

Warrenville State of the City Address
BY WARRENVILLE MAYOR DAVID BRUMMEL
Delivered on February 25, 2013

Good evening and welcome. I appreciate it very much that you have chosen to join us tonight as we reflect on what has happened in Warrenville over the past year, what is going on currently, and how our prospects look going forward. A special thank you to the West Suburban Chamber of Commerce for providing refreshments to complement this evening's event.

In preparing for tonight, I was looking over my copy of the previous year's State of the City Address, and I was impressed by how much material from last year could easily find a place in this year's effort. A lot of issues and projects carry over from one year to the next, and community progress is more or less a continuous process, that doesn't necessarily stop at the end of one year, and then begin anew at the start of the next. In the evolution of a community, it's easy to blur the timeline. Looking back, the years just sort of blend together, and it's sometimes hard to remember what happened when.

As I was about to put aside last year and set to work on this year, the little "C'mon-Dave-what-could-go-wrong?" imp who is a frequent squatter on my left shoulder, and also a frequent source of intriguing, if often misguided, inspiration, whispered in my ear: "I'll bet if you took the 2012 State of the City, changed some dates, deleted a couple of things, added some new details, inserted some up-to-date topical references, and, you know, punched it up a bit, you could just use last year's speech. This would allow you to reclaim, for other pursuits, the nearly three days of your life that you will have to invest to write the State of the City for 2013."

Given that even I couldn't remember anything I said last year without digging out my dog-eared copy from my files, I had to consider that there might be something here. Admittedly, this particular imp had proposed some pretty boneheaded things in the past, and I generally had the good sense to view his promptings with a jaundiced eye, but this suggestion, on first blush, had the look of pure genius!

I could avoid the potential for the stress I had to endure last year, when my hard drive crashed, and ate the only copy of my just-completed speech, while I was engaged in some last minute editing the morning of the day it was to be given.

There's a happy memory.

The imp was nothing if not persistent, and continued: "Plus", he smiled impishly, "you know writing these things is hard work. You already sweated it out last year. Why do it again? Take the easy way out. No one will know! They won't remember!"

Oh, I was sorely tempted. After all, what could go wrong?

Well, what the imp on the left shoulder giveth, the imp on the right shoulder taketh away. The annoying little bubble-bursting imp on my other side, who so delights in denying me new

adventures, just had to chime in: "Allow me to point out a couple of things," he began, even as I reached to cover my ears.

"First, if you hadn't procrastinated so earnestly this year, not to mention last year, you wouldn't need to consider plans of such dubious merit. Second, anyone in this room tonight could pull up last year's State of the City Address, on the internet, in less than a minute, should they be curious as to why your talk had somewhat of a familiar ring to it, although some of them would need one of their kids to do it for them."

Slowly, with much dismay, I saw Door # 1, the much-desired, easy-way-out door, begin to swing shut, and Door #2, the three-days-sitting-in-front-of-the-computer door, began to swing wide open.

Well I say, a pox on all "take-the-safe-way-or-you'll-be-sorry" imps! And drat the information age! Once more, there apparently would be no easy way. I really should have started sooner.

So tonight, I begin with this promise: The speech you are about to hear is 99.44% new material. Any similarity to last year's scratchings is purely coincidental.

There is no need to check, so put those smart phones away. They're supposed to be turned off now anyway.

To begin, while I will do my best to phrase things differently, there are some things that need to be said every year. A successful, vibrant community is a group effort. The progress we make in Warrenville toward our goals and toward reaching our full potential is due to the sustained efforts of many people, and I again want to recognize that.

The City Council has, this past year, done an outstanding job as your elected representatives, by making sound decisions to insure the smooth and efficient operation of City functions and service delivery. They continue to make prudent fiscal decisions, while giving thoughtful consideration to how best to sustain Warrenville in the years and decades to come.

I offer a special thank you to Stu Aschauer and Fred Bevier, Ward 1; Bill Weidner and Bob Wilson, Ward 2; Dan Leonard and Matt Wiesbrock, Ward 3; and Leah Goodman and Clare Barry, Ward 4.

I salute you for not only your accomplishments, but also for the respectful and open manner by which you conduct the business of the community, and for the respect and consideration you afford to all our citizens. Thanks also to our other elected officials, City Clerk Emily Larson and Treasurer Bob Johnson.

