

**State of the City 2018
Paragould, Arkansas
February 11, 2019**

The City of Paragould has had another positive year. Revenue exceeded our budget overall and provided opportunity's to continue to improve the city. Each department-head works every year to stay within their budget. On occasion things come up that make a difference and they work hard to stay within revenue.

Last year, on June 21st the dispatch center opened and we began dispatching for the City and the majority of the County. In September, we also began dispatching for the ambulance service of Arkansas Methodist Medical Center. In January of this year, with a new Sheriff, we began dispatching for the Sheriff's Department and because of that, we are dispatching for all of Greene County. That includes all Fire Departments, Cities and County, Police in Paragould and Marmaduke, Arkansas State Police and the Greene County Rescue Squad. We have also dispatched Greene County Coroner and OEM. Year 2018, in the full 6 months it was open, the dispatch total number was 37,344. Since the dispatch center has been moved from the front office of the Police Department, we will begin to institute an "automatic attendant" for the phone system along with a videophone once the "former" dispatch center is remodeled. Citizens will be able to enter the lobby, pick up the videophone that automatically connects to the new communications center. New and more surveillance cameras have been installed in preparation for this. This will relieve the need for a police officer to sit at the front desk.

In the Police Department we were asked to send three more officers to the Paragould School District for SRO's. We agreed to do that, and it required us to hire three more officers before school started in 2018 and was successful in hiring and having them trained. We also bought 7 new cars for the department and one of them was to go to the dispatch center. They are continuing the effort in becoming more streamlined and efficient through the use of electronic data collection, storage and reporting. It reduces the amount of time spent writing citation or working an accident scene dangerously on the side of the road; for officer and civilians. It will able electronically to upload the ticket, significantly reducing the cost of ticket books, and integrate the e-ticket with our current Records Management System that reduces personnel cost/time. We have applied for 10% matching funds grant from the National Transportation Safety Board/Arkansas State Police, to outfit the remaining 34 units. The equipment's that we provide for the police and every department continue to help protect and improve the City of Paragould.

The Fire Department in 2018 began working with the AMMC ambulance service. They are also doing the rescue of vehicle accidents in the City of Paragould.

Some of the fire department members are undergoing EMT certification training and currently have several on staff as certified EMTs. As you know we have employees in the Fire department and Police department 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. That provides continuing service to the citizens. This year the Fire department had 11,214.77 training hours and made 38 public education visits. The department also received a new fire truck. This keeps the equipment updated as much as possible.

The Public works department provides service to the citizens for street repairs, sidewalks, drainage updating, sanitation, dogcatchers, repair work for our equipment. Last year we approved, after the budget, to purchase another sanitation truck that we had leased as we had also gotten three new ones. This project has helped provide a good service for the citizens during the week and during weeks that have holidays. We also approved something we had never had, and it is due to be here this year, it is a pothole provider truck. This truck will be able to keep asphalt heated when we purchase it to repair streets. In the past, it has been difficult at times because of the temperature of asphalt. It cools off once it was collected and to the area needed. Each year they do some sidewalk repair, and last year they had created a little more on Hunt Street. They had spent almost \$900,000.00 for street repair.

Last year at the Paragould Community Center Park there was something new done on the field that is incredible. It is a children's playground, a facility for children. We have these in every park and the one out by the Community Center was created by a group of people that made a great difference in the park and is an impressive playground. Just about anytime you go out there, children are playing in it. We also had to do some repair on the indoor aquatic center. The equipment outside that controlled the water and temp on the inside was beginning to lose control. New equipment was bid, and bought, and replaced at the end of the year to make sure that the indoor aquatic center will continue to be something the citizens of Paragould can use and enjoy. We also bought some property on the north east side of the parks. It is a couple of acres so that we can continue to add projects to the park area.

The Airport is taken care of every year for safety. Last year there was a new lighting regulator to control the runway lights. Also, they resealed the taxi way and the parking ramp. All airplane hangers continue to be full year round and help provide income for the department. The airport is working to get a maintenance hanger built. This would provide airplane repair work for safety, and also provide additional income.

The Inspectors office shows permits in 2018 that was created considerably. There were fewer permits from 2017, but the construction cost was up about \$12 million. There was 107 new residence permits that were very close to 2017 that was 115, new commercial permits was 17, which doubled those over 2017. Commercial addition and remodel was also up over 2017, carport, new triplex, and commercial remodel were over the previous year. There were three new

subdivisions approved for the construction of new homes. As you look through the city you will see new buildings that have been built or being finished, NEA Federal Credit Building, Farm Credit Building, AMMC Doctors Office Building for Family Practice, OBGYN Clinic, Ambulatory Surgery Center and Elite Eye Care. New commercial also is Huddle House, Dollar General on east 412, Avocados, and Fazoli's and others are coming. Several churches in the city have made remodels and new construction.

