

State of the City Address
Mayor Nathan Leigh
February 3, 2015

Lion President Glenda Leigh, members of the Parma Lion's Club, honored guests, citizens of Parma, and friends. It is with great pleasure that I have the opportunity to share with you the State of the City of Parma today. It was on July 2 of last year that I assumed the interim role of Mayor when then Mayor Flowers resigned. Twelve days later, On July 14, I was appointed by unanimous vote of the city council to become your mayor. I have been encouraged and supported by many people both inside and outside the city. I truly have been humbled by all of the support I have received thus far. Thank you. Your encouraging words have been very much appreciated.

The job of mayor has been a learning experience for me to say the least. Even though I was somewhat familiar with goings on of the office as a four year council veteran, when I sat in that seat the first time on July 15, I began a journey of intense learning, a journey of beginnings and hope, and also one of frustration, determination, and future planning.

To digress for a few moments, I must share with you the fact that this is the second time in the history of Parma that a Nathan Leigh has sat in the mayor's seat. In the late 1940's, my paternal grandfather, Nathan E. Leigh, was mayor of the Village of Parma.

Also, during the tenure of Mayor Pat Romanko, from the mid 1970's to the late 1980's, my mother, Nelle, served as city clerk. My mother and Mayor Romanko had a great working and social relationship. I have several stories to share but will save that for another time. So perhaps I have come by the mayor's seat not by luck or sheer happenstance but by something else. Maybe it was my time. Grandfather, Mother, and now the son and grandson. But, enough about family.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Parma is situated on an economic development bubble of opportunity today. Everything good that has happened in and around Parma has happened for a reason. We as a city are working hard to keep up with the economic development opportunities and trying to leverage those key developments to the city's advantage. Over the last six and seven years, the businesses along the highway, what I like to call the Highway 95 corridor businesses, have invested more than \$5 million dollars in capitol improvements. These improvements, from Champion Produce building 6 new onion storage buildings, Parma Post and Pole with a new office and furniture production facility, a new production yard for Agri-lines, Crop Production Services has built additional dry and liquid fertilizer bulk storage facilities, Medicap Pharmacy, Family Dollar, new office meeting rooms and an agri-shop and onion storage facilities for J.C. Watson Company, expanded production facilities for Parma Company, a new agriculture equipment production facility in Top Air, Office Etc, Trailridge Family Dental, and an expanded soils testing facility in the name of Western Laboratories.

All of these businesses have increased production and have in some cases created more jobs. But whether those jobs were part time or not, the businesses have contributed to a robust economic climate in the area. These same businesses, whether they have one or two employees

or as many as 100 or more, all share a common trait. Their expansion was due, not to a belief about what happened yesterday, but to a thoughtful considerate exploration of what was going to happen in the future. These business leaders are visionary experts within their respective fields I believe. The City of Parma needs to piggyback off their foresight and draw conclusions based on sound, practical considerations so as to create amenities and infrastructure which will allow the city to grow, modernize, and be flexible to change and growth as we proceed into the Twenty-first century.

To that end I have begun conversations with a variety of groups since inheriting the office of the mayor. I have developed a five-prong approach to re-vitalizing Parma. First: create local interest in the promotion of Parma and all of its economic possibilities. Second: begin a thoughtful upgrade to our airport. Third: Focus the efforts of the Planning and Zoning Commission on meaningful and visionary upgrades to all of the zoning ordinances. Fourth: upgrading city infrastructure, specifically water, waste water, and storm water systems. Upgrades to the sewer and storm water systems will challenge the bottom line of the city but will be required by federal and state statute sooner rather than later. And fifth: Create a “Want to, Can do, Will do” mindset within the city and the business community that allows us to dream, to discuss, to argue, to propose, and to build with an eye toward the future. Please allow me to be more specific, ladies and gentlemen.

