEDED it. We got this designation because we DESERVED it. We showed our strength and we demonstrated how we can get stronger. This designation just confirms what everyone who lives and works here already know. HUNTINGBURG IS A STELLAR COMMUNITY!



In earning the designation, we were told by the evaluating committee there was one key element to our success. Community involvement. Huntingburg is a city like no other primarily because of its people. We have a long history of being able to get things done. From the construction of Memorial Gym to the creation of the Events Center and now as we begin the projects that are a part of the Stellar program, Huntingburg has always demonstrated we can get things done.

On the day of the Stellarbration, just outside this building, on what was a very hot day, I asked that the community input that led to this success continue, and in the planning for our first projects, that call has been heard by our citizens.

Two months ago in this same room, the committees working on the plans for a Market Street Park and the 4th Street Heritage trail revealed their design concepts at a public meeting. In excess of 70 citizens attended that meeting. State officials are still impressed in Huntingburg by the amount of community involvement demonstrated by the response.

But the Stellar designation is much more than just getting projects done. The Stellar designation has placed Huntingburg in the forefront in the region and across the state of Indiana. Investment in the city from private industry is growing. Nearly a million dollars has been pledged to the city, not only to build the projects, but to sustain them through a partnership with the Dubois County Community Foundation. Local firms such as OFS Brands, Touch of Class, Uebelhor Developments, Farbest Foods, Steinkamps, Freedom Bank, United Minerals, Kimball International, Masterbrand Cabinets, Jasper Engines, Kimball Electronics, German American and Old National Bank have all become partners in the process. They see Huntingburg as the community of choice for the current and future work force.

Huntingburg is ready to grow. But it must be a controlled and well planned process. Working with Dubois Strong and based on the recent Dubois County Housing Study, Planning Director Paul Lake is reviewing our existing codes and ordinances to determine how the city can spur business and development and make the path easier while still holding to our community standards.

With a renewed interest in Huntingburg, inquiries are coming in. Partnering with the Indiana Municipal Power Agency, Community Development Director Rachel Steckler has developed new promotional pieces to tell the Huntingburg story to business and industry that are looking at Huntingburg and for newcomers to our community. As Community Development Director, Rachel also oversees one of our top incentive tools, the Huntingburg Revolving Loan fund.



Just last week the Fund Committee recommended and the City Council approved a request for funds from a current Fourth Street business that will allow them to purchase the property they have been renting and secure their future in our downtown. Two similar requests are under review by the committee at this time. This shows our business owners are also ready and willing to invest in the vision for our community.

The Stellar projects are at the starting line, but the state of the city in 2015 goes far beyond this exciting and challenging designation. Growth and progress has been evident in many other areas, and it is my privilege today to update you on how our departments and employees have worked together to build up our community.

The strength of a community can be measured by its commitment to public safety. Our investment in those who protect our city is very evident.

The Huntingburg Police department continues to grow in many ways. The most obvious sign of growth is the renovation and expansion of the main police station on 1st Street. Contractors began work on the project that will invest over \$978,000 in the station to provide adequate administrative space, increase training space, and state of the art processing equipment, allowing all the department to do their job more effectively and efficiently. Growth is also seen in the department itself, as another patrol position was added to provide more patrols and more manpower on each shift. Training hours have grown. Under the leadership of Chief Art Parks, every member of the department reached the state minimum for training in the first six months of this year, and more police budget has been focused on keeping our department trained than ever before. We must continue to equip the officers we have. The first phase of a plan to update vital communications equipment has been accomplished by the purchase of four multi-band radios. The need for this upgrade was made obvious during the first ever active-shooter training exercise conducted at our schools in conjunction with the Indiana State Police, Dubois County Sheriff's Department and the Jasper Police Department. A complete upgrade of portable radios for all full-time officers is planned for the next two years.

A similar story can be told about the Huntingburg Volunteer Fire Department. Work began this spring on the expansion of the Fire Station on 11th Street. This \$804,000 project will more than double the size of the station, meeting the need to provide adequate fire protection to the growing industrial and residential areas on the city's north side. A new station requires new equipment. The Huntingburg Redevelopment Commission has approved the bids to purchase a new ladder truck with an estimated cost of \$678,000. The department is growing in manpower, with four new fire fighters added to the department this year.



What is impressive is these new recruits are young men and women who live in and near our community and want to serve the city in this way. The purpose of these expansions is to help the city receive a higher fire insurance rating. Should this rating be achieved, that will result in significant savings for business, industry and homeowners.

