



2015 STATE OF THE CITY

MAYOR DON WALTERS

February 24, 2016

Thank you very much for the kind introduction, Russ. I also want to especially thank Laura Petrella, CEO of the Cuyahoga Falls Chamber of Commerce. I appreciate your hard work and everything that you continue to do for the business community here in the City of Cuyahoga Falls. We are incredibly fortunate to have you as a partner to the city and I am grateful for your service, for your friendship, and your unwavering support.

Good Afternoon ladies and gentlemen, I am honored that all of you are taking time out of your busy schedules to be here today. I first want to thank the Cuyahoga Falls Chamber of Commerce, new Board President Kathy Romito and Chamber members for planning and hosting this event. In 2014, my first year as Mayor, there were a record setting 16 ribbon cuttings as we welcomed new businesses to the City of Cuyahoga Falls. I am thrilled to announce that in 2015, a new record was set with 20 ribbon cuttings for new businesses! What an accomplishment.

I want to thank my beautiful and understanding wife, Stephanie, for standing beside me while I continue to serve this great City. I don't know what I did to deserve you, but whatever that was I am eternally grateful that I did it.

I'd like to thank all of the elected, community and business leaders that are here today. I'd like to make special note of some of our dignitaries: Diana Colavecchio, Clerk of Courts - Stow Municipal Court; Sara Drew- Mayor of the City of Stow; Wally Davis - Superintendent - Woodridge Local Schools; Daniel Horrigan- Mayor of the City of Akron; Bernie Hovey- Mayor of the Village of Silver Lake; Dr. Robert Kent, President and CEO - Western Reserve Hospital; Dave Kline ó Mayor of the City of Tallmadge; Todd Nichols, Superintendent - Cuyahoga Falls City Schools; Russ Pry - County Executive; John Schmidt ó County Councilman; and Bill Topper, Senior Vice President of Operations from Associated Materials. Thank you for your collaborative efforts and the investments that you continue to make in our community. We are a stronger and better city because of you.

To our Members of Cuyahoga Falls City Council, some who are here todayô I want to thank you for your support and for continuing to work with me and my Administration-- casting our sometimes differing political views aside-- to do what is right and what is necessary to move this great city forward. It is not uncommon to hear stories of infighting happening among elected bodies, but here our officials serve with the grace and dignity that all residents deserve and ultimately we get things done because we work together.

I would also like to take a moment to recognize my dedicated cabinet members: Law Director Russ Balthis, Service Director Eric Czetli, Finance Director Bryan Hoffman, and Community Development Director Diane Sheridan. To my cabinet members, our city employees and safety forces, I want to acknowledge your hard work and tireless service to the residents of our community. I am grateful for your commitment to improving the quality of life for all of us. Your families sacrifice valuable time with you while you are here and I am appreciative that they lend you to us. It is my pledge to them that I will ensure that you be treated with the respect you deserve and that we will take every measure necessary to return you safely to them at the close of every workday.

I want to begin by highlighting our 2016 budget that was unanimously passed by Cuyahoga Falls City Council. Our overall approved budget is \$167,445,096 with the 2016 General Fund budget being \$32,985,461.

In 2015, I increased our road repair and resurfacing allocation from the 2014 amount of \$1.5 million to \$2 million to address aging infrastructure. The increased amount of \$2 million will remain in 2016 so that we may further renew and repair roadways across the city. Also, we have increased the budget for our Street Department vehicles by \$612,150 for new, heavy duty tandem axle trucks needed for plowing snow, pulling leaf machines, and filling potholes. The street budget will also leave funding available to invest in much-needed infrastructure improvements that will continue to benefit the community for years to come. Projects such as one of the most talked about roads in the City of Cuyahoga Falls— Front Street— which I will be talking about in greater detail in a few moments.

Early last year, we were able to hire Income Tax Administrator Shelley Goodrich, and I am pleased to announce an increase of roughly seven percent in tax collection over 2014. That is a testament to the hard work of our tax department.