First, starting in May of last year and with the assistance of Ms. Tina Wilson of the Western Alliance for Economic Development, we began a series of meetings designed to better understand the needs of our business community. These meetings were productive in that the business leaders who attended were not shy about telling the city what they believed were needs that should be addressed. In December of this past year, the Parma business community made the decision to form an economic development group. This group is calling themselves the Greater Parma Economic Development Association. This group is so named because all businesses with an 83660 zip code will be included. These business leaders will no doubt chart a course of economic development and, I hope, place the name of Parma on the Northwest map of business successes. Parma must be able to show the world and marketplace that we have the means, the energy, the visionary insight, and the where-with-all to meet the needs of a dynamic and fast moving economy. If we do not advertise and promote ourselves, no one else will.

Additionally, the city has undertaken a complete overhaul of the city website. I am pleased to announce the official roll out of this new website is today. Besides what you would normally expect to see on the website, we will, eventually, list all of the businesses that are located in the greater Parma area and that have a Parma address. I am sure that the list is not inclusive at this point in time, and that we have not listed every business, but if a business is not listed, please advise the city and it will soon be added. Eventually, the city’s web address will be signed at each end of town so that travelers may access the site when traveling through and take advantage of the many amenities we have to offer.

Secondly, in December, I reinstated the Airport Advisory Committee. The airport has received a grant for resurfacing the asphalt runway and taxiways. In addition, a set of runway lights has been earmarked for Parma from the Cascade Airport. Lengthening the runway from 2700 to 3200 or 3500 feet is of primary importance for the advisory committee. I am happy to

report today that the land owner adjacent to and immediately east of the current runway has indicated a willingness to begin negotiations for the city to purchase property to lengthen the runway. In addition, the development of the access road and hanger pads is critical for future development. A fueling station will also be considered as well as a small pilots lounge with restrooms. Certainly, airport upgrades will be of benefit for those who live in the area and use the facility. But, our airport should be an appropriate facility that will invite businesses to choose Parma as their business destination. Many businesses either have their own airplanes or lease travel times to enhance their market share. It has not escaped me that business moves at the speed of a 4g network. We cannot afford to let our airport sit with few or no enhancements.

Third, traditionally the Planning and Zoning (P & Z) Commission met only when needed. Several issues that came before the city council in the latter half of last summer indicated to me a need for the P & Z to meet and review some ordinances. Their first meeting was in November. They decided to meet monthly over the course of the next year in order to, one, create continuity within and among themselves and two, to have the time to delve into the workings of the P & Z code. This group will be able to better address the needs of airport expansion when that happens by enacting zoning requirements that will allow commercial growth along the fringes of the airport yet protect the flight-way and airspace. Additionally, they will have specific answers as developers come before the commission in the future. By taking the year to learn about the P & Z code, they will become expert on the issues regarding development. I am pleased with the makeup of the commission. They are a diverse group of citizens who have the best interests of the city at heart. However, as of today, there is an opening on the commission. I would encourage any tax paying citizen of Parma to get an application at city hall so you may be considered to fill this two year position.

Fourth, infrastructure upgrades within the city is a high priority item now. Though our water and sewer systems could support many more single family dwellings, we will find ourselves backed into a corner should a developer want to build high density housing such as apartments, condominiums, or four or six-plex housing modules. More people living in a smaller area translate into higher water and sewer usage. Currently our sewer ponds are near capacity. Four infrastructure issues face the city as I see it. One is increasing the capacity of our sewer ponds; two, insuring adequate water pressure in any new developments on the higher north side of the city; three, is separating storm water from our sewer system; and four, being able to comply with new Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules governing phosphorus and chlorine contaminants in our sewer discharge into Sand Hollow Creek and the Snake River. The city engineer, along with the city public works director and I have begun conversations to ensure the city is in the right position to meet all challenges.