Fire Chief Scott Patberg and Risk Management Director Don Foerster worked together this year with Dubois County Emergency Management to bring to Huntingburg a full scale train derailment training exercise. This exercise brought together experts from Norfolk Southern Railway and emergency personnel from across Dubois County and Southern Indiana to test our response to such a situation and prepare our departments to respond appropriately should such an event occur in our city.

The Police Station and Fire Station renovations and new fire equipment is all being accomplished with zero impact on the city tax rate. This work is being done through effective use of the revenues generated through Tax Increment Financing.

The final element of public safety is adequate emergency response. This year the former Gas Department Garage on North Van Buren Street underwent a major renovation that allowed the city to meet its commitment for the Dubois County Ambulance Service to continue to provide 24 hour response in Huntingburg. This station is now the showcase for the county ambulance service and could not have been completed in time and under budget without tremendous contributions by our utility department employees, citizen involvement and without the guidance and leadership of Energy Superintendent John Reutepohler. A dedication ceremony for the station is expected in the next month.

As Mayor I have been honored to represent the City of Huntingburg in many state and regional meetings where economic development and quality of life issues are discussed. In listening to what experts say are key factors to community growth, I have gained an understanding of what the city government role should be in inviting investment to your community. The city should be responsible for creating a secure infrastructure and dependable services that allows the private sector to confidently make decisions that allows their business or industry to grow. From our actions in 2015, I can report to you that strides have been taken to strengthen the infrastructure in Huntingburg. And we have done it with fiscal responsibility in mind.



There has been discussion for years about the water main in our downtown. The 100 plus year old main has served the community well, but it must be addressed if we want our downtown to continue to be vibrant. Steps have been taken to prepare for its repair. Earlier this year, working with a Stellar financial partner, Water bonds that paid for the construction of the filtration plant at the City Lake were refinanced, reducing the interest rate to below two percent. This move not only saved the water utility over \$100,000 in interest, but also freed up nearly \$350,000 of the utility's Debt Service Reserve Funds. This has more than doubled the amount now available in the department's Capital Savings fund. Those funds will be able to be used to address the Fourth Street Water Main Replacement Project. Our approach to this project will be a first of its kind in southern Indiana. Water Superintendent Todd Williams has carefully researched the project and qualified engineering firms have confirmed that by using Cured in Place technology, this major repair will be completed without loss of service to water customers during construction, without disruption to traffic on 4th Street, and in three to four weeks instead of three to four months using traditional methods. Last week Williams viewed a project in Illinois using this technology, where it was demonstrate how feasible such a project can be. He will be before the Utility Board later this month to present his recommendations.

Similar to the work in the water department, we are preparing for a major project in the Wastewater Department. Growth on the north side of town has created the need for a new wastewater main to serve the area. This will represent a four-million dollar investment in this utility. Again, working with a Stellar financial partner, two bonds used to finance previous improvements at the plant were refinanced. The new bond will shorten the bond term by four years and in consolidating the bonds — shrinking them from two to one — Huntingburg will decrease the interest on the bonds by 33 percent, creating a gross savings of over \$326,000. This strengthens the financial status of the Wastewater department and will have a positive effect on any potential rate change to finance the new construction. Superintendent Mike Kemp has created a plan for the new project that will be finalized by the Board of Public works in the coming months.

Meeting the needs of those who face challenges in our community has been a focus and are being addressed through the work being done by Office Manager Sue Tooley, who oversees both the Huntingburg Transit system and ADA compliance issues. Ridership on the Huntingburg Transit vans continues to grow, serving everyone from senior citizens and the workforce to elementary students and children in day care. Boardings in 2015 are up by over 700 compared to the same time in 2014. But a look at the destinations of the riders tells a bigger story. In 2012, only 11 percent of those using the transit system were being taken to their workplace. In 2015, that number is up to 35 percent. This shows how vital this service is in our community.



We have utilized precision cutting technology to have sidewalks meet ADA standards, public walkways in the busy areas of the city, including the city park. Curbed intersections were also brought into compliance, making it easier for those citizens to access the Public Library, City Hall, the Post Office and the Memorial Gym. More sidewalks will get this treatment this year, making our sidewalks more pedestrian friendly.

This ADA work on sidewalks is in addition to the over \$200,000 that was invested in curb and street projects in 2014. Street Superintendent Jason Stamm and his crew paved ten streets, and sidewalks in seven locations were replaced last year, including the completion of the upgrade of Tenth Street east of Van Buren. This project was not only a street project, but included work to improve all utilities serving the northeast side of town. This year's paving schedule calls for at least eight more projects, including major improvements to a pair of highly traveled corridors, Chestnut Street south of 6th Street and First Street east of main.