In June of 2015, Moody's Investors Service released a rating report confirming the City of Cuyahoga Falls' Aa2 rating. The report highlights the city's "healthy financial position supported by strong management and conservative budget practices."

Also, the City of Cuyahoga Falls was again awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report by the G.F.O.A. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting.

The Moody's rating report and Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting reiterates our commitment to strong financial management by implementing best practices that most significantly benefit the city as a whole. This speaks directly to the innovative talent and capability of our Finance Department. I am incredibly proud of their achievements and remain confident in our ability to maintain a strong financial performance as we move forward.

One of our most significant accomplishments of last year was contract negotiations with all six of our labor unions. I could not be prouder of the negotiating teams and employees for working together and stepping up to best benefit both employees and taxpayers. We initiated a Healthcare Committee that is comprised of labor, management, and union and non-union representatives. The goal was to identify and provide quality healthcare plans that provide financial stability, and that will be sustainable over time. Their hard work will save upwards of \$800,000 in annual healthcare costs. Furthermore, they instituted Vitality, a health and wellness incentive program for city employees who are enrolled in our healthcare plans. This will not only provide long-term health benefits to participants, but also has the potential to provide savings to the city because we know that healthier employees decrease healthcare claims. We all know that healthcare is always evolving, and it is imperative that we stay on top of new and innovative ways to protect our greatest asset which is our city employees. The Committee has done just that.

We also utilized the Interest Based Bargaining technique which provides a more collaborative, problem-solving approach than traditional bargaining techniques by, quite literally, bringing everyone to the table. Ultimately, all parties worked to formulate better solutions to protect the interests of all involved. At this time, I'd like to recognize those involved in the negotiations and they are Law Director Russ Balthis, Service Director Eric Czetli, and Finance Director Bryan Hoffman. From AFSCME President Mark Walters; Laurie Scianna and Michelle Krobotzky from Dispatch; Rich Smith from Electric; Eddie McCullough and Matt Hutchison from Fire; Ruben Miller from Police Blue; and Sgt. Mark Hawley and Sgt. Ed Caswell from Police Gold. I would also like to thank Wendy Foster in Payroll for her efforts and Human Resources Director Vicki Steiner and her team in the Human Resources Department for successfully and rather seamlessly completing the city's first Open Enrollment.

We all recognize that negotiations are challenging and certainly not easy. It is a stressful time that is often tenuous and tedious. I want to thank all of you for your professionalism and hard work in negotiating fair agreements for all parties involved.

As we have continued to read in the paper and watch on the news, times have been trying and uncertain for safety forces around the country. Our emergency responders have continued to serve our residents with the dignity and professionalism that they deserve. I am incredibly proud of Fire Chief Paul Moledor and Police Chief Jack Davis for their commitment to being leaders on the forefront of the opiate epidemic. Our community has not shied away from the problem. In fact, our police department was the first in Summit County to carry the life-saving, opiate reversal Narcan in all police vehicles. As a direct result, we were able to save 20 lives when officers arrived on scene before EMS. Our chiefs also remain active and involved on the Summit County Opiate Task Force. Thank you both for your leadership.

Last year, our Fire Department hired five new firefighters, three members were promoted to Lieutenant, one Lieutenant was promoted to Fire Marshal, and one firefighter was promoted to Deputy Fire Marshal. Congratulations to all of you on your accomplishments and we are happy to have you on board.

Our Fire Department also continues to actively participate in the Envelope of Life, funded through Western Reserve Hospital, which provides residents with a form that outlines vital medical information such as current medical conditions, medical history, current medications, and any known allergies. This allows our safety forces to quickly evaluate potential medical risks onsite so that they may deliver more effective, immediate care. To date, nearly 1,300 residents have participated in the Envelope of Life program.