Our senior, professional staff is charged with carrying out the policies adopted by the elected officials, and taking care of the nuts and bolts of getting everything done on time and, almost always, within budget.

Thanks to: John Coakley, City Administrator; Assistant City Administrator Jennifer McMahon; Police Chief Ray Turano; Community Development Director Ron Mentzer; Public Works Superintendent Mike Smith; Finance Director Kevin Dahlstrand. Literally, we could not do it without you.

Thanks also to our employees, whether in the office or out there in the neighborhoods. You are the ones who have the most contact and interaction with our citizens, and the feedback I receive tells me you are competent, helpful, friendly, respectful and prompt. We are all appreciative for your good work and loyalty to Warrentville.

Speaking of good work and loyalty, I would like to call attention to a much valued member of our staff who will be leaving us soon. Ana Vainisi, Executive Assistant and Deputy City Clerk, who will have been with the City for 25 years this coming April 11, will be retiring on April 16. We are still trying to determine how many people we will have to hire to accomplish all that Ana does. Could be as few as three but we are hoping for less than five. Ana, we will miss you and offer you our very best wishes as you embark on your new adventure with Frank.

We will be hosting a reception for Ana just before the regular City Council meeting on April 15. Please stop in to wish Ana and Frank bon voyage.

It is also appropriate to highlight the many positive contributions made by the volunteer members of our City Commissions: Plan Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals; ESDA; Environmental Advisory Commission; Bicyclist and Pedestrian Advisory Commission; Electrical Commission; Fire and Police Board of Commissioners; Tourism and Arts Commission; Police Pension Board. Reading the end-of -year reports from these groups, and looking at their accomplishments along with their goals for the coming year, always makes me appreciate how much we depend on our dedicated volunteers to make good things happen.

I'd like to recognize that The City, even with community-minded elected officials, inspired professional staff, competent, hard working employees, and dedicated volunteers, can't do it alone. We enjoy and appreciate positive and productive relationships with the Warrentville Fire Protection District, Warrentville Park District, Warrentville Library District, Community Unit School District 200, DuPage County, and the DuPage Forest Preserve District. Each of these important entities contributes to making Warrentville the special place it is.

I would be remiss if I did not include my oft-repeated PSA and perennial request for all of you to get engaged with some aspect of community life. Positive community involvement is a win-win situation. The community wins, because good things that probably wouldn't happen otherwise, get accomplished with the aid of your time and talents. You win, because as you participate, you inevitably learn and grow in ways you could not have anticipated. Will there be times you regret sticking your neck out? Certainly. But I have yet to talk to someone coming out of a volunteer experience who hasn't confirmed that they would do it again. At the very least, your circle of friends and acquaintances is certain to grow.

Last year when we met for this occasion, before I got into the community highlights for the past year, I said a couple of things, that one year later, I think remain an accurate and compact description of how Warrentville is doing, so I will repeat them to you now.

I said: "All things considered, for the moment and for the immediate future, Warrentville is in pretty good shape, and long term, our prospects as a community are looking better than they have in a couple of years. While there is not a lot of large-font headline stuff, there is much in the pipeline and in progress, and a lot of energy is being invested in preparing for the future." I haven't the time, and you haven't the endurance, for me to chronicle for you tonight all the good things going on in Warrentville, so what follows is my executive summary.

I would like to start with two things which have a huge impact on our citizens that I want to particularly highlight. The first is ongoing, and concerns how we handle your money. I'll begin with some numbers: The City's General Fund added approximately \$685,000 in fund reserves for the fiscal year, while the FY 2012 budget initially anticipated the use of \$355,000 in fund reserves, a positive swing of a little over \$1,000,000. Approximately 90% of that was made up of expenditures coming in well under budget, with total expenditures of \$9,400,672 versus the budgeted expenditures of \$10,361,855.

Additionally, revenues came in over budget by just over \$100,000, on total revenue of approximately \$9,870,000.

These numbers, all of which we all agreed earlier we all will have forgotten by next year, are still helpful because of what they illustrate: Warrentville continues to live within its means. Let me also add this: Warrentville continues to have no debt. Not a penny of the taxes you and I pay to the City goes for debt service. All of our revenues go toward providing staff and services at a level consistent with what our citizens have told us they want.

