

State of the City address for 11/9/2015

Good evening citizens of Brighton, Michigan. Thank you for being here or turning in at home on our Cable TV station. It is my honor and privilege as the current Mayor of this City per the City Charter at this time to deliver the Biennial State of the City address.

First, I want to thank all of my fellow City Council Members for entrusting me two years ago with serving as Mayor of our City.

It is my view that for our form of government, which is the Council-Manager form of government, the Mayor's role is to serve as the City Council's elected leader and also to serve as a facilitator of the City Council as a policy-making and governing body of our city. Policy-Making is a deliberative process which is very dependent upon consensus building amongst and within our City Council.

With those thoughts in mind. Two years ago, I stated that "I am happy and confident to report to you the state of our City is very bright." It was a bold statement then but I made it and I stood behind it then and stand behind it now. I will give some examples why I feel that way still today.

Here are some highlights of what I view as important accomplishments and indicators of progress of our City during the past 2 years by a combination of Community volunteers, City employees and City Council. These are not ranked in any particular order.

Where would we be without Volunteers? Volunteers who contribute their individual efforts and - time throughout the year on such things or with such groups as, the Imagination Station, the Historic Village, The Veterans Memorial group, the Brighton Garden Club, our City of Brighton Arts, Culture and History Center known as CoBACH, the Livingston Players, the Art Guild and many more. Projects such as

Completion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> biennial re-sealing of the wood in the imagination station per our official

City Council plus DEQ approved Due Care Plan for the playground. This resealing was done by a group of 50 plus volunteers supported by City DPW Workers, this effort saved City of Brighton taxpayers in excess of \$10,000 by not having to pay an outside contractor. Again this effort has been led by Renee Pettengill, thank you Renee.

- Brighton Historical Society continues to clean up the old Historic Village Cemetery. City Council just this past Budget cycle allocated/contributed to the Brighton Area Historical Society to assist with its great ongoing restoration of historical grave monument markers in our historical village cemetery, almost 100 monuments have been restored or upright.
- Greater Brighton Area of Commerce continues its efforts with 25 plus Civic events in our Community.
- City council also restored the budget allocation for the Brighton Senior Citizens Center during each of the past 2 fiscal years after it had been cut as part of several unfortunate budget cuts we had to make due to the 2008 economic crash.

When we talk about service to our community we cannot forget the many members of our various City Boards and Commissions who spend hours in meetings and in prep time for these meetings. Thank you for your dedication to continue to improve the City.

Now I would like to take a minute to talk about our City Departments.

The Downtown Development Authority has continued its efforts in securing parking for our downtown area, for example the CSX West parking lot, which has added 50 plus spots, the old Chamber lot has been improved and added some additional parking spots, the DDA also purchased the old Dairy Mart and raised the building and will be adding additional parking there also. Much of this was accomplished with a new ordinance which was a goal of a previous council a few years ago, that worked its way through Planning Commission and City Council for transitional, temporary and overflow parking. So in

total the nearly 250 new off-street parking spots have been added. The PSD has a new SAD formulation to provide renewed funding for the proactive marketing of our Downtown.

Finance and Assessing. 2 more unmodified, formally unqualified, opinions from our City Auditors, which makes something like 28 in a row, but who's counting? congratulations to Kelly and her staff. 2 more GFOA Distinguished Budget Awards and 2 more GFOA Financial report Awards. These awards or other like it in other department are not taken for granted and are much noticed by City Council. The staff do not pursue these type of awards for the sake of obtaining awards. Instead, these award related programs have enabled the departments to identify what needs to be improved and to then go implement those recommended improvements. The City of Brighton has achieved the second highest bond rating that a city government of Brighton's size can achieve.

Police, under the leadership of Chief Wightman the police department continues to be a model department that is looked up within the area. Within the last two years we have hired the first policewoman, Kristi Pace in many years and our first police dog, officer Danko. A Dutch Shepard, who's handler is Officer Jim Meldrum. Danko graduated at noon on a Friday and before the day was over he "collared" his first perp. When a drunk driver fled the scene of a crime and MSP called for assistance and Danko went to work tracking and locating the suspect. Police officer of the year for 2014 was James Meldrum and in 2015 Don Bishop. Over the last two decades our Police Department has maintained a conviction rate in excess of 95%. On a sad note we lost Doug Roberts a long time reserve officer, he will be missed especially during our civic events which he truly enjoyed working.

The police department now has nearly 1,400 subscribers of Nixle and still growing, this is an alert system that the Police Department can alert a subscriber of different information from traffic jams, missing persons, including severe weather alerts or suspected criminals in the area.

