

Mayor Steven L. Schag

ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL
State of the City
February 1, 2021

We are living in one of the most significant times in our City's history. The advent of COVID-19, which officially arrived in our Community in March of 2020, has challenged us in every way, every day since. That is the obvious and inescapable backdrop to this 2021 State Of The City/Annual Report to Council.

Despite the extraordinary challenges presented by this pandemic, the indispensable services that our citizens depend on have been delivered in an exceptional and largely uninterrupted fashion. Thanks to our dedicated employees, calls for aid have been answered by our police and fire departments, our streets have been maintained and improved, we have kept municipal electricity flowing, our water and wastewater treatment plants were manned 24/7, City Hall adapted to keep doors open, tax documents have been processed, parks were kept in pristine condition (and we even kept our pool open with protocols in place) and our Health Department rose to the occasion in this most unprecedented and challenging time. I am very proud of our employees who are so dedicated to serving our Community every day despite the unique demands that are put upon them.

I would like to thank each member of Shelby City Council for their dedicated service – namely: Charles Roub, Ward 1 Councilman, Derrin Roberts, Ward 2 Councilman, Garland Gates, Ward 3 Councilman, Nathan Martin, Ward 4 Councilman and Steve McLaughlin, Councilman at Large. The progress that was made in 2020, despite COVID-19, is largely due to a competent Council that is skilled in creating and passing legislation in a timely fashion. I also want to publicly thank Mr. Joe Gies, our Project Coordinator, Mr. Brian Crum, our Director of Finance, Ms. Amber Cutlip our Deputy Director of Finance, Mr. Gordon Eyster, our Law Director, Mr. John Ensman our Director of Utilities, Jerry Marshall our Park Superintendent and Jessica Gribben our Economic Development Liaison. I also want to express my appreciation to Chief Lance Combs and Chief Mike Thompson for providing inspiring leadership in their respective departments. I do not have time to properly recognize all the men and women who make up the extraordinary team that serves the citizens of Shelby daily. We all had to add new terms to our vocabularies in the last 11 months and we learned how to communicate with new technology, most commonly Zoom Meetings.

Although COVID-19 has disproportionately dominated the news, I am happy to say that Shelby has made progress over the past year. Today, instead of focusing completely on the negatives of Coronavirus, I am going to spend some time in talking about the positive things that have happened in the past and looking forward to possibilities of the future.

In 2020 we celebrated several noteworthy accomplishments, some of which will come to full fruition in 2021. Please allow me to highlight some of the good things that happened in the year 2020.

Last year we held ribbon cuttings for Wilging, Roush & Parsons Accounting Firm on Main Street, Yocum Law Offices on Main Street, a portion of Black Fork Street was renamed and dedicated as “Charles Follis Way”, Denim & Lace held a grand reopening in the Drug Mart Plaza, I participated in a groundbreaking service for the Shelby Pre-K thru 8 complex and the Ivory Bean Coffee Shop opened on Main Street. We also witnessed a substantial expansion at Lloyd Rebar on Technology Parkway. It was also exciting to see Rocket Chevrolet engage in a major recovery and rebuild after the 2019 tornado.

Early in 2020, our city website underwent a major makeover. We have had many favorable comments on how much the new and improved features make navigating the website so much easier. It was a pleasure working with the Pivot Creative team on this project.

The West Main Street Sewer Project is in the very final stages of completion with lateral connections. This was a large and complicated project that required a lot of cooperation and patience, for which we thank our residents.

Utilizing Cares Act Funding, there were many necessary upgrades made to city owned facilities. These upgrades will serve us well in the areas of health and safety in the future.

In collaboration with The Richland Area Chamber and Economic Development we brought thousands of dollars’ worth of financial relief to our local small businesses and nonprofits who were struggling under the strain of COVID-19.

Our relationship with Richland County Regional Planning Commission continues to flourish and be of mutual benefit to all parties concerned. Mr. Joe Gies now serves as the President of the Richland County Regional Planning Commission. This Commission has been instrumental in enabling us to move forward with our Downtown Revitalization.

The Shelby City Health Department responded to the pandemic in a remarkable way. Under the capable leadership of our Medical Director, Doctor Ajay Chawla, we provided guidance to our community and took measures to educate our community regarding daily coronavirus data from within our jurisdiction, as well as current protocols and recommendations from the Ohio Department of Health. We were able to work with local businesses regarding workplace issues and questions. We also worked with our school systems in bringing them online with onsite

school education and getting fall sports on track with a responsible restart. From March through December, we documented a cumulative total of 561 cases with 457 cases having attained recovered or resolved status. Sadly, in that time frame there were also 11 COVID-19 deaths documented. These figures represent totals from both the Shelby general population and long-term care facility populations. On another note, regarding national PHAB (Public Health Accreditation Board) accreditation, our Department will undergo a virtual site visit from an accreditation team in the month of March. In terms of our vaccination clinics, we have administered, at this point, 445 doses to age eligible citizens. We want to express our appreciation to The Shelby Community Senior Center for their gracious accommodation of our clinics. This is another illustration of how collaboration certainly benefits the citizens of Shelby.

2021 will be the year when we will begin to see our downtown Main Street Corridor Revitalization Plan gain traction in visible dynamics. Our downtown district will have a new look as a result of major streetscape enhancements and additional aesthetic improvements in the very near future.

We continue to work with Richland County Soil and Water Conservation District on a proposed Ditch Petition which will enable us to continue the work that already has been done in clearing the Black Fork River and maintaining a free flow from Mickey Road to Route 13.

And, as was noted in our last Utilities Committee meeting, we are also working with Richland County Soil and Water Conservation District to establish a pollinator habitat on the old Reservoir One site which we hope will give a boost to the honeybee and butterfly populations. I plan to work with Council to apply for Bee City recognition this year. This would be a great addition to our long-standing Tree City designation.

Of course, our united focus, will continue to be upon economic development, job creation, and business expansion & retention.

COVID-19 will most likely continue to negatively impact our plans in 2021. But we are committed to maintaining a laser focus on our citizens and the services which we have historically provided. Our mission has not wavered – and it must not waver - even when faced with declining revenues, fluctuating infection rates, job reductions, seemingly ever-changing regulations, and the loss of some of our favorite traditions.

President Abraham Lincoln said, “The best thing about the future is that it comes one day at a time.” By the grace of God, we will move forward together confidently and courageously . . . one day at a time.

Thank you, and may God bless you. And may God bless the City of Shelby, Ohio.