

STATE OF THE CITY 2017

Intro:

Good Morning! I am very proud to be here with you this beautiful June morning. And I am most grateful to be the Mayor of this great city—the City of Springfield, Missouri. It is a city with both a heart and a soul, a city with a great heritage, and a city full of people who each have a unique spirit and story to be told.

I am honored to be here at Parkview High School, my alma mater, and home of the Vikings, and I thank Principal Eric Ramsey and the great faculty and staff for running a fantastic school and their hospitality today.

Please join me in thanking Eric and his staff for their hospitality today and the important work done each day to develop our workforce.

Throughout this school year Parkview has celebrated its sixtieth anniversary and has been able to re-live a priceless history. It seems like just yesterday we were celebrating the win of the State Class L Basketball Champions, the 1964-1965 Jolly Green Giants!

I would like to acknowledge and thank my colleagues on City Council and ask them to please stand and remain standing—Zone 1

Councilwoman Phyllis Ferguson; Zone 2 Councilman Tom Prater; Zone 3 Councilman Mike Schilling; Zone 4 Councilman Craig Fishel; General Seat A Councilwoman and Mayor Pro Tem Jan Fisk; General Seat B Councilman Craig Hosmer; General Seat C Councilwoman Kristi Fulnecky; and General Seat D Councilman Richard Ollis.

We are all volunteering our time to serve Springfield because we care deeply about our community. We take our roles as public servants and servant leadership very, very seriously. I thank each of my colleagues, sincerely, for the role they have played and will continue to play, as our community's future unfolds. We have a real opportunity to move our city forward in the right direction in the right way. I know that we will take the time and exert the effort to chart a course that is transparent, strategically planned and—we will do it in the right way. Thank you for your dedication. And thank you for your friendship.

In addition, we are honored to have some very special guests joining us today. Several years ago, Missouri State University displayed a photographic exhibit in Plaster Student Union entitled, “The Shoulders Upon Which We Stand.” Today, we welcome many who have served our city over the last seventeen years as members of City Council. They truly have provided us “The Shoulders Upon Which We Stand.” I would ask them to stand and ask that you please join me in thanking them for their service.

I would also like to recognize and thank the members of the Springfield Police Department and the Springfield Fire Department. These men and women regularly put their lives on the line to protect and keep us safe, often without us even being aware of their efforts. They deserve our admiration and respect.

The men and women of the Springfield Police Department serve the citizens without fear. Police work is indeed a calling—we thank you for your service. I want to recognize Police Chief Paul Williams and members of the SPD Command Staff—Major Kirk Manlove and Captains Greg Higdon, Vance Holland and Ben King, as well as the President of the

Police Officers Association, Chris Welsh. The citizens of Springfield can and should be proud of their police department and each of the officers that have chosen to wear the badge. Our community is safe because of them – we depend on them – they have our backs – but, make no mistake...we have THEIR backs.

Meanwhile, our firefighters work hard every day to keep our homes and businesses safe. They perform some of the most vital tasks around our city each day, and we owe them a debt of gratitude. Among other initiatives the Springfield Fire Department continues to develop an ambitious Community Risk Reduction Program that is a data driven, comprehensive approach to getting at the causes of major risks in our community.

More than 1000 homes have been visited, and nearly 200 free smoke alarms installed, thanks to the Fire Department's Project RED Zone. Chief David Pennington leads an outstanding 228-person department and Springfield's cost of fire services per capita is among the lowest compared to other cities our size. I would like to recognize Chief Pennington and members of the SFD Command Staff, Asst. Chief

Randy Villines, Interim Asst. Chief Brad Eden, and Division Chief Olan Morelan, as well as IAFF Local 152 Political Director Eric Latimer.

We are proud of all of our public safety and first responders and we are indebted to you for your bravery and protection.

Would our police and fire personnel please stand so we can thank you for all you do for Springfield.

Finally, I want to take a moment to recognize our city staff. The professionals who work for the city serve a different role from we who are elected officials – I know we do not often make it easy for them. Their continued dedication and expertise at what they do is often unseen but is crucial to keeping our city running smoothly each day. I believe the City of Springfield is one of the best-run municipalities in the nation. Our staff continues to offer high-quality services in a manner citizens deserve and expect.

Many of our departments have completed a vigorous process of accreditation, including the Springfield-Greene County Office of

Emergency Management, which just received notification of re-accreditation last month. In addition, many of our employees, departments and divisions have received state, regional, national and international recognition.

I would ask that our City employees present today to stand and be recognized so we can thank you.

Springfieldians have a unique spirit and our City staff and elected officials understand the urgency of delivering the type of high-quality services, with an emphasis on **customer service**, that a great city needs. A city is a living, growing and changing entity. Our greatest asset—our people—must both serve and be served. There should be no line between our local government and its residents—because we are one and the same.