Contrast our situation with that of the Federal Government, where all the taxes we pay do not even cover the debt service on the National Debt, and the State of Illinois, where the income tax we pay doesn't even cover pension obligations, and the pile of unpaid bills to vendors approaches \$90 billion. Warrentville is proof that government can be fiscally responsible. If anybody from Washington or Springfield wishes to stop by for some pointers, we'll buy them a cup of coffee. With cash.

We also have someone on staff who could offer graduate-level lessons on overcoming obstacles and getting the job done. For many years we have had a noise problem along our western border because of the trains. It got much worse when Canadian National purchased the tracks and increased traffic dramatically. I live a mile and a half from the tracks, and on a summer night with the window open, it was not uncommon to be awakened, from a sound sleep, by the jarring blasts from the horn of a passing train. During the day, it was easier to ignore these frequent intrusions, that is, if you didn't live close to the tracks. I worked in a couple of homes located immediately adjacent to the tracks, and I recall that even when you heard the train coming, when that horn blasted a couple of hundred feet away, it was like an air horn going off next to your ear.

Well, no more. The Quiet Zone at the Batavia Road crossing finally became a reality last year. After seven years of frustration, delays, opposition, bureaucratic red tape and jumping through hoops, train horns are a rarity instead of a constant, unavoidable intrusion. The person most responsible for this sweet victory is Assistant City Administrator Jenn McMahon. Jenn refused to give up, and now there is quiet.

On top of this, Jenn successfully administered the Sound Mitigation Reimbursement Program, which, since 2010, has gone through two phases, and distributed nearly all of the \$1.2 million provided by CN, to be used by eligible homeowners along the tracks for upgrades that would reduce the negative impact of noise associated with the increased train traffic.

Both of these efforts have had a huge positive impact on a large number of Warrenville citizens, and this work exemplifies the Gold Standard of service that our staff and employees strive to provide every day.

While we are on the subject of high service standards, I'd like to share excerpts from an email, dated February 6, 2013, that was sent to our Building Inspector, Ray Atkinson, by the Project Superintendent for the Procure Treatment Center recently completed in Cantera:

"Ray, let me begin by thanking you and your staff for all of your help, assistance and understanding throughout all 4 phases at the cancer center.

You have made this the best experience I've EVER HAD with any city inspections, on ANY of the sites/projects I've ever superintended in the past 23 years that I've been a superintendent/GC!!

You and your staffs ability to not only appreciate the time sensitive matter of these projects, but your approach to inspections and willingness to make yourself available on weekends, and/or evening inspections, is ABSOLUTELY RARE, and greatly appreciated by our company as well as by the tenant.

I can truly tell you that your approach and help has made this project a HUGE success, and for that I am extremely grateful.

Please forward my gratitude to the rest of your inspectors that were involved...You're the BEST!!!"

Ray did forward this, as requested, to his boss, Community Development Director, Ron Mentzer, along with this comment, so typical of Ray: "Kind of makes me smile."

Me too, Ray. Me too.

There are a lot of ways to encourage quality economic development. One of them is for the community to have a reputation for high but reasonable standards, which are clearly articulated and communicated in a timely manner, coupled with prompt and helpful service. Over the years, Ron's department has earned Warrenville that reputation. Thank you Ron Mentzer, Ray

Atkinson, Debra Swinden, and everyone in Community Development for your dedication to an especially high level of helpfulness and service.

And a big thank you along with congratulations to Code Enforcement Officer Sonya Shearer, for earning Warrenville the Code Enforcement Agency of the Year Award from the Illinois Association of Code Enforcement. Well done, Sonya!

Continuing in this same vein, over at our Police Department, Chief Ray Turano was selected to join the Executive Board of Directors for the DuPage County Major Crimes Task Force. The MCTF was formed in 1997, and Chief Turano was an original member. Congratulations, Chief!

Sgt. Brian Melvin was selected as FIAT SWAT Commander. Brian is now responsible for the oversight of 25 trained SWAT officers, and coordinates with all FIAT member communities during SWAT team callouts. This is a tremendous responsibility, as Brian is in charge of all training, assignments and tactical strategies during a call out. We are proud of you, Brian.

