

February 2012

City Notes



Senior Housing Assistance Program

Senior citizens can now apply for assistance through the Housing Commission's annual Senior Housing Assistance Program. To qualify for assistance with housing expenses, you must be at least 65 years old, have been a Wheaton resident for at least 3 years, and have a maximum total annual household income of \$20,600. Applications are due by March 1, 2012.

The City is now accepting applications, which are available at City Hall, 303 W. Wesley St., or [on the City's website](#). For information, please contact Sara Bemer at 630-260-2019.

Christmas Light Recycling

The City will continue accepting Christmas lights in any condition for recycling

(Continued on page 4)

Annual Speech Focuses on Finances and Infrastructure

Mayor addresses state of the City

On Jan. 19, 2012, Mayor Michael Gresk summarized key issues facing the City of Wheaton during his annual State of the City Address. To cover the broad range of issues considered top priorities to the City Council and City staff, Mayor Gresk reviewed the four strategic goals the Council adopted in November 2011 and highlighted some of the positive notes regarding current and future projects.

Financial Stability

The first strategic goal, financial stability, states the City will aim to: "Maintain a positive financial position with a long-term perspective of achieving greater reliance on local revenue sources. Ensure that operating revenues and expenditures are in balance, while continuing to invest in critical infrastructure."

One factor affecting the City's success in achieving financial stability includes de-



Among the Council's four top priorities is maintaining a positive financial position. Wheaton continues to retain the top bond rating, recognizing its superb financial management.

clining revenues due to the overall state of the economy. Funding sources such as the City's revenues from sales tax, real estate transfer tax, income tax and motor fuel tax have declined in recent years. The City also has uncertainties regarding state funding sources. State legislators have at times suggested cutting cities' share of state

income tax or other state shared revenues as a way to solve some of the state's budget woes. The state has delayed income tax distributions to the City and currently owes the City \$1.2 million in income tax revenue. A final factor affecting the City's financial stability is the increasing costs to continue

(Continued on next page)

Contact the City

Police/Fire: 911

After-Hours Water/Sewer Emergency: 630-260-2161

General Information: 630-260-2000, 630-260-8090 (TDD)

City Hall Hours: 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday

Feedback:

Please mail your comments to:

Mayor's Office, 303 W. Wesley St., Wheaton, IL 60187

Or, email comments to: feedback@wheaton.il.us

Speech

Continued from page 1

providing the services residents expect.

Despite these challenges, Mayor Gresk highlighted some positive news related to the City's finances. For the second consecutive year, the City managed to decrease Wheaton's property tax levy. In addition, Wheaton maintained the highest possible bond rating, AAA, recognizing the City's superb financial management and credit worthiness. The City's five-year financial forecast also shows improvement in the City's overall financial state starting in Fiscal Year 2011 and continuing in 2012.

To measure its progress toward achieving financial stability, the Council set goals to reach. These include:

- Increasing the level of operating reserves the City maintains to 40 percent of yearly operating expenditures in the General Fund by April 30, 2015
- Keeping annual operating cost increases to 2 percent or less
- Having 90 percent of the General Fund revenue locally generated by April 30, 2015.



The City has begun working to repair the community's worst sidewalks.



One City Council goal is reducing flooding damage by 20 percent during 100-year storm events.

Quality Infrastructure

In regard to the second priority, quality infrastructure, the City's goal is to: "Maintain reliable infrastructure systems that support the high level of community expectations. Systems are delivered equitably and appropriately."

Among the challenges with Wheaton's infrastructure, Mayor Gresk first cited flooding. This ongoing problem has a number of contributing factors, including flood-prone areas developed before the advent of modern stormwater conveyance systems. Before the 1960s, Wheaton did not have subdivision standards, and land developed before this point often did not have adequate infrastructure improvements to address stormwater control.

Challenges Wheaton faces with sanitary sewer backups are a factor of the age of the system. Because there are spots where groundwater can infiltrate sanitary sewers, storms can overwhelm the system and cause backups.

In regard to streets, the

City's traditional source of revenue to fund its annual road construction has not kept pace with the amount needed to keep the City on its desired long-term schedule. This has created a challenge for maintaining the City's roads.

Finally, the Mayor pointed to sidewalks as another infrastructure challenge. Whereas the City formerly offered a shared cost sidewalk replacement program, its funding was cut when the City made major budget reductions in 2009 and 2010. A recent examination of a portion of the City's sidewalks revealed there are many that need repairing.