Our Police Department hired nine new officers last year, and we are happy to welcome them to the city. They also promoted a Captain, Lieutenant, and Sergeant. Congratulations to each and every one of you.

Officers and staff continued the "Not Me I am Drug Free" program with fifth graders throughout the city. It is exciting to note that in the next school year, all three grades in the middle schools will be made up of students who have taken the pledge to be drug-free for life. I am incredibly pleased with each and every one of them.

The Police Department also reinstated the Cuyahoga Falls Senior Watch Program to identify needs and check the well-being of older adults in the city. Residents 65 years old or older, who are living alone, and have limited to no contact with family members or caregivers can rest assured that someone is checking in on them to ensure that they are safe. Our Police Department also restored the bike patrol to increase communication and build even stronger relationships with seniors and residents, alike.

I was happy, at the end of last year, to announce that the lobby of the Police Department would serve as home to the Internet Purchase Exchange Location. I have designated a "Safe Zone" where members of the public are free to meet face-to-face to buy and sell items transacted through online marketplaces, such as Craigslist. The "Safe Zone", which offers recorded video and audio surveillance, is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When I announced this program on my Facebook page, it received over 114,000 views and responses from as far away as Australia.

Our Police Department works tirelessly to continue the trend of reducing incidents of severe crimes. In fact, burglary reports were down by an impressive 25 percent last year.

To all of our first responders, I thank you for your selfless service and I thank you for keeping us safe.

Since becoming your Mayor, I have been working to fulfill my promise to increase and improve communication between City Hall and residents. I have always believed that our services and programs are only as good as the number of people who know about the benefits provided. I am pleased to report that we have done just that. Social media has provided me with an incredible opportunity to stay in contact with residents through my Facebook page. I always enjoy running into my Facebook friends at events around the city. I have recently joined Instagram, as well, and remain active through CFO Alerts and nextdoor.com.

This past year, we began publishing the City of Cuyahoga Falls Community Report and Citizen Update, a newsletter that contains information about businesses and overviews of the events and endeavors around the community and at City Hall. The newsletters are inserted three times annually in the Falls News Press. The Falls News Press is also publishing my monthly "Mayor's Minutes," which allows us an added resource to help keep residents up-to-date about what is happening in the city. As our weekly, local newspaper, the Falls News Press plays a significant role in our community, and I want to thank them for keeping us informed.

Although I see many of you in the community at meetings and events, it is also important to me that I meet with citizens one on one. I remain committed to keeping office hours for First Tuesday so that I may visit with residents, hear concerns, and discuss potential solutions to a variety of issues. Furthermore, the Take 10 program is an opportunity for me to conduct random, unannounced 10-minute visits with neighbors and businesses to grow and forge relationships throughout the community. Much like First Tuesday, the purpose of the visits is to hear your opinions about the city, take notes on what is important, and then work to address concerns. I know you don't always have time to come to me, but I can certainly schedule the time to visit you.

To encourage and maintain open lines of communication with our business community, Community Development Director Diane Sheridan and I have been conducting on-site visits. This is an opportunity for us to meet face-to-face with business leaders and employees so that we may forge relationships and identify needs. We meet informally and are given tours of facilities and learn the ins and outs of respective businesses and products. In 2015, we conducted over 70 business visitations. We have met with business leaders like Bill Topper, Senior Vice President of Operations from Associated Materials, who gave us a tour and talked to us about major renovations that are being done at his phenomenal facility on State Road. I am thankful for his continued investment and commitment to the city. These visits continue, and I am always impressed and energized by the vast array of services and products that are produced right here in the City of Cuyahoga Falls.