Thanks to both Chief Turano and Sgt. Melvin for accepting these important positions in the larger community. This type of extra engagement benefits Warrenville because what you experience and learn you are able to then bring back to the department and share. You also, by raising Warrenville's profile in a positive way, identify us as a well-run community, one that is willing to work with its neighbors for the common good.

One last shout out: While IDOT was not able to accomplish their goal of having all lanes of traffic open by the end of the 2012 construction season, they are far enough along for us to see that this project is going to turn out well for Warrenville. All things considered, it's going to look good and function well.

That this hugely disruptive project has gone as well as it has is due to the efforts of Ron Mentzer, who has worked tirelessly to reduce the negative impacts of the design, as well as inject quite a number of desired elements, and the hard field work of Public Works Superintendent Mike Smith, whose countless hours on site, pursuing Warrenville's best interests, have held the IDOT contractors feet to the fire. From what I have seen of Mike's abilities over the years, and his efforts on this monster project, I would confidently offer that if Mike had been in charge of the whole thing, all the traffic lanes would have been open long ago, and half the landscaping would be done by now, not to mention that there would have been less disruption. For both Ron and Mike, excellence and service are not just abstractions, they are a way of life.

Other notes, happenings and observations:

If I had a nickel for every time someone asked me over the past decade what was going on with the closed restaurant/piano store at the corner of Batavia Road and Butterfield, and why can't the City do something, well, I'd have a pretty nice pile of nickels.

Certainly, I'd have enough to head down to Starbucks and have Marty brew me up the most expensive cup of coffee ever, the one that goes for \$47 and change, although I'm not sure it would be prudent to risk acquiring a taste for that particular item.

I hope you have noticed that this long standing, high visibility community embarrassment is now conspicuous by its absence. This spring, all will be able to enjoy that magnificent magnolia tree without the distraction of an unsightly, decrepit structure as background. As several citizens have pointed out, when re-development finally comes to that site, that beautiful tree needs to be somehow saved.

Another run down structure, the house just west of the Police Station, has also been removed. Both of these buildings were demolished by their respective owners, when they determined that it made more financial sense to remove them rather than to bring them up to the minimum property maintenance standards of the community.

These decisions were made necessary by the adoption, in the spring of 2012, of the City of Warrentville Vacant Building Registration Program, which requires owners to register their vacant residential and commercial buildings "to protect the livability, appearance and social fabric of local neighborhoods." This new ordinance was prompted by the proliferation, for a number of reasons, of apparently abandoned, run down structures in Warrentville.

This program requires, after a building has been identified and registered, that the owner must, within two years, bring it up to, and maintain it in accordance with, the City's Property Maintenance Code, or tear it down. As of January 3 of this year, 68 vacant buildings have been registered. Because of this program, the appearance of our neighborhoods and our property values are going to improve, one way or another.

Also, currently under discussion is careful consideration of how to move ahead with a Rental Registration/Inspection/Crime Free Housing Program, which, in the long term, will benefit both renters and landlords, as well as the community in general. We hope to make progress on crafting and implementing this program in the coming year.

I have always appreciated the 24/7 availability of the City's website, as well as the wealth of information that can be accessed there. It has been a good site, but its time has passed.

I am happy to report that the Council approved, this past November, the hiring of a consultant to redesign the City website. There have been many upgrades to our site since 2005, but it is time for a complete do-over. There are now several generally accepted standards for municipal websites, that not only make them more user friendly, but also make them more uniform in terms of layout and navigation, so that no matter which community's site you visit, while the information will be unique, the way to access what you are looking for will be the similar.

The City has begun the process of considering and implementing our third TIF, or Tax Increment Financing District. TIF #1 ended on December 31, 2009, after an incredibly successful run, and TIF #2 was ended five years early by the Council at the end of 2012.

Redevelopment remains near to top of our priorities and concerns, and TIF #3, as envisioned, will be a very useful tool to make quality community improvements a reality. All citizens are invited and encouraged to participate in this important process, which has the potential to bring significant change to parts of the community.

The best plans nearly always come out of collaboration between citizens and officials, so please make time to attend public information meetings to be informed and have your voice heard. The next meeting, to take another look at a possible roundabout road configuration for the Old Town area will be at 7 PM on Wednesday, February 27, in the Council chambers at City Hall. It would be good to see you there.