My family ancestry in Springfield traces back to before the Civil War. And I was blessed with a hardworking immediate family that cemented my work ethic early in life as I helped my dad in his appliance store in downtown Springfield. My mother was a dedicated teacher, serving in

this very building for twenty-seven years, teaching business law, salesmanship and typing---and shaping young minds. Growing up in Springfield in the 1960's, I did not always realize what a great place it was to live. I realize that now, and I also realize that a lot is at stake in making it an even BETTER place to live.

I have recently looked back at some of the newspaper headlines from 1960 and I was amazed at how the things we talked about then are the things we still talk about today. The headlines talked about creation of jobs, educational opportunities, crime, poverty---the same celebrations and challenges we face fifty years later.

I am both proud and humbled by this incredible opportunity to be your Mayor. And I embrace the great responsibility it brings with it. I am proud of our community and of the opportunities afforded me to contribute.

Last summer, as I set out to seek the Office of Mayor, we began a journey together. We talked about the importance of making key investments. Whether it means an investment in the highly visible items like our

public safety, economic development and transportation infrastructure, or in the less tangible but no less important issues like our relationships with each other and with our neighbors, these investments are what will guide our community as we move forward.

I have always believed that Springfieldians have a unique spirit, and I know our city staff and elected officials are eager to do whatever it takes to capture that spirit and use it to guide us to a brighter future.

Great Cities

Great cities are built on innovation, creativity, courage and the power of good people who are not afraid to roll up their sleeves and work. In other words, great cities emerge from sound decisions built on a good foundation

Springfield has both a history of sound decision-making by the leaders—our forefathers and mothers who have preceded us—and a good foundation from which to build a future.

But we also have learned that some of our greatest achievements happen when we come together, share our ideas and look at what is best for the entire city.

For example, I had the honor of attending the inaugural Build My Future event during my first week as Mayor. Approximately 900 high school juniors and seniors from across the region gathered at the E-Plex to learn about opportunities in construction and business-related trades through a hands-on approach. I saw students and teachers participating in a variety of activities, such as a welding simulation, brick laying and nail driving, while students simultaneously learned about the vast variety of careers connected to the construction industry. The students were eager and the energy in the room was readily apparent.

It was a reminder of the need to **connect people** with **available jobs**. It is also a reminder of the need to address the skills gap that prevents good people from getting great, good paying jobs.

And groups from throughout the community are trying to address that gap. I applaud Mary Ann Rojas, Director of Workforce Development,

and the team at Ozarks Technical Community College who worked together to obtain a \$3 million America's Promise grant from the United States Department of Labor to provide tuition-free training and certifications in health-related occupations for 372 individuals over the next four years.

Job training, workforce development and economic development are all essential ingredients to providing our residents with the skills necessary to apply for, and obtain, good-paying jobs – jobs which ARE available. We have excellent partnerships in place to make this work—Springfield Public Schools, OTC, Missouri State University, Drury and Evangel Universities, the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce and the City's Workforce Development team. There can be no better partnership. I am convinced that, by working together, we can address the barriers that keep us from closing that gap.

We should not be afraid to think big; we have learned through the success of the Vision 20/20 program and numerous other bold bets on the future that **visionary projects** can change culture and create their own demand.

We have a long history of taking responsibility for our own problems and coming together to find solutions. We provide our own power supply through a utility company that is owned by and answerable to its citizens. When our police officers and firefighters pension fund was at risk of being dangerously underfunded, we addressed the issue ourselves as a community. When we saw road and infrastructure projects that needed to be funded, city leaders asked the citizens to help by supporting a sales tax—and then delivered on what they had promised to ensure that support was well-placed. That tax was renewed last spring with an 86% approval rate---any politician would take that!

And we should take the same approach to the issues we face now. We must combine compassion and empathy for our neighbors with providing them the tools they need to earn a living for their families. Programs like the Wheels to Work initiative and the job-training services provided by the wonderful staff of the Missouri Job Center are a good start. But it is only a start. They are not the whole solution, but they are steps in the right direction. With Wheels to Work, community

partners aim to address the barriers people face trying to *get* and *keep* a job, while providing a better way to support these efforts than handing money outside a car window – a practice that is both dangerous and counter-productive.

Of course, city government cannot and should not address all of our challenges alone. But what we can do—and what we will continue to do—is use our capacity to convene and our ability to work together across all sorts of boundaries to make life better for everyone. We have said it many times before, but our bias toward collaboration is not a talking point in Springfield. It is a way of life.