Another exciting way that we have been able to increase communication efforts is through our radio station, 96.1 WCFI-FM. This past year, we have had the ability to broadcast several Cuyahoga Falls High School football games, the Friday night Riverfront Concert Series presented by IROK and other city events. In fact, for the first time, my State of the City address is being broadcast live right now. I want to take this opportunity to commend our Signal/Radio Technician Bob Felmly for his efforts to keep these operations running so smoothly. Though the station is owned and operated by the city, a partnership has been formed with Cuyahoga Falls High School. The school began a curriculum in the fall of 2015 for students eager to learn and gain hands-on experience in radio and technology. We will be expanding the station content in 2016 to include more live broadcasts and community-based programming. The goal of the station is to be both informative and entertaining by providing a variety of music, news, talk shows, information and syndicated programming. WCFI-FM is a unique venture of which I am incredibly proud.

Today, I am thrilled to unveil our brand new, revamped city website. The new website will serve as a marketing tool to help attract businesses and residents alike. Most notably, it will clearly outline everything our residents and visitors need to know about why life is better here in Cuyahoga Falls. I encourage you to visit us at www.cityofcf.com.

One of my goals is to continue to work to provide low-to-no-cost programming that produces a high impact value for the community. I have been busy coming up with a vast array of ways to do just that.

Last year, I became aware of an issue that has affected our veterans for decades. Since 1945, Oakwood Cemetery has provided veterans of Cuyahoga Falls with an eternal resting place at no charge. It came to my attention that spouses were not permitted, per city ordinance, to be buried with their military partner in the cemetery. In September, I introduced legislation to ensure that loved ones can be laid to rest together. This policy is aligned with national veterans' cemeteries where civilians may be buried first where burial plans have been made for their veteran spouses. The markers are shared between partners. I thank City Council for passing that ordinance so that families may now remain together forever.

I also started my Mayor's Youth Advisory Council, which is a unique collaboration between my office and our future leaders of Cuyahoga Falls. The purpose of the program is to encourage High School students to become active participants in their local government and community by working with city leaders to address issues that directly affect them, the young people, in the city. The panel sat with me and various city departments to have open discussions about what matters most to them, how they would like to see the city move forward, and what role they can play to effect change. The Youth Advisory Council attends City Council meetings to gain an understanding of how local government works. The group is asked to perform a good deed each week to serve the community. I could not have been more pleased with the youth council last year when they worked with City Council members to pass an ordinance that extended curfew in the Riverfront District by one hour, changing it from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. These are our young people-- our future leaders-- effecting change. This year's youth council began serving on February 1, and I cannot wait to see what this year will bring.

On Small Business Saturday, I saw an opportunity to promote the impact our local businesses have on the Cuyahoga Falls community through a social media promotion called Small Business "Celebration." At no expense to the taxpayer, I purchased \$20 gift certificates at random, small, locally-owned businesses around the city. Each gift certificate was awarded to the first customer who entered the small business and mentioned the promotion. Winners posted "selfies" to my Facebook page to encourage others in the community to shop locally. We remain extremely fortunate to have many business owners and patrons investing in the community here in Cuyahoga Falls.

We all know that Falls Pride runs deep in our town. We are proud of where we come from, and we take care of each other. There are countless residents in our city who do not think twice before answering calls for community service whenever an opportunity presents itself. We are truly our brother's keepers. This past summer, I unveiled the Honorary Boulevard Street Naming Award with inaugural honorees, Bob and Harry Heath. For decades, their involvement in countless organizations has significantly impacted our entire community for the better. The commemorative site was developed through donations from local businesses and is located in the median on Broad Boulevard between Third and Fourth streets. The Honorary Boulevard site is regularly renamed to pay homage to the people and organizations that selflessly give back to Cuyahoga Falls residents and the city as a whole. Thank you to all who have put hours of work and dedication into your volunteer efforts, all of which make Cuyahoga Falls a better place to work, live and play.

Last August, I announced that I would be providing residents with yard signs as a gentle reminder for drivers to drive with caution. The signs read, "Please Drive Slow, We Love Our Children and Pets." The signs provided a gentle reminder and feel good message until the grammar police showed up. Debate began across the region over whether the message should have read "drive slowly" or "drive slow." It garnered so much interest that Bob Dyer from the Akron Beacon Journal wrote a column about it. He stated that the signs should have been printed with "drive slowly," instead of "drive slow." I did what any decent human being would do-- instantly googled the grammar rule and sent it to him proving that I was correct and he was not.

