

2017 State of the City Address

January 24, 2017

GOOD MORNING PAOLA!

Thank you for joining us here this morning, and thank you Chamber Director Mary Lynn Roberts, the Chamber Board of Directors, and our generous sponsors for hosting today's event. Also, a special thank you to our moderator Blake Heide, who year after year does such a wonderful job.

Before we get started, I'd like to introduce some special guests who are with me this morning; our newest city department heads: Paola Public Library Director Emily Burgdorf, Chief of Police Paul Jokerst, and Public Works Director Kirk Rees.

I would like to begin by thanking my City Council colleagues for their dedication to serving the citizens of Paola. We are privileged to work together to ensure the delivery of the essential services our citizens depend on and deserve, AND to do so in a fiscally responsible manner. Would you please stand and be recognized as I call your name:

Council President: Leigh House who represents Ward 3

Council Members: Aaron Nickelson, Ward 4

Jim Pritchard, Ward 1

Gee Gee Wilhoite, Ward 2

No city can function without a hardworking dedicated staff of individuals who are willing to go the extra mile to make things run smoothly. We are so very fortunate to have such wonderful employees working for us. They are truly the best because "they truly care" about

making Paola a great place to live. Would all of our staff members who could be here today stand and be recognized.

Also, I want to offer our collective appreciation of all the citizen volunteers who are giving of their time, talent, and expertise to serve on the city's boards, commissions, committees, and taskforces. If you serve on any of these, please stand so we can recognize YOU for your service to our community.

These men and women are residents just like you and me. Most, if not all of the people who stood to recognized live here, shop here, drive around here, and raised or are raising their families here. At some point they decided that running for elected office or accepting the call to appointed service was their way to give back and strengthen our community. PLEASE JOIN ME IN ANOTHER ROUND OF APPLAUSE TO THANK THEM FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS.

A year ago, I appeared before you, much like this, to share the state of our city and our ambitious vision for 2016. That vision required innovation, imagination, resourcefulness, originality and yes, even some risk, all of which are characteristics that define an enterprising city. The foundation for any success Paola realizes is rooted in citizen engagement, in creating public/private partnerships, and in our ability to come together around a good idea and make it happen. Without you and your support, leadership, and investment, Paola could not succeed in providing the quality of life we've all come to expect. THANK YOU!!!

There is so much good that goes on here every day, and so many positive things happening we want people to know about. The Paola you see today is stronger and strategically prepared to meet the challenges of the future. We are ready to grow and welcome new residents, businesses, and companies to our community. We are ready to expand our level of cooperation

with our business community and our educational and governmental partners. We are OPEN FOR BUSINESS!

Speaking of growth, I'm pleased to report that from January 1 through December 31 2016, the City issued 411 building permits with a construction value of \$23,278,787. Notable projects include the new Sonic, the remodeling of PriceChopper, the addition of 16 residential living units to Prairie Place Apartments, the Miami County Medical Center Rehabilitation Center, the Lighthouse Church addition, and the USD 368 tennis courts. In addition to the permits issued in 2016, a number of other projects are in various stages including a 32-unit, \$3.3 million senior living project-phase 2 of the Paola Senior Townhouses. Another bright spot from last year is the construction of 9 new single-family homes.

The City continued making improvements to its infrastructure including more than 4 lane miles of street resurfacing, the installation of more than 1,000 linear feet of curb and guttering, replacement or relining of more than 1,500 linear feet of sanitary sewer main, and replacement of water mains and fire hydrants. Just as a side note, over the last 3 years the City has improved more than 12.8 lane miles of roadway. In addition, through the efforts of Paola Pathways and the Public Works Department, nearly 3 miles of new walking/biking trail was added to the Miola Lake trail system.

In 2016, the Paola Community Center broke its all-time attendance record for its various programs, classes, and community events. The average monthly usage for the Community Center reached 1,300 patrons. The Center hosted 13 concerts, 14 movies, 10 theatrical plays along with a number of community meetings and receptions.

The Paola Fire Department has continued to provide excellent service to our community and to the residents of the county served under our agreement with Miami County Rural Fire

District #1. The 27-member volunteer force responded to 285 emergency incidents in 2016 and logged over 1,415 hours of public relations, building inspections, and maintenance activities. The Paola Fire Department is recognized as being one of the best trained and operated volunteer fire departments in the state.