One project, having to remove more phosphorus and chlorine from the discharge to Sand Creek will no doubt be a costly endeavor once EPA rules are in effect. Currently, the city – actually every city along the Boise and Snake River – has the same requirements as do irrigation companies. One option the city has is to trade phosphorus credits – much like the City of Boise is trying to do with the land they purchased along the Dixie Drain just east of Parma a few miles. The trading of credits is a relatively new example of how municipalities can maneuver around the requirements of the direct removal of phosphorus. With that idea in mind, the city has written a letter of support to the EPA regarding a project by Farmers Cooperative Ditch

Company. This project, if approved and completed, would move water from Sand Hollow Creek into the Co-op Ditch during the irrigation season, there by reducing phosphorus levels in Sand Hollow Creek. This would benefit the City as we discharge into Sand Hollow Creek below the anticipated project. All cities in the lower Boise Basin and Snake River drainage have about three - ten years to reduce the phosphorus levels to a number the EPA has yet to determine, officially. We are closely watching the Dixie Drain project to understand how that project is going impact phosphorus removal in the lower Boise River. The City of Parma could develop a similar project as the Dixie Drain on property we already own on the east side of our sewer ponds.

Another infrastructure issue is developing and implementing a storm water plan that removes storm water from the sewer or waste water system. Currently, in the area of Bates, Grove, and Main Streets between North 7th and North 1st streets, all storm water ends up in the sewer system. Usually this is not a concern except during the winter months when rain and snow melt can create overloading problems in the sewer lagoons. Removing this storm water will require the installation of a separate piping system west along and parallel to and in Main Street, west across Roswell Boulevard and parallel to the railroad tracks to a point about ¼ mile down Apple Valley Road. At that point a settling pond would need to be dug and maintained so that the storm water would channel south under the railroad tracks and on to Sand Hollow Creek. This project would require easements from several different land owners besides the cost of engineering, piping, and settling pond construction. This project could easily top one million dollars.

The development of these infrastructure upgrades will be very expensive. The costs will have to be absorbed by the water and sewer users along with any grants that the city will be able to garner. Currently, the city has no plan to begin these developments because there is no where near enough money in the water and sewer accounts to even consider a matching funds grant. The only way to increase the funds in those two specific accounts is a rate increase. The city council has begun considering this issue. I am in the process of writing a letter to all water and sewer account holders with regard to the anticipated rate increase. The thoughts of the city council are mixed at this point, but before the spring is over, the city will hold hearings and workshops to garner support in a water and sewer rate increase. This is an issue that will create controversy, but the upgrades to our infrastructure will only become more expensive as times passes. I personally do not want to have to tell a developer of either a residential or commercial project that the city cannot meet the water or sewer demands of the project. That is unacceptable. The business community and the citizens themselves must be on board to accept and approve these rate increases if we are to move forward in a methodical, thoughtful, and visionary way.

The fifth and final prong is engaging and educating the entire community with the idea that nothing is impossible so long as we believe that Parma has an attitude of “Want to, Can Do, Will Do.” The history of Parma, those intrepid early settlers, businessmen and women, and the farmers and ranchers, did find a way to overcome difficult times. They followed the trappers, the first ferry, the fort builders, the railroad, and built businesses that exist to this day. The Baldrige Buggy and Hardware Shop in 1908 later became Parma Water Lifter Company which later still became Agri-Lines and Parma Company. And just in case you have forgotten, Parma

was good enough to support two governors of the State of Idaho, Illinois born and Parma transplant H.C. Baldrige 1927 – 1931, and native born C. Ben Ross 1931 -1937.

Part of my plan on educating the public has been the publishing of the About Town articles in the Western Canyon Chronicle every other week. The articles, which started in May of last year, are written on a variety of topics that I believe have a large general interest. I have purposely tried to write the articles in a non-technical format so that readers can more easily understand the intent of the specific article. Interestingly, I have had very little comment regarding these articles. I am hopeful these articles are being read and well received.

