



2019 State of the Village

By Village Manager Matthew Newton

Looking back on the past year, I'm reminded of a quote from Gordon Hinckley, "You can't build a great building on a weak foundation." In my first year as Village Manager, I've often reflected on this ideal and worked strenuously to lay a solid framework upon which we can continue to improve village operations. Progress and positive change take time, but, I'm extremely proud of what the staff and I have accomplished, and I look forward to continuing this into 2019 and beyond.

I would like to take an opportunity to thank all of the village employees for their efforts over the past year. Their hard work and dedication to this community are readily apparent. From our Village Office Staff to Public Works and our Police Department, everyone did a fantastic job and, importantly, worked together in a cohesive and collaborative manner. Each department plays an important role in ensuring our overall operations are running efficiently and providing effective services to the village.

Our Police Department has seen steady improvement. In general, feedback for PD has been phenomenal and I credit all of our officers. In particular, I'd like to commend the department on their efforts in the successful investigation and conclusion of the homicide case, leading to charges against 3 individuals. Our officers also did a great job of supporting our community events this year, ranging from Midwest Festival to Girls on the Run, 4th of July, and Decatur Day. Looking forward, we have some big plans and goals. First, we are implementing body cameras later this year. I think it's important to be proactive and moving in this direction will be a huge benefit to all parties. We are also planning to implement a new in-car video system. In the coming years, Chief and I are also looking at options to enhance our presence in the school system and beyond. Our hope is to eventually propose the addition of a School Resource Officer/Decatur Investigator role. This would be a multi-faceted role that would support not only the school but potentially several other areas in our community as well. We are still working on the logistics and feasibility of this role, but it illustrates our commitment to working towards providing the best possible service we can to our community.

Our Public Works department has also had a fantastic year. Foreman Ebeling has done a phenomenal job of leveraging our equipment acquisitions in recent years to expand our capabilities and increase our response rates. From keeping our parks beautiful to maintaining our infrastructure, patching potholes, snow and ice removal, sidewalk maintenance, and annual leaf pickup, the DPW has a large number of tasks and the feedback we get from the community on our performance is refreshing. Their assistance with road closures and setup of event areas for our community events this past year was also fantastic. All in all, I applaud Foreman Ebeling and the entire DPW staff for their efforts. In 2019, we will be moving to a new work order system that should dramatically improve our ability to address work orders and visualize potential challenges through our GIS system. The village is also in the final stages of implementing a SCADA system for our water and wastewater infrastructure. This system will allow us, for the first time, to remotely monitor several aspects of our system to ensure that everything continues to operate as intended and address any issues that arise quickly. We also have several other projects coming up this year including the replacement of Christmas decorations, sewer repairs, a 5-year Parks and Recreation Plan, sewer lagoon improvements, lift station upgrades, and the rehabilitation of Well #4.

I would also like to thank our Village Council. The Council serves a fundamental role in guiding the policies and vision for the village. It has been a true pleasure working with all of you over the past year. All of you have worked to position the village well. With 2018 being an election year, we also saw some changes. We welcomed Mike Verran to the Council



and he's done a fantastic job of getting up to speed and working to help our community. Congratulations to Charlene Jackson and Robert Mead on their reelection to the Council. I would also like to extend our thanks to Tom Stull for his years of service to the community.

Infrastructure is always a critical element. Maintaining our roads is vitally importance, and we made great strides in 2018. We moved to a new system of road maintenance, employing a mill-and-fill style of improvement. The results turned out very well. In addition, the decision was made to turn the intersection of E Edgar Bergen and Rogers ST into a traditional intersection by removing the island and relocating the historical trough to our downtown. Now, that intersection is much less confusing, easier to maintain, and safer. We will also be working to make the trough a focal point with seasonal plantings and displays. We accomplished another major feat in paving the last unpaved street in the village with Hill ST. Finally, we made a big improvement in downtown with the completion of the North Phelps Alleyway Project. This resulted in the renovation of the village parking areas to the west and north of the village office and provided much needed enhancements of water service and storm water management within the alley itself.

