

As another year passes quickly by, it is time again to take stock of all that we've accomplished and to set our sights on new challenges and opportunities for the year ahead. 2019 was another busy and productive year in Xenia, but there is much more that remains to be done in our pursuit of prosperity.

The City of Xenia has been focused on maintaining great services while ensuring financial accountability and transparency. To date in this fiscal year, we've seen limited increases in expenditures, well below budgeted amounts. On the other side of the ledger, our revenues have seen solid growth with income tax collections estimated to increase by about 4% by year's end. Being good stewards of our tax payers' contributions is our top priority, and seeing our numbers trending as indicated offers some comfort that there will be sustainability of our services for the immediate future. We encourage residents to be aware of how their tax dollars are used. To do so, the City makes available numerous means of transparency, including Ohio's Online Checkbook, which can be accessed through the City's website and shows every expense paid from every department in the City.

Tax dollars provide resources for core services like fire/rescue, police, parks, and streets. Realizing growth in tax revenues while keeping expenses low will allow the City to continue to provide good service in these critical areas into the future. Other service areas like water and sanitary sewer are funded through consumer fees. The present fee structure in place for water and sewer services is sufficient to maintain strong service delivery and we do not anticipate the need for any rate increases in the immediate future. Our water and sewer funds remain quite healthy, even in light of on-going investments in rehabbing buried infrastructure and treatment plants intended to modernize operations and ensure reliability of these systems.

On the other hand, our sanitation and stormwater funds present less optimistic scenarios. The sanitation fund covers services related to trash collection as well the closed municipal landfill. It is here, with landfill compliance and mitigation that we find ourselves with real challenges. Ohio EPA regulations require the City to monitor the closed landfill to ensure there are no adverse impacts to the environment or adjoining property owners. Due to the natural decomposition process and various conditions at the closed municipal landfill site, we are faced with some compliance issues. The City is required to take steps to bring our site into compliance, and these efforts could result in potentially costly projects making sanitation rate increases likely over the near term.

Similarly, our residents may face modest increases in fees for reinvestment in our storm sewer system. Our stormwater infrastructure provides a conveyance system for natural water runoff to help prevent flooding in our community. Significant components of the storm sewer system are many decades old and in increasingly urgent need of repair or replacement. Yet limited funding resources make comprehensive rehabilitation of storm sewer infrastructure impossible. A more aggressive and more equitable stormwater rate system is needed and will be pursued in 2020.

As we evaluate the needs and funding options for our storm sewer we will couple these efforts with new data and ideas for a comprehensive and long-term pavement management system for our streets. This past fall City Council directed staff to undertake a city-wide assessment to determine the current

condition of all streets, curb-to-curb throughout the City. Getting updated, objective data on the current state of infrastructure is the first step in identifying a long-term plan to correct a problem that has been growing in severity and cost for many decades. The state's increase in the gas tax will help resource a funding model, but the capital funding need is great when we consider the size of the street problem we face. Admittedly, we don't have the funding solutions for this major community problem worked out, but City Council has made developing a realistic strategic plan for street rehab one of our most urgent priorities.

Looking beyond the capital funding needs, the bottom line for City operating finances is that we are stable. We are not yet in a position to expand some services in areas like public safety and recreation in the ways many would desire, but we are able to continue to provide high quality services affordably and responsibly. Yet as we continue to see substantive increases in call volume for EMS and police services in particular, it may be necessary to evaluate the need for additional personnel to provide the capacity to meet these growing service demands.

As a preemptive alternative, we are presently seeking out ways to reduce overuse or misuse of safety services through partnerships with other local service providers. What we are finding is that folks who need social services, counseling or other assistance are often calling 911 for help. By proactively offering the proper services for these community members through enhanced partnerships, we reduce costs for taxpayers and workload for our staff. This would be great for all involved, and so we'll be pursuing these efforts aggressively in 2020.

Another area City leaders continue to pursue aggressively is development. Investment in our community in industrial and retail sectors means growth in tax base and local services. City Council has made clear their desire to see growth in investments in Xenia through proactively marketing our community and offering incentives for industrial expansion where appropriate. The City is working closely with Greene County leaders to realize buildout of the Greene Regional Business Park, and we are enhancing relationships with private developers and local industry to help businesses already operating in Xenia to expand and prosper.