He furthered his research and later, publicly retracted his initial assessment of the situation. Those who read his column know that this must have caused Mr. Dyer great pain to admit he was wrong, but I thank him for the entertainment of the banter and the added bonus of the attention he helped bring to these yard signs that help promote public safety. That was a lot of fun for a great cause.

As a city, we are incredibly fortunate to have forged relationships with many organizations across the region. We have been working to partner with businesses and service providers to bring new benefits to the city, and I want to mention a few with which we have connected.

Western Reserve Hospital is an integral part of the health and well-being of the citizens of our community. We are incredibly grateful for the leadership of Dr. Kent and his team's continued commitment to fostering a strong, collaborative partnership with the City of Cuyahoga Falls. Over the years, we have been fortunate to have joined forces on various initiatives that have produced programs that could not have otherwise been accomplished. In fact, The "Not Me, I'm Drug Free" Program, recognized by the offices of the Governor and Attorney General for positive impact, would not be possible without the help and partnership with Western Reserve Hospital. The program would also not be possible without the commitment and support of School Superintendents Wally Davis and Todd Nichols and I thank both of them for their continued involvement.

Western Reserve Hospital also continues to play an invaluable role in this community by sponsoring the Envelope of Life program and countless city projects. Many of our residents owe their lives to the hospital, and many more have been directly impacted by services provided. We at the City of Cuyahoga Falls have worked with Western Reserve Hospital to ensure a lasting future together. When it comes to the health and wellness of our residents, Western Reserve has gone above and beyond to guarantee quality care. They are a valued community partner, and I have quickly learned that when it comes to reaching out to the community and providing services, the team at Western Reserve has two questions: 1.) How can we help? 2.) How can we do more? On behalf of the residents of the City of Cuyahoga Falls, thank you for all that you do.

Another great community partner has been Jerry Craig and the staff at the Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services Board. They have been an incredible resource to us as we all continue to fight the opiate epidemic. We are thankful that they, in partnership with Summit County Public Health, chose Cuyahoga Falls as a site location for a mobile DAWN clinic, and have provided vital support groups and access to information and care facilities for families and citizens who are fighting addiction. The DAWN clinic allowed friends and family members of those with opiate addictions to receive Narcan kits in the community, understanding that not everyone has means of transportation or scheduling opportunities to come to their facility in West Akron. The ADM Board also provided necessary insight during my Summit County Mayor's Forum on Opiate Awareness that was held in December.

The forum was an opportunity for me to bring all of the Mayors and Township Trustees in Summit County together in one room to network and to learn about and discuss the opiate issues

that our communities are currently facing. I was pleased to also be joined by Western Reserve Hospital and the State of Ohio Attorney General's Office in this effort.

We were also thrilled to have the occasion to partner with the Akron Art Museum and the Knight Foundation for Inside|Out, which provided an opportunity to showcase and enjoy art right in our neighborhoods. Ten pieces from the museum's art collection were replicated and installed on the exteriors of local buildings, in gardens and throughout our city parks. We are thankful that we were able to collaborate with the Akron Art Museum, allowing for our city to feature those amazing works of art.

This year in Parks and Recreation we were able to build upon the Cuyahoga Falls Partnership for Parks, a nonprofit charity committed to building community pride, investing in neighborhood parks, enhancing the local economy and improving the wellness in Cuyahoga Falls. This past year, "A Change for Parks" program was rolled out to raise funds to help support the Cuyahoga Falls Partnership for Parks. While participating in activities at Brookledge, Downview, and Water Works, visitors were encouraged to donate their change from concession purchases to the Cuyahoga Falls Partnership for Parks. These funds will be utilized to help promote wellness programs in our parks system.