Flood prevention and mitigation also continues to be a priority for the City. Working cooperatively with the County and the Forest Preserve District, The Preferred Alternative Plan, adopted unanimously by the Council, continues to move forward. Neighborhood meetings for Riverside Parkway and Iroquois Court continue to be held to determine citizen preferences for mitigation efforts in these neighborhoods. Based on the formal response from the Emerald Green Homeowners Association, it has been decided that they do not wish to proceed with the flood mitigation plans suggested for their neighborhood by the County.

Also as part of the Preferred Alternative Plan, the City requested that the County analyze potential modifications to the gate operations of Fawell Dam, on both the front and back ends of storm events, in order to maximize available storage of the flood pool, without compromising the City of Naperville. County staff anticipates that the results of this analysis will be available in 2-3 months. At that point, staff from the City of Warrentville, the City of Naperville and the State of Illinois will meet to develop a path forward for modifications of Fawell Dam gate operations.

Enhancements to the Bower School berm were completed last year, giving the school a much higher level of flood protection, and the Williams Road bridge is scheduled to be replaced beginning in mid-2013, with federal and state grants to cover 80% of the cost.

On February 13, DuPage County hosted a Phase II Preferred Alternative meeting, and provided information on flood mitigation for the River Road corridor from Warrentville Road to McDowell Grove.

Phase II includes plans for a multi-use path proposed for the top of a berm along the east side of River Road, as well as the replacement of the Warrentville Road bridge, scheduled at this point for 2015. The beauty of this successful collaboration of three governmental units is twofold. Warrentville will see much improved flood protection and mitigation, and nearly all the funding for these improvements will come from Federal, State and County sources. Much needed improvements with significant long term benefits for Warrentville are to be funded principally by outside sources. From a municipal perspective, it's pretty hard to top that.

Here are some recent fiscal year total construction values for Warrentville: FY 2011, \$10.1 million; FY2012, \$7.7 million; FY 2013 is projected to be \$30 million. I like where this is going.

Construction highlights for FY 2013 include build-out of Maple Terrace single-family subdivision; completion and opening of Gardner School on Ferry Road; remodeling and anticipated opening of Latitude 42, a state-of-the-art, cutting-edge family entertainment complex, in April, 2013; RR Donnelley remodeling; EN Engineering remodeling; and Patterson Medical remodeling. These last three businesses are relocating to Warrentville and will add 870 employees to Cantera's daytime population to begin with, with a total of 1050 employees

ultimately projected for these growing companies. This is very good news for our restaurants, hotels, stores and exercise and entertainment venues in Cantera.

Some, quiet, behind the scenes stuff you should still know about: This past year both the Sergeants and Public Works contracts were settled. This was a successful, timely effort utilizing collaboration between management and labor that did not involve the use of attorneys (other than language review) which saved money and also built trust. We are establishing an impressive record of productive and reasonable negotiations with our employees.

The City successfully launched Electrical Aggregation in 2012, utilizing 100% green energy and passing 100% of the savings benefit on to citizens and small businesses, with a projected average savings for homeowners of \$200 per year. The initial contract was for two years, after which time there will be a re-evaluation of the success of this program.

A personal favorite from last year: 2012 saw the very first Mayor's Fitness Challenge, which had folks of all ages and fitness levels in friendly competition with the Mayor to accumulate activity minutes toward earning a special, custom designed tee shirt, awarded for completion of the program. Over 200 people had some fun and gained some fitness (and hopefully some new good habits!) through their participation. I hope to have the Second Annual Mayor's Fitness Challenge this coming summer.

I'm considering adding a weight loss competition component this time around, as a certain Mayor I know is finding it necessary to hold his breath in order to button his jeans.

So, there you have it. Some snapshots of your hometown taken over the past year, featuring some fine folks serving you, that I am grateful and privileged to work with, along with some significant things to anticipate, as Warrentville continues to mature as a small town second-to-none. I know I speak for everyone here at City Hall when I say that we look forward to the year ahead and the opportunity it brings to work together for a better Warrentville.

I reaffirm my commitment to and my vision for our town: I want Warrentville to be the place where others come to see how a small town does it right.

Good night, and thanks for coming out!