The Electric Department has drawn to a close a project that has been in process for over 30 years. The conversion of electric lines from 4KV to the higher voltage 12.5 KV began in the early 1980's and was completed in late July. The conversion on the city side of the system will deliver a more steady voltage with very little voltage fluctuations for the customers. Plus many of the 4KV lines were on old poles with small copper lines and old transformers built before 1979, which the EPA banned the use of PCB's in transformers. All of the transformers on the 12.5 KV system have mineral oil in them and are free of PCB'S.

The Gas Department continues to show steady growth in the expansion into new service areas. In the past 12 months, gas department crews have installed over 12 miles of two inch and four inch gas mains adding 45 new customers to the system. That growth will continue as there are plans for an additional four miles of lines this year, reaching a number of substantial local commercial customers.

It was another year of growth for our Parks Department. The walking trail at Niehaus Park was expanded, improvements to two playgrounds at City Park was completed, and the new Gazebo is nearly finished. New poured concrete walls were constructed at League Stadium to enhance the baseball experience and make the facility more secure. Funds for that work were generated by the receipts from ticket sales by the Dubois County Bombers, who brought over 20,000 fans to the venue during the season, ending with an Ohio Valley League Championship.



But a more significant change will occur in our Parks Department next year. Park Director Jim Rueger will be retiring from his position after serving the city for 38 years. Jim has managed, maintained and grown the parks department during his tenure. The Huntingburg City Parks are among the finest in the state and provides our citizens and visitors a safe and comfortable atmosphere to gather and enjoy time with their friends and family. Thank you Jim for all you have done for our city.

These are highlights of what work the City has been doing. But that is just part of the story. As I mentioned earlier, private interest in Huntingburg is evident. In March, groundbreaking ceremonies were held at the former hospital property for The Lofts at St. Joseph's. Miller Valentine group is transforming the abandoned building into 45 Senior Living Apartments, representing an investment of over six-million dollars. As of July 1, Demolition of the existing structure is complete, metal stud framing and rough mechanicals in that portion of the building is in progress and the foundation for new building is in place. M-V-G is still on target to open the new facility in the spring of 2016.

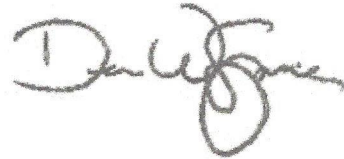
On 4th Street in May, Dubois County's first co-share working space was opened. Current Blend is a collaborative workspace designed to bring entrepreneurs with different skillsets under one roof to promote interaction and business development. The Parker House location was chosen primarily because of its location in the Market Street Park development area. When one of the state's top entrepreneurs, John Wechsler, visited Current Blend last month, he said quote, "When you look at a community of 6,000 people, to think that the community came together to create a place such as Current Blend, it's quite frankly inspiring," Wechsler added, "I mention this to a lot of people when I'm talking about how Indiana can rebuild communities like this with entrepreneurship and innovation at its core."

And just last month, we announced a partnership that will help solve the workforce housing issue facing Huntingburg and Dubois County. "Hunter's Crossing" on the city's north side will be the first major subdivision platted to meet the needs identified in the recent Dubois County housing study. The private partnership between developer Boxer Girl LLC and Jagoe Homes will result in over 100 new homes in our city. The City of Huntingburg's investment in Hunter's Crossing will come in the way of providing access to the new development area, and to the first new park on the City's north side. Working with the developers, the City will be constructing the street that will connect Chestnut Street to the new park, and provide access to the first phase of home development in Hunter's Crossing.



This project meets the criteria set forth in our Stellar Strategic Investment Plan to address the Workforce Housing issue in our region by addressing the critical need for workforce housing for first time home buyers; it promotes workforce growth for Dubois County, it grows the city's tax base; it develops property within corporate limits which minimizes the extension of infrastructure, and it translates to up to \$20 million in private investment in our community.

It was a Stellar year for Huntingburg, and the vision for the future is prepared. So I come before you today with the same challenge I have presented in the past. Let's be the best Huntingburg we can be. Strides have been made, and with the help of the City Council, the work of all the boards and commissions, with input and support from all sectors of the community, and with God's guidance, we will continue to be a progressive, positive and proud "City Like No Other". May God continue to bless the City of Huntingburg.



Dennis W. Spinner, Mayor
City of Huntingburg