We had record turnouts at events such as the Keyser Barn Concert Series and Food Truck Frenzy, the All Kids Carnival, and Touch-A-Truck. We also expanded the Farmer's Market at Quirk. During the Farmer's Market events, residents were able to enjoy additional activities like yoga in the park, consultations by wellness professionals, food trucks, and story time by the Cuyahoga Falls Library.

After an incredibly slow start last spring due to increased amounts of rain, there was record attendance at Water Works Aquatic Center in July and August, given the extremely hot temperatures. We were also pleased with the warm weather that extended the summer and fall seasons, allowing residents and guests the opportunity to continue golfing at Brookledge Golf Course. In fact, it was one of the first years that we received calls asking if the golf course would be open on Christmas Day. Thank you to the Park Board and Parks Superintendent Ed Stewart for continuing to ensure that our park system is one of the most impressive in our region.

I can honestly say that it is likely that no one appreciates our mild winter more than our employees in the Street Department. Last year brought with it a rather vicious winter, with 30 major snow events and 58.5 inches of snow. That is hard to believe given how uneventful this winter has been. Let me knock on wood, though, I don't want to jeopardize the good thing we have had going for us here.

One of the many incredible perks of living in the City of Cuyahoga Falls is the continued ability for residents to take advantage of low-cost electric utility rates, with reliable service, and quick response in the event of an outage. The city provides citizens with some of the most budget-friendly electric rates in the entire region. Additionally, our Electric Department was awarded the Pinnacle Award for Outstanding Service by SDS Research. The Department scored 25 points above the industry benchmark. I jump at the opportunity to tell new residents and business

owners of our low-cost, reliable utilities, and I would argue that they are some of the best in the area.

I am also pleased to announce that the Electric Department was awarded the AMP Safety Commendation for having less than one percent time loss due to reportable accidents. Furthermore, from 2014 into 2015, the Department went 569 consecutive days without time lost due to injury. That is amazing!

We are at an exciting junction here in the City of Cuyahoga Falls, as we are moving forward on many redevelopment and revitalization projects across the city. An area that we have focused much attention on is the Front Street Pedestrian Mall. We are working to make the pedestrian mall a historic district so that we may financially incentivize business owners to relocate or start their businesses in that area. Also, we are in the planning phase of infrastructure improvements such as working with a developer to add a boutique hotel and we have obtained a potential developer for the Falls Theater.

We have been spending a lot of time and effort looking at the potential for redevelopment of the Front Street Pedestrian Mall. Multiple studies have been conducted over the past few decades, and they all have resulted in the same conclusion that to ensure success, the mall must be opened to traffic to provide better accessibility to patrons. This is the first time that market and housing studies have also been conducted to determine the feasibility of housing and retail potential.

Urban Design Planners from MKSK completed the in-depth study on the potential for opening the street. They have submitted design plans with various recommendations on how the street could most viably be opened. In addition, Robert Gibbs from Gibbs and Associates completed the market and housing report to be used in conjunction with the MKSK study. Gibbs and Associates worked to best identify possible options for restaurants, retail stores both big and small, and housing. He highlighted our unique availability of free parking, waterway access via the river, highway accessibility from Route 8, and continued development along South Front Street. He also conducted meetings with local property owners and retailers to garner input on how they would like to see the area move forward. Mr. Gibbs has identified 200 cities across the country that closed their primary shopping streets to automobiles and turned them into pedestrian malls. He notes that out of those 200 pedestrian malls, only about 20 have survived.

Throughout the project, we have also continued to hold public meetings and ask for community input, and that will maintain as we move forward.

My Administration and I have looked at the opportunity for opening up Front Street as a whole. We have brought to the table the findings of the historical studies, the MKSK study, the Gibbs report, and the three community meetings and countless conversations that we have had with residents across the city. With that, I am excited to announce that within the coming months my Administration and I will be taking legislation to council to begin the process of opening the Front Street pedestrian mall to vehicular traffic. This will be a lengthy process. We remain cognizant that this is a tremendous undertaking with numerous working parts. As this project continues to evolve, we will keep you updated on the process and the progress.