To measure the City's progress toward maintaining reliable infrastructure systems, the Council set measurable goals, including:

- Putting in place a program to reduce sanitary sewer backups and overflows
- Achieving 90-percent customer satisfaction with community infrastructure systems by 2014
- Achieving a 20-percent

reduction in flooding damage during 100-year storm events over a four-year period

- Improving pavement condition for all streets to average in the "good" category by 2017

- Beginning a sidewalk program to repair the worst sidewalks throughout the community

Mayor Gresk reviewed three infrastructure projects under way related to this strategic goal. The first, a joint sanitary sewer improvement program between the City and the Wheaton Sanitary District, involves replacing 3.5 miles and repairing more than 44 miles of sanitary sewer pipes in Wheaton. As part of this project, the City authorized a study of one portion of the City's sanitary sewers to serve as a template for how the City will address sanitary sewer improvements throughout the City.

Another infrastructure project under way is the Main Street Flood Control Project, a joint improvement between

(Continued on next page)

Speech

Continued from page 2

the Wheaton Park District and the City. The Park District made changes to the lagoon at Northside Park allowing additional stormwater to be collected there, and now the City will construct an enlarged bridge on Main Street over Winfield Creek and widen the creek channel. The result of these efforts will be reduced occurrences of flooding at North Main Street.

Finally, the City has been discussing a capital improvement plan to get back on track with its road repairs. This proposed five-year plan would allow the City to catch up with the schedule.

Efficient and Effective Services

The Council's third strategic priority states that: "Services are delivered at a level and scope established by historical practice. Sustaining current levels is desired and achieved through continuous operational efficiencies and balanced against resource limitations and prioritization."

Mayor Gresk outlined challenges the City faces in delivering services, such as offering the same level of services to residents with a significantly smaller workforce. Due to budget concerns, the City cut 13 percent of its workforce in 2009 and 2010. Still, the City seeks to provide the high level of services that residents expect.

Toward achieving efficient and effective services, the Council set goals, including:

- Generating \$75,000 in savings in operating efficiency improvements by April 30, 2015
- Reaching a level of customer satisfaction with existing programs and services at or above 90 percent as measured by April 30, 2015



Mayor Gresk outlined some major development projects happening in Wheaton, including the sale of the former Hubble Middle School site to Bradford Real Estate Companies.

sured by a community survey

- Improving productivity by at least 2 percent for five identified services per year.

Mayor Gresk shared examples of how the City is working to be more efficient, such as the Enterprise Resource Planning System the City is looking to integrate to modernize many of the processes City staff use internally. This would lead to more efficiency in areas such as finance management, payroll and work requests. Another way the City is working to be more efficient is through its recent adoption of Twitter as another communication tool to reach the community.

Economic Development

The final strategic priority, economic development, aims to "maximize taxable property value, reduce vacancies and create an inviting environment for doing business, consistent with the needs and values of the community."

The chief obstacle standing in the way of economic development, Mayor Gresk stated, is the state of the economy nationally and internationally.

Goals the City Council set to measure progress in economic development include:

- Reducing retail vacancies across the City by 15 percent by April 30, 2015
- Increasing the net prop-

erty value from new investment by \$2.5 million by April 30, 2015

- Completing a strategic plan for downtown Wheaton by Jan. 1, 2013
- Completing an economic development plan for the City by July 1, 2013.

In the area of economic development, Mayor Gresk mentioned a number of new businesses that opened in the past year and gave updates on current or future redevelopment projects. Mayor Gresk commended Community Unit School District 200 for selling the former Hubble Middle School site to Bradford Real Estate Companies, a project that will put part of the property on the tax rolls and meet the community's need for a grocery store in the downtown.

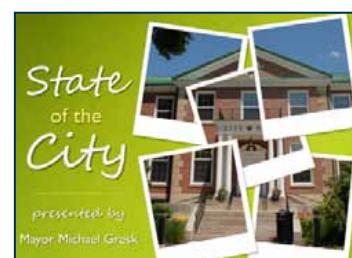
He also provided an update on the Courthouse Square redevelopment project, which was adversely affected by the economic downturn, causing construction to halt during a phase to construct more condos and townhomes. The developer is

currently looking at different options for the property, including proposals for a senior care facility.

Another project on the horizon is the vacant block bounded by Front, Scott, Wesley and Cross streets, which has been purchased by the Morningside Group and proposed as a luxury apartment development project.

A final project in the works that Mayor Gresk mentioned is the Studio Movie Grill, a 9-screen movie/restaurant concept taking the place of the former Linens N Things building in Rice Lake Square.

Mayor Gresk concluded his presentation stating these continue to be challenging times for the City in a tough economy, but the City of Wheaton's finances are in better condition than many other municipalities, the state or the federal government. The City will continue its mission to keep providing top-quality services for its residents, while being fiscally responsible and responsive to the needs of the community.



Watch the Presentation

The Mayor's State of the City Address is available [on the City's website](#) and on City of Wheaton Channel 10 (CWC10).

City Approves Water Rate Change

Chicago charging more for water

As a result of increased costs passed along from the City of Chicago and the DuPage Water Commission, Wheaton residents are now seeing an increase in water rates.