Community Development and DDA, these two departments has probably been hit the hardest with the retirement of Laurie French and the departure of Planning Director but this has given us an opportunity to contract with the County for some additional intragovernment agreements. We received two MDOT Category A grants for funding both Brighton Interior Drive which is the public road leading into TG Fluids and also for an improved traffic signal at Orndorf and Grand River, which is part of the expansion of Eberspaecher.

Some economic developments that have been approved, started building or have opened within the last two years:

- Expansion of Eberspaecher which is more than doubling its size
- The move of TG Fluids to a larger facility, staying within the City and re-using a manufacturing facility that sat idle for years.
- The addition of SkyZone, this is a re-use of a retail store front that has been vacant for a while.
- Hampton Inn has started to build a new hotel on a previous vacant parcel of property.
- The redevelopment of the former Davis Office Center site to the new Brighton Commercial Development. Located at the intersection of Grand River and Best Buy Drive, which will be bringing some national chain restaurants, Panda Express and Chipotle
- Downtown continues to thrive with little to no vacancies, and when they do go vacant they don't seem to stay vacant long and we get new business such as Yogurtopia which our Community Development Staff was able to obtain a unique Façade Improvement Grant to assist with their redevelopment., Fitwall, Tribute Salon to name a few

DPS and Utilities: The Utilities Department received a SAW Grant from the DEQ for \$500,000, which will allow us to do such things as inventory of fixed assets, mapping and video taping of and surveying water and sewer lines and much much more. They also received a 50 year community Fluoridation award. We

continue to be a Tree USA city. The past two years have been extremely hard for all Michigan communities including our City. Our DPW Crews and our Water and Sewer Utilities Crews and Workers have simply done outstanding yoemans' work with keeping up with our service needs during very difficult circumstances--- especially considering that our City's overall workforce is 15% lower than it was before we had to downsize the organization by not backfilling positions after retirements or resignations due to the declining revenues caused by the 2008 economic crash. Public Works department is one of approximately 100 public works department in North America to achieve the American Public Works Association Accreditation.

City Clerk, human Resources and Labor Relations. These are very important departments that probably don't get the recognition of some of the other areas because they are behind the scenes. But they are very important for example the State changed the Freedom of information Act rules and the Clerks department was on top of it and had amendments to our ordinance in front of Council to discuss and approve. They are continually challenged with the continuing changes in Health Care, whether it's the Affordable Health Care Act or trying to hold down cost to both the city and the employees. They will also be heavily involved in negotiating new contracts with 3 or our 4 unions this upcoming year.

And to all 50 plus of the city's employees a special thank you for your continued hard work. And we cannot forget our customers, the citizens of the City of Brighton, the Business of the City of Brighton and the guest that choose to come to Brighton to shop, eat or visit. Thank you.

Even though the next group isn't exactly a department of the City, there are technically consultants they certainly function as a department. Our City Attorney Paul Burns and assistant City attorney Brad Maynes and our City Labor Attorney Dennis Gabrian. Our City Engineer Gary Markstrom. And other contractors we use throughout the year. I would like thank all of you and your organizations for your continued support of the City.

And I haven't forgotten the Manager's office, Manager Foster has continued to serve this community with his whole heart and soul. One of the biggest challenge that this new council that will be sworn in in just a few minutes will be hiring a replacement of the city manager Dana Foster. Dana has decided to move on from the City, I wish you the best of luck in the future. I think it is a testament of the City of Brighton and manager foster that he has chosen to keep his home and family here in Brighton. This will also give us all a chance to run into Dana and his family at either a local establishment or one of our civic events. Thank you Dana for your 24 plus years of service to this great City we all call home Brighton.

I would also like to thank the citizens of the city of Brighton whom elect us to represent them, I know I don't and I don't think anyone of us sitting here today take the election process for grant. So thank you citizens of Brighton for your continue support to entrust this council with the decision making power that we have. We always welcome your input, whether through attending a meeting, completing our bi-annual survey, or a citizens' inquiry form on our website. Speaking of websites, if you haven't been to the city's website in a while please visit it soon at [www.brightoncity.org](http://www.brightoncity.org) you'll find more information about some of the things I have spoken about this evening and continue to watch for updates all the time.

And to wrap this up, I feel that we have certainly held our own during the time since the downturn in the economy over that last several years. The current staff and current City Council continue to look for ways to reduce cost and increase revenue.

A special thank you to the families of my fellow council members, of all the city staff, and of the volunteers for their understanding while us councilmembers, staff members and volunteers are away from them do their part in keeping this city running.

Finally, to my fellow council members, I want to thank you for entrusting me to serve as your Mayor for the last two years. I feel honored and privileged to serve this community that I call home. I love this community and am very lucky to be able to live, work and play right here in Brighton.

Respectfully Submitted,

James Muzzin, Mayor and Council Member