A growing retail trade in Xenia is obvious as well. New construction in the Progress Drive area means new jobs and access to better retail services. We have been pleased to partner with Greene County and regional developers to open up a new retail center. We should see aggressive construction here in 2020. Look for other new business starts in the area moving into the construction season next year.

Access to job opportunities and retail services are two of many quality of life factors that make communities like Xenia competitive. Another quality of life area we are seeking to improve is our amenities in our parks. We've recently completed additional improvements at Sol Arnovitz Preserve where crowds are now enjoying nature on convenient walking paths and sharing in the competition of one of the region's best Frisbee golf courses. We've added a new feature at Shawnee Park as part of our Rising from the Ashes program: the new carving of Tecumseh completed this summer now proudly serves as a testimony to our region's rich history.

We all know that no community park would be complete without the fun of a vibrant playground. The Shawnee Park play equipment is now over 20 years old, and portions of the play feature can no longer be repaired, as replacement parts are not available. It is time that a new generation of Xenians makes new memories on new play equipment. At City Council's direction, we've come up with creative funding solutions including grant proceeds to construct a new play space at historic Shawnee Park. Construction will start in the spring of 2020 to create a more accessible, more contemporary, and safer playground for our little ones to enjoy for many years to come.

The new amenities at Shawnee Park will make it an even more appealing location to enjoy local events like the Sonnycalb Fireworks Festival and the Community Festival. This past year saw vibrant and growing activities hosted at the park and in downtown. We are excited to see these events growing, attracting new vendors, and drawing new crowds from surrounding communities to join us in celebrating all Xenia has to offer. Look for new attractions and activities at many of your favorite community and holiday events in 2020.

While Xenia has much to offer families, empty-nesters, and young professionals, one of the most rewarding activities can be found in the opportunity to give back and serve. There are so many ways to volunteer and contribute in Xenia. It's one of the special things about living in a small city. It helps put the "unity" in *community*. Whether serving your fellow citizens through participation in local government boards and commissions, coaching for youth sports, or volunteering for a local outreach charity, we encourage you to make Xenia better by demonstrating the hospitality our namesake invokes. Help us make 2020 the year of the volunteer in Xenia.

We are also excited to support all of the great things going on with Xenia Community Schools. We truly must be active partners with our local schools if our community is to prosper and our students succeed. We were proud this past summer to partner with school leadership and the Greene County Sheriff's Office for an active shooter exercise to help make certain our students stay safe. We join community members in celebrating the many achievements of our local students and educators as well. The Xenia Bucs football team won the Miami Valley League title and battled its way to represent us in our first playoff game hosted right here at beautiful Doug Adams Stadium. We are excited to see the significant renovation of Benner Fieldhouse and appreciate that the legacy of this storied facility will carry on.

We are also excited to see the Greene County Career Center's new campus developing rapidly. The local landscape is starkly different with the rise of the 260,00 square foot facility that will be a gateway feature for visitors entering Xenia from US 35 westbound and US 68 northbound. The mix of traditional vocational courses with cutting edge aeronautics experiences will help Xenia and our Greene County neighbors meet regional workforce demands well into the future.

Truly, partnerships will help pave the path to prosperity in Xenia. We are grateful to have exceptional partnerships with so many local institutions and service providers, all of which are helping make a difference in our community. The Xenia branch of the Greene County Library, Clark State Community

College, Central State University, and Cedarville University are providing information, expertise, and advanced education helping position us for competitiveness in the region. Next year we'll be excited to offer new program opportunities with the help of the Greene County OSU Extension Service. We are working actively with the leadership of Kettering Health Network and Greene Memorial Hospital with the Greene County Combined Health District to promote health and wellness and to explore new, proactive service delivery to meet changing community needs. We are engaged in discussions with partners like One Bistro, Bridges of Hope, TCN, and DeCoach Rehab to find ways to meet struggling community members right where they are at and lead them toward stability and prosperity. Finally, we are continuing to partner with leaders in our faith community because we know truly prosperous citizens are healthy in mind, body, and soul. Indeed, we are seeking out partnerships to face both challenges and opportunities together as a city.

Your local government is an important part of making Xenia a great community, but only a part. We need those in our business community, educational community, and faith community and all of our residents to join us in a united pursuit of prosperity. We look forward to you joining us in this continuing quest in 2020.