Looking forward, we have several great initiatives for road maintenance into 2019 and beyond. In 2019, we have budgeted \$110,000.00 for local road maintenance projects. We will also finalize plans and begin preparations for the resurfacing of South Williams ST. This project is being completed through the Rural Task Force (RTF) and utilizes Federal funding. At the December RTF meeting, we were able to secure an additional project. In 2022/2023, Prairie Ronde will be reconstructed from S George ST to the village limits. The existing surface will be replaced, shoulders will be widened, and it will also include upgrades to signage, drainage, restoration, and sidewalks. As with S Williams, this project will utilize Federal funding. In total, by leveraging the RTF structure to our advantage effectively, we have been able to secure \$700,000.00 in road projects over the next 4 years at a cost to the village of just over \$140,000.00. We working on a major improvement on the administration side of our roads as well. We will be working to update the PASER ratings of all village streets and creating first Road Asset Management Plan. This will also include leveraging our GIS mapping system as well. We will be using it to create a Road Asset Map. Once completed, it will give us access to the current rating, condition, and estimated life of all village roads and display each road's current condition on a map that is continually updated. This will serve as an amazing guide to help us determine future projects and present that in a clear, visual manner. We have a number of other areas where we are working to leverage the GIS system as well. I have started the process of creating an interactive zoning map. When completed later this year, it will allow residents, business owners, and prospective developers to view the zoning of all village parcels and provide easy to access zoning information that will assist with renovations and improvements.

In 2018, we began the process of creating our first municipal code for the Village of Decatur. Later this year, the process will be completed. It will be continually updated and will be added to our website for ease of viewing. We also rolled out the first revision of our website in over 8 years. The new site is much more intuitive and easier to use. It now is easily viewable on a range of devices. We also incorporated a new community event calendar and a new contact form that allows residents to contact us with any questions or challenges directly from our website.

In the Water & Sewer Office, we made a big change in moving to a new online payment provider. The system allows us to offer paperless billing, email notifications, automatic payments, and easy access to water and sewer accounts for all customers. It also makes processing payments much simpler and faster for village staff. Finally, I am hoping to further refine our system to allow for the possibility of electronic payments to be made without any additional fee. Once accomplished, it will further reduce barriers give customers a compelling online option. Online billing is becoming standard, and I'm glad that we are driving that adoption here in the Village of Decatur. In 2019 and beyond, we have big plans to further innovate with technology that enables us to effectively communicate with the community. This year,



we are planning to rollout a new system that will permit village staff to create the first quarterly newsletters, provide updates, and email notifications. In addition, we are exploring options for a new feedback system that would allow all residents to report problems to the village. This would then be displayed on a map to give a visual representation of areas of concern, helping guide village staff on addressing matters more quickly and helping identify problem areas that may require attention. All in all, input from our community is paramount and I am excited to work towards offering an improved way for the community to interact with the village.

This past year, we made a significant change with Ordinance #203. This ordinance revised our trash ordinance and brought the billing in-house. Doing this had several advantages. First, we were able to negotiate better contract renewal rates. It also allows our residents to now pay one bill to cover their water, sewer, and trash services. This system also permitted the village to be able to monitor for compliance much more effectively. In addition, I worked with Waste Management to allow us to procure containers that we can utilize in cases of broken containers, new residents, etc. Thereby, allowing us to respond much more quickly. In 2019, I am planning to explore updates to our water and sewer ordinances and am looking to implement a detailed purchasing policy that will define and streamline the purchasing process. In conjunction, I am also planning to create an overarching Village Policy Manual that will, for the first time, compile all village policies into a single detailed document.

Another great success from 2018 was our community events. The first village-wide Midwest Festival was a resounding success. The 2019 Midwest Festival is slated to be even larger and changes are being implemented to make it an even better experience for attendees. In 2018, the 4th of July Fireworks show was the biggest show we've ever held. This year's show should be equally impressive. The show will now start at a dedicated time. The Village will also work to support Decatur Day. While I am unable to guarantee anything, I am also pursuing the idea of bringing back a Christmas Parade. We are also planning to hold a holiday decorating contest this year open to all village residents.

All in all, I am pleased with village operations during 2018 and am excited to be able to further refine our operations this year and beyond. Our goal, as always, is to provide the highest level of service we can to the residents of Decatur. Now that I have completed a full year as Village Manager, I am excited to take the things I've learned and refine my technique to take our village operations to the next level. We are in a great position and I intend to do my utmost to serve this community and do what's needed to ensure our continued success.

Respectfully,

Matt Newton

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Village Manager