My peers on City Council believe in the sharing of ideas. We met just a couple of weeks ago for a half-day retreat to talk about what our priorities should be in the coming months and years. In fact, we were not too far into the process when the all too frequent tornado sirens began to sound. As we huddled in our safe room in the Davis House, we noted how fortunate we are to now have someone on the Council who specializes in risk management for just this type of situation---and he

was the first one out of his chair to get to the bunker---thank you to Richard Ollis for leading the way!

But despite all the excitement, we came to a consensus that our focus will be in a handful of areas, and that is what I want to share with you today. I want to tell you about the planned focus of our work, and how we will more effectively utilize our committee structure to carry out our priorities of economic vitality, fiscal sustainability, public safety and enhanced legislative engagement. Setting these priorities will also provide City staff with the guidance they should expect and deserve from City Council as to how we should invest our time and resources.

I want to give you a look at the city's health in each of those areas, and give you a glimpse into where I think we can go if we work together.

Economic Vitality

First is economic vitality.

Springfield is home to two major health systems, the state's second largest university, a number of corporate headquarters, and a diverse mix of industries that support our local economy. From Fortune 500

employers and global companies to countless local success stories of small businesses that were born out of great ideas and willingness to take risks. Springfield provides exciting opportunities in nearly every industry. Springfield is also a great place for budding entrepreneurs to realize their dreams.

When nearly 600 employers responded to the annual Momentum survey facilitated by the City's Department of Workforce Development, 45% indicated they expect to hire additional full-time employees in the next twelve months - up noticeably from the previous two survey years - and 55% of organizations plan to hire additional full-time employees over the next three to five years — up from 47% last year

Over the past 18 months, businesses announced nine new major projects, which created 707 new jobs with more than \$33 million in payroll and more than \$187 million in new capital investment.

Examples include:

--New facilities under construction at Partnership Industrial Center West for JRI holdings and Vital Farms, a significant expansion announcement by Kraft Heinz.;

--A significant expansion of the headquarters location for O'Reilly Auto Parts;

--AT SRC Logistics, Inc.—an expansion within its Springfield facility that will create up to fifty new jobs with competitive benefits;

--And just last week 3M announced its plans to significantly expand its Springfield facility. I believe Frederick James, 3M's plant manager, is here this morning as well. Frederick spoke to Council on several occasions about the importance of the city's support for this project that contributed to the addition of 90 new and good paying jobs here in Springfield. All of this is happening during the 50th anniversary of 3M's presence in Springfield. What an asset they are to our community! Please join me in thanking Frederick and all of 3M for their

long-term commitment to Springfield and the good jobs they have provided for thousands of families over the decades.

--And then there is a little 320,000 square foot museum planned just down the road from here that will be the “largest most immersive fish and wildlife attraction in the world.” Thank you to Johnny Morris and the team of associates at Bass Pro Shops. What you are creating is a **game changer** in the country. We support you in your efforts to empower the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts and conservationists and we are grateful for the impact your entrepreneurial spirit has on Springfield.

It is not just Springfieldians who are noticing what a great community we have. Numerous national publications and websites have recognized Springfield in the last year as a great city to do business, to start a business and to be an entrepreneur. Of course, they are pointing out what we already know: Springfield really is a great place to live.

Fiscal Sustainability

A second area my Council colleagues and I discussed was fiscal accountability and sustainability. Springfieldians have told us they are pleased with the overall direction their city is taking and they feel they are receiving a good value for the taxes that they pay.

There are some positive metrics that show us that Springfield is on the right track:

--The most recent Citizen Satisfaction Survey indicated that overall citizen satisfaction in the City of Springfield is 15% higher than the Kansas/Missouri average and 12% higher than the national average;

--Moody's Investor Services reaffirmed the City's Aa rating, demonstrating our continued strong creditworthiness. They described our financial position as "expected to remain healthy over the near-term given our prudent fiscal management and current satisfactory reserve levels, which provides an adequate cushion against fluctuating sales tax revenues."

Though City departments have done a good job of running efficiently and keeping expenditures down and within budget, the cost of providing high-quality services that our citizens want and deserve continues to increase, and they are outpacing our modest growth in revenue—including the volatile revenue source we most depend upon—sales tax.

While it **could** make our prognosis for fiscal health in the future concerning, we are committed to finding solutions to our financial needs that will serve us both now and into the future. We are fortunate to have a history of being responsible and forward-looking. The City of Springfield staff and elected officials do a good job of not only asking “what is it we want and need” but also “what is it we can afford.”

Take as an example our city’s storm water infrastructure. We often take clean water for granted, but waste water and storm water systems and facilities around the county are fading and failing. In Springfield, parts of our storm water and sewer system are over 100 years old.