Code Enforcement continues to clean up the city through constant investigations. In 2018 there were 587 files opened, 55 of those were condemnations. There were 30 structures removed or repaired by the owner and 12 structures were demolished by the city. We have remaining condemnations that are pending this year of 2019. We will continue to improve the condition of the city.

The Economic Development Committee, which I serve on, is working to continue improvement. Land has been bought on the existing new bypass for commercial development. Industrial land has also been bought. This land has been bought for the need of our existing industry for extension, or if a new industry was looking at Paragould. We ran a line for reliability on Internet services for the third line. That helps not to be any disruption, on any of our Internet services, which includes any business, large or small, or industry. There are 77 acres that have been certified, and we were the first site to be certified by McCallum Sweeney. Arkansas Economic Development Commission also recognized us as the first competitive community. This committee has used the EDC money to continue to provide access to our city, so that we will continue to grow and provide employment opportunities.

As we move in to 2019, there are additional projects, including the improvement that was listed in the beginning for the old dispatch area here in the Police Department. Last year we purchased property on north 49, across from Morgan Street. That property was purchased to build a new number 1 Fire Station. We have been working on the design and expect to bid it this year, and start the construction. We will be moving our number 1 Fire Station there and will place the existing number 1 Fire Station property up for sale. That location is commercial and will be available. This whole project will improve the City of Paragould.

Another project that has been discussed with the Street Department is to look at purchasing asphalt pavement equipment to pave the streets of Paragould. Along with having the pothole truck, this equipment could help us maintain the streets of the city. Many times, Delta Asphalt is working for the State for there projects, and cannot get to us immediately. By purchasing asphalt pavement equipment it will allow us to do some of the work ourselves when immediately needed.

The bike and walking path project design along the eight-mile creek has been completed. We are waiting for approval from the Highway Department, for construction under the bridges and the Army Corp of Engineers who designed the eight-mile creek for flood protection. If approved, that project will be bid and brought to the council.

We are looking at providing some AEDs (Automated External Defibrillator) to Police and Fire departments for assistance in emergency situations. These departments may be at an emergency service and find someone with problems that no one was aware of in an accident or fire. It is a portable electronic device that automatically diagnoses the life threatening cardiac arrhythmias of ventricular fibrillation and pulseless ventricular tachycardia, and is able to treat them through defibrillation. The application of electricity, which stops the arrhythmia, allowing the heart to reestablish rhythm. AEDs are designed to be simple to use for the layperson. We have some already in our buildings but are looking to provide for those who deal with emergency services.

Also in 2019 we have added a few new employees. We have added three new fire fighters, one for the community center, and one for the police department. These were all requested by the department heads to help improve their responsibilities for the their department.

Paragould Light, Water and Cable, (PLWC) is working to improve the Internet service through fiber for the entire City of Paragould. They have been providing new fiber for the last two years and expected to be finished by 2021. They are offering GIG service through the fiber that also allows IP (internet protocol) to TV. Features include restart and catch-up TV. PLWC maintains all electric, water, sewer, street lights, cable and Internet. They are available at all times to repair any of these as quickly as possible. This project will upgrade the entire City of Paragould.

ARDOT, the Arkansas Department of Transportation, will finish the final part of the bypass which is on the west side of 49, this year connecting to 412 west. This bypass will continue to help the traffic in the city and will be a tremendous addition and asset to the City of Paragould. They have another 5-lane project in the City, starting where Highway 49 and 135, at Glen Sain Ford location, and will extend the 5 lanes to the area of Utility Trailer Company, which is between North 12th Avenue and County Road 845. The goal of this project is to be started this year if all things are prepared for the construction. They have also awarded a bid on the highway 412 projects. Highway 412 is 5 lanes wide, from here to 141 west, there it turns into 2 lanes shortly after that. It will be improved to 5 lanes to match the existing highway all the way to Walnut Ridge. This will be another improvement for the state of Arkansas and the City of Paragould for traveling.

One final report to the council and the citizens of Paragould. The local Veterans have been working since last summer to get the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Replica & Mobile Education Center to the City of Paragould. They have been successful, and the Vietnam Wall will be coming to Paragould. It will be at Harmon Playfield and will be available Wednesday May 29 through Sunday June 2, 2019. This wall will show all of the ones who lost their life in Vietnam. There are 58,318 names on the wall, 31 sets of brothers, 3 sets of father and sons and 8 women. There is also the number 246, which is the most Casualty Deaths for one day, January 31, 1968. In Greene County, we lost 8 in Vietnam. This is coming to Paragould for the first time.

Once again, as I do every year, I would like to thank all of the employees and their commitment to take care of the city. This is also a time to commend the City Council for being progressive and conservative. I appreciate their efforts to help take care of the city and maintain funding for all departments. We also have many volunteers that are also committed to this city. I am very proud to work for, and support, the citizens of Paragould. It is an ongoing goal to maintain the City of Paragould during its growth.

Respectfully submitted,

***Mike Gaskill
Mayor
City of Paragould***