As we move through the process, rest assured that I am mindful of our festivals and community activities on the mall. Know that we will work closely with event organizers to ensure that they are being accommodated, and their needs are being met.

We must invest in doing what is best for us as a city, that which will build a more successful and promising business district. We must work to do what is necessary to capitalize on these development opportunities.

As such, we transferred ownership of the Falls Theater to the Community Improvement Corporation of Cuyahoga Falls to facilitate the redevelopment of the historic property. We have secured a developer, Coming Attractions LLC, who is interested in historically renovating the structure into a mixed-use space for a restaurant and microbrewery, retail space and apartments. They are anticipating approval of competitive historic tax credits from the State of Ohio and Federal Historic Tax Credits to help with venture funding. The opening of the Front Street pedestrian mall is a critical component of the realization of this project. Transferring the property from the city to the CIC allows for the ability to apply for the tax credits and provides the city with protection if, for any reason, the developer is unable to move forward with the project. I am excited to watch as this plan unfolds.

I am also pleased that this summer, we will be hosting Cuyahoga Falls Better Block on August 26 and 27. Better Block will provide us with an opportunity to build upon the momentum that is happening in and around Front Street. Better Block is a unique and innovative way to catapult and enhance our efforts. While we continue to focus on infrastructure and development, Better Block will complement our vision by aiding in community revitalization and bringing focus to potential businesses. Better Block will showcase this opportunity for the area and encourage entrepreneurial spirit on the Riverfront. Cuyahoga Falls natives Getta Cornici and Samantha Coldwell secured a SPARC grant from the Knight Foundation to bring this project to life. I want to thank both of them and the Better Block committee members for your dedication and for your vision and drive to help move our city forward. My Administration and I are committed to this effort and pledge our support to see this project through from beginning to end.

We stand at a historical opportunity for the region as new leaders with renewed focus, new energy, and innovative ideas are starting to emerge. Leaders like Mayor Dan Horrigan in Akron and Mayor James Armstrong in Munroe Falls. They want to work together with us in the spirit of collaboration and moving the region forward, much like we have already been doing with Stow Mayor Sara Drew, Silver Lake Mayor Bernie Hovey, Tallmadge Mayor Dave Kline, and Summit County Executive Russ Pry. We will work together for the collective betterment of the region as a whole. We understand the effects and correlation between the strengths and weaknesses of our respective communities and we are working together, and being intentional about it because we know that this is the way that we succeed as a region. I thank them for their leadership and look forward to continued partnerships.

As a lifelong resident of this city, I am humbled and honored every day at the great fortune of serving you as your Mayor. When I was a kid at Lincoln Elementary, Roberts Middle School, and Cuyahoga Falls High School, I took great pride in my claim to fame that I knew the Mayor. I

was neighbors with Mayor Bob Quirk. He was a local celebrity to me because he fixed problems and made the city a better place. I never imagined back then that I would someday be Mayor. I was fortunate to be surrounded and inspired by dedicated teachers and community leaders that instilled in me that even though I did not necessarily imagine I would be Mayor, it did not mean that I could not be Mayor. I hope that I am able to encourage a future city leader, much like Mayor Quirk and community leaders did for me when I was growing up.

We are a committed city of residents, involved community members, service providers, and business leaders. We come together every day to work to improve our quality of life and that of those around us. We give our time and our money to ensure that life truly is better here in the great City of Cuyahoga Falls. We are Falls Pride. Every day I wake up and go to bed thinking about and researching new ways to move our city forward and every day I am grateful for the opportunity. Continuing to serve as your Mayor is truly a life's honor and I hope I am making you proud.

Our State of the City is strong, and I could not be prouder of the hard work that has been put in day in and day out to make that so. Thank you.