On the budgetary front, through careful management of our available resources and a well-thought out action plan, we ended 2016 with increased cash reserves and fund balances. The City Council and staff have worked hard to insure that Paola's finances are on solid footing and that we are in a position to move forward in meeting the needs of our citizens. Incidentally, I should note that even during a time of nationwide financial uncertainty, the City retained its Standard & Poor's bond rating of "A+" with a Stable Outlook. The retention of our rating is significant that we are in a strong financial position and have a solid financial foundation. Furthermore on, I need to mention that our sales tax receipts for 2016 set a new record. The growth in sales tax revenues is positive as it helps us lessen, or at least hold steady our dependence on property tax funding.

With the hiring of Chief of Police Jokerst, the Police Department has seen the implementation of a number of new programs and strategies. Included among these are a revised approach to community policing programs such as: "Coffee with a Cop" which brings police personnel and citizens together over a cup of coffee to discuss issues and learn more about each other; the Gold Key Program that is designed to provide extra care to residents of our community who do not have someone to check on them on a daily basis; the Internet Purchase Exchange Program which provides dedicated parking spaces in the Justice Center parking lot allowing a safe place for completing online transactions such as EBay purchases; and the Prescription Drug Take-Back Program that allows citizens to prevent prescription abuse and theft by providing a

convenient and safe drop box site to get rid of dangerous, expired, unused, or unwanted drugs. So far, the Police Department has received over 23 pounds of unwanted prescription drugs.

In addition, the Police Department implemented a social media presence on Facebook which features up-to-date information on various crime prevention activities, community events, Amber Alerts, safety tips, mug shots of wanted suspects, and surveillance videos. During the Christmas season, it was very instrumental in the capture and arrest of the Grinch. This entertaining video produced by our police officers, which was a spoof on the “How Grinch Stole Christmas” story, reached over 600,000 views all across the country and resulted in lots of positive press coverage for our department and city. I’m also proud to be able to say that by February of this year all of our police officers will be wearing body cameras which will provide better officer safety and increase transparency to the public.

In 2016, the Police Department had an overall clearance rate of 73% which was an increase of 9% over the previous year.

Oh, and I do need to just say that Paola is a busy place as it was the host to 22 community events ranging from Easter egg hunts to the ever popular Roots Festival. If it seems like you’re running around at times, keep in mind there were five 5K runs and a triathlon held in Paola in 2016. We also participated in the Kansas State Extension’s First Impressions Program which involved a group of citizens from another community visiting Paola and providing input on their impressions of our town. The feedback that we received was very positive and reinforced my belief that we have a “welcoming” town that is impressive.

Turning to 2017, we’re excited about a number of potential projects that include a westerly extension of Baptiste Drive from Old KC Road to Iron Street which will help improve the transportation network for our local manufacturers and assist with the redevelopment of the

former Kahn Steel/J&J Metal Products property, a signalization and intersection improvement project at 303rd and Hedge Lane to improve traffic movement during the peak pickup and drop-off times at the schools, development of a layout for a Frisbee golf course, continued renovations to city facilities, and continuation of infrastructure improvements throughout the community. We also will be working to improve communications with our citizens by re-introducing the city newsletter – The Pace, fostering a better social media presence, conducting a citizens survey to collect information on “how we’re doing”, hold semi-annual community/council public forums, and invite community clubs and church groups to become involved in community improvement activities. We are exploring ways to improve our code enforcement activities to help insure that we have attractive neighborhoods and orderly growth patterns. Items like parking, property maintenance, and neighborhood beautification activities will be a priority. Let me once again emphasize my belief that to be successful, Paola, our neighboring communities, and Miami County must pursue true partnerships and work closely to provide the services our constituents desire while being respectful of the differences in our communities and constituency groups.

In closing, I want to encourage you to be proud of our community, stay involved, and celebrate our accomplishments. We should embrace our past and look to the challenges of our future. We need your voice to be heard as we chart the course for that future. The City has made tremendous progress over the last year, and I believe we are on track to see much more progress over the next few years.

The City Council, city staff, and all the individuals that serve the city in so many ways are committed to being mindful of those who have gone before us, paving the way for the excellence we now enjoy. We are firmly rooted in the present, realizing our strengths and celebrating our accomplishments and we look to the future with excitement and hope.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege and honor of serving as your mayor. I hope you know without a doubt, that I LOVE PAOLA!

May God continue to bless each of YOU and MAY God continue to bless our great community as we move forward.