Nationwide, more than 100 cities are under federal or state environmental mandates to upgrade their waste water systems, but many lack the funding and the political will to invest in projects that are never glamorous and sometimes not even visible. Springfield's overflow control plan – a consent decree reached with the Environmental Protection Agency which promises \$200 million in the City's sewer system – is a plan which would have cost us \$600 million if it were not built on ingenuity. EPA has agreed to allow us to try new things, such as a successful approach to spend a relatively small amount of money fixing private inflow and infiltration (I & I) to save a large amount of money on downstream, expensive facilities.

Because we have made very wise decisions as a community and because we invested in things that matter most AND we have addressed fiscal challenges head on, Springfield continues to be positioned as a smart and thriving city. Again—sound decisions based upon a good foundation.

Public Safety

In our recent retreat we also agreed that public safety is Council's top priority. We want to encourage a systemic approach, as best we can, to addressing public safety, to include substance abuse, mental health, courts, public defenders, jail, staffing, funding and all related components. We need to focus on what our **next steps** will be. We want to be more proactive and enforce all existing laws.

Unfortunately, our needs clearly outweigh our resources. But we are working to identify existing resources that may be of use. The proposed operating budget for next year includes ongoing funding for the twenty-one police officers obtained through federal grants over the past several years. This is a commitment made over the last three years, and it is a priority we intend to keep.

On Tuesday evening, Council added three police officers and two support staff positions during the budget process for FY2017-2018.

Capital improvements and equipment, especially for our firefighters and police officers, have not been funded for years. A funding stream has

not been available. City staff, at Council's direction, is investigating whether we could use existing funds from the Level Property Tax to move forward on critical public safety capital needs.

In addition, we are committed to growing our partnerships across the community aimed at reducing crime and domestic violence through good solid community policing and innovation—programs such as our Zone Blitz efforts or police officers' use of iPads to connect suspects with mental health resources.

We also know that public health is a major component of public safety, as evidenced through efforts like the Regional Health Assessment and the proactive approach of the staff of the Springfield-Greene County Health Department and their work with the numerous health care institutions in our area.

We are also looking at transportation infrastructure. Those investments begin with innovation, and Springfield has a tremendous transportation story to tell. The ever-increasing number of passengers traveling through the Springfield-Branson National Airport, the resounding

renewal of the 1/8 and 1/4 cent transportation and capital improvements sales taxes, and our leadership in establishing a workable statewide model for Transportation Network Companies. This community served as a trailblazer in that effort and I know we can take that trailblazing approach and apply it to much more.

Legislative Engagement

Our final emphasis is on enhanced legislative engagement. We want to increase City Council's personal engagement in the state legislative process and provide helpful input and support to our state legislative delegation. It helps both the City and state if our legislators understand our issues and concerns. Our legislators have a difficult job and must weigh countless priorities. We want to be supportive and helpful.

Our retreat was both enjoyable and successful. We are beginning work immediately. At Tuesday's City Council meeting, each of these priorities were referred to a committee to begin leading that effort.

State of the City

So what is the state of our city? Overall we are in good health—and I am very optimistic about our future. The reason, simply put, is our people.

I had the pleasure of recently appearing on *The Mystery Hour*, a popular locally produced late night show. As an aside, the highlight of the show, for me, was the opportunity to mention a project of Ms. Williams' first grade class at Rountree to focus on the environment. The class decided to write to the Mayor and urge him to help save the oceans and encourage recycling. Of course, it didn't hurt that my granddaughter, Ada Montgomery, was in the class. The handwritten letters from each of the students began with "Dear Mayor" ...but Ada's said "Dear Papa" ---- the very least she could have done was say "Dear Mayor Papa."

In any event, in a video about his show, emcee Jeff Houghton issued a rallying cry for people to build something here in Springfield rather than going somewhere else and being a part of someone else's machine. Springfield is home to innovators, entrepreneurs, business owners and

dreamers, people creating something on their own. I agree with Jeff—
Springfield is the kind of place you can make up what you want to do.

And as he says to conclude the video, we are not here because we gave
up---we are here because we jumped in.

I am constantly impressed by the energy and enthusiasm of the
generation of young adults entering civic life in Springfield. Both the
young and those young at heart are stepping up and claiming their spot
to help ensure our community is one in which all people can thrive.

I would encourage you, if you are not already doing so, to get involved—
whether it is in one of our city volunteer boards or commissions or in
numerous other ways that you can give back to the community. Make
the investment of time.

In closing, let me say that I am so encouraged by what the future holds
for Springfield. Walt Whitman said “A great city is that which has the
greatest men and women.” By that measure, Springfield is truly a great
city. We are a city that can truly be a beacon for our state and nation.

I look forward to serving you as we work on making that investment together.

Thank you.