Wheaton is one of many communities that obtain Lake Michigan water through the DuPage Water Commission, which purchases water from the City of Chicago. The City of Chicago passed a budget that increases the amount it charges for water by 25 percent. As a result, the DuPage Water Commission is raising its rates 30 percent to incorporate the City of Chicago's increase and to address its financial needs.

At its Jan. 3, 2012 meeting, the Wheaton City Council approved a water rate increase



Wheaton's rates directly pass through the increased rates the City is being charged to provide Lake Michigan water.

that matches the increased cost for water the City will incur from the DuPage Water Commission. This equates to an increase from \$2.65 to

\$3.45 per 100 cubic feet of water used. The City estimates that the average resident's water bill, based on 9,000 gallons (or 1,200 cubic feet) of

water used, will increase by \$9.60 per month. New rates became effective for all water and sewer bills issued after Jan. 3, 2012.

City Notes

Look for signs like this one inside the entrance of the Public Works Storage Yard, 820 W. Liberty Drive. You can recycle unwanted Christmas lights and extension cords there.



(Continued from page 1)

through Feb. 17. Drop off strands and/or extension cords at the Public Works Storage Yard, 820 W. Liberty Drive, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. The collection bins are just inside the gate.

Elgin Recycling will collect the lights and recycle them for their copper and plastic parts. No materials will be shipped overseas. This program is open to residents, businesses, schools and other organizations, and there is no limit on quantity of lights accepted.

Commission Notes

The Council approved the appointment of Mitch Williams and Anthony Trendl to three-year terms on the Fine and Cultural Arts Commission.

Upcoming Events

Electronic Recycling

Feb. 11, 9 a.m.-noon

State law now prohibits throwing away electronics in the garbage. Drop off electronics and old batteries for recycling during the City's monthly collection



event from 9 a.m.-noon Feb. 11 at the Public Works Storage Facility, 820 W. Liberty

Drive. Electronics such as televisions, computers and printers and small household appliances such as toasters and hair dryers are accepted along with household batteries. More information is [on the City's website](#).

Voter Registration Deadline Approaching

The next election will be the March 20, 2012 General Primary for the nomination of federal, state and county candidates by an established party. If you need to register to vote or change your registration, you must do so by Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2012.

All eligible registered voters, including those who are physically unable to get to their polling places, are entitled to vote an absentee ballot by mail, Feb. 9, 2012, through March 15, 2012, or in person at the Election Commission office, beginning Feb. 9, 2012, through March 19, 2012, or early vote in person at one of the County's Early Voting sites, starting Feb. 27, 2012, through March 15, 2012.

For additional information contact the Election Commission office, 421 N. County Farm Road, Wheaton, Illinois, 60187 at 630-407-5600, the TDD number at 630-407-5631, or visit www.dupageelections.com.



See Wheaton in the '40s and '50s

Four longtime residents participate in documentary

Back in their day, Wheaton families practiced blackout drills hiding from enemy World War II planes, youngsters did the jitterbug, and Wheaton was just a quaint little town.

Four longtime Wheaton friends recall their school days in the latest edition of the City of [Wheaton's award-winning historical documentary series "Wheaton Remembers."](#) This installment, titled "Wheaton Remembers: Growing Up in the '40s and '50s," shares the memories of four Wheaton classmates – some who met in the first grade – who spent their childhoods in Wheaton.

[Watch this program](#) to see what the community was like when there were just two stoplights between Wheaton and Oswego, teenagers went



Four Wheaton classmates shared their memories and photos during a new edition of the "Wheaton Remembers" series.

to the drive-in restaurant after school, and you knew almost anyone you met walking down the street. Pam Burt Lowrie, Sue Daleiden Denson, Fred Bennett and David Henricke will take you on a fascinating trip back to Wheaton as they remember it in their school days.

"Wheaton Remembers" is

a recurring television series produced by the City's Communications Department in which longtime Wheaton residents share their stories of growing up in Wheaton in order to educate residents and preserve Wheaton's history for future generations. The City has won two awards from the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors for the series.

If you are a longtime Wheaton resident and are interested in being a guest on "Wheaton Remembers," contact Richard Sagen at 630-260-2036 or rsagen@wheaton.il.us. The City is seeking both individuals and small groups to participate in the series.



City Calendar

City Council Meetings and Planning Sessions are held in the Council Chambers at Wheaton City Hall, 303 W. Wesley St. Coffee with Council takes place in the Gamon Room at Wheaton City Hall. Visit www.wheaton.il.us for a complete list of meetings and events.

February 2012

- 4** Coffee with Council, 10 a.m.
- 6** City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.
- 13** City Council Planning Session, 7 p.m.
- 20** City Offices Closed
- 21** City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.
- 27** City Council Planning Session, 7 p.m.