The need to have the inhabitants of the city to become active participants in promoting their city is a time consuming and often arduous task. City Council meetings are rarely attended except for a few interested persons. Not one person was in attendance or provided any written comment regarding the 2.099 million dollar budget just passed by the City Council on September 2 of this past year. It is a bit disconcerting to me when I see very little apparent interest in the business of the city – except for negative issues and concerns. Dwelling on this issue, however, is not something I will do.

At this point I will speak briefly on the three legal claims facing the city in the order they were filed. Claim 1: The former clerk, Mrs. Teresa Phelps, filed a lawsuit against the city and certain city staff after she was not re-appointed in January of this past year. That suit is still ongoing. Claim 2: Former Mayor Bob Flowers initially filed a tort claim against the city after he resigned July 1 last year. Sometime in October he moved the tort claim to U.S. District Court, naming the city, four of the six council members, and all 20 citizens who signed a petition for recall as related participants. As of this date that suit is ongoing. Claim 3: A tort claim was filed by a former part-time reserve police officer Mr. Kenneth Yellen. To date, that case is inactive. Interestingly, all three claims are being handled by the same attorney. Though these suits and claims are serious, I have chosen to set them aside and, let our legal team handle it. The claims are being handled by city staff attorneys and the insurance carrier. I have no legal expertise, so my time is better spent working on creating a more vibrant and exciting future for Parma and its citizens.

One of the personal challenges I face nearly every day is the fact that government moves glacially slow. So also do legal matters. If I am still your mayor one year from now, it will be only because I have somehow managed to reconcile my ants-in-the-pants action oriented mood to the ever so slow creeping motion of government. I have also been monitoring my blood pressure, which has risen somewhat since taking office, though this nothing serious.

There are some in Parma who have indicated to me that they do not want Parma to change. To those I say that change is inevitable. Are we the same community we were 20 years ago, 10 years ago, or even 5 years ago? Change will always occur. The question is, where do we as a city want to be in that change? Do we want to be at the end or do we want to be in the front? What I seek for change in Parma is change that is measured, thoughtful, sustainable, and will allow our city to meet all challenges – from new housing, to new retail, and new commercial. That can and will happen if smart, motivated, and forward thinking people come forward to lead by example. Parma has the opportunity to be a “Want to, Can do, Will do” community. And with that in

mind I have, with the able assistance of Office Etc., created a logo I hope will inspire our community to become all it can be. I have spoken twice already about this project today. I am excited to introduce to you today the new Parma motto: Parma: Want to, Can Do, Will Do. This motto will be available to anyone, for a small fee to cover expenses, who is interested in seeing Parma become something more, something positive and vibrant, something that others look to with a bit of envy.

Since I was appointed mayor of the city, I have had a hand in completing projects that were started by former Mayor Telford. In six months time, between January 1 and July 1, Parma had three mayors. With regard to transitions, this was a difficult time. However, in spite of that, several projects were completed. Well 12, north of A Bar M Mobile Home Park on Parma Road, became fully operational and is the best well of the six now in operation. The straightening of Main Street at 6th was completed with oil matting applied in September. Access to Idaho Power Park located below the electrical sub-station, will be completed when a bridge across the drain is installed in the early spring by Parma Post and Pole. Also, Crop Production Services, as a community outreach project, will supply two tables for that small park. And finally, the memorial in Old Fort Boise Park, even with all of the delays, will be officially dedicated on Memorial Day, May 25, this year. A wonderful program is being planned with speakers and a singing group. You will not want to miss this dedication.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have taken enough of your time. I will leave you with this final thought. The future of Parma will not be determined by me or even by the next mayor, the city council, or any other individual group. The future lies in a collaborative effort by all who seek a community who embraces change through forward thinking economic development, thoughtful planned and citizen initiated growth, infrastructure upgrades endorsed by the citizenry and business community, and promoting ourselves as the best “Want to, Can Do, Will Do” community west of the Mississippi River. Is this possible? Of course, but the real question is this, “Do you want this change for the City of Parma as much as I do?” Thank you.