



Mayor - City of Cortland

400 North High Street, Cortland, Ohio 44410

Annual Report of the Mayor to Cortland City Council
January 18, 2005

Introduction

The primary purpose of this report is to document activities during FY 2004 and the condition of the City of Cortland at the conclusion of FY 2004. I want to thank my staff for their support throughout the year and everyone else that contributed to making this year a successful one for the city.

The city completed the year with continued financial solvency. Progress has been made in several business improvement areas targeted by the city administration. Through the strategic planning process, a number of projects for improvement of the city have been started with significant progress in several areas. Much of this progress has been through the hard work of volunteers.

Finance

The city completed 2004 with a total fund balance of \$1,608,000 which is a reduction of \$635,000 or 28 percent from the carryover 2003 balance. This reduction was primarily due to additional projects undertaken in 2004 and a \$120,000 carryover of grant funds for 2003 projects that were completed in 2004. Total expenditures for FY 2004 were \$5,519,000, an increase over 2003 of 10.5 percent.

The most significant balance reductions were in the general fund, water fund, State and Federal grants and Fire Levy. There was an increase in the sewer fund of \$33,000, and an increase in the Police Levy fund primarily due to the delay until 2005 of the labor contract renewal. Spending in the general fund can not be as aggressive in 2005 or there will be further deterioration in fund balances.

Service department

Progress has been made in several business improvement areas targeted by the city administration. The focus throughout this year has been to stabilize city services through improved problem resolution and tracking, adherence to procedures, and documentation of procedures and processes. Long range capital plans are to be

developed for all city service areas. This will allow the city to plan for financial needs well into the future and continue to maintain or improve current levels of city services.

Water

The water fund balance decreased by 27% with expenditures of \$428,000 to support the water department. Total revenues from water billings were \$399,000 a decrease of 4 percent from 2003.

Water pressure continues to be a problem in several areas in the city and a model of the system is being updated to study alternative solutions. These alternatives will be incorporated into a long range capital plan to be developed. The plan will also consider the age of the water delivery system and replacement requirements for well equipment, storage towers and water lines. In addition capacity upgrades and additional potential customer areas will be considered in the plan.

Sanitary Sewers

The Sanitary Sewer fund balance increased by 6% to \$692,000 with total expenditures of \$946,000 in 2004. Revenues from sewer billings were \$984,000 down 3 percent from 2003. The changes in the water and sewer fund balances and impending need for water system upgrades point to the urgent need for a rate adjustment.

A sanitary sewer infiltration study was completed in 2004 and 3 areas of concern were identified. The amount of infiltration identified in the study probably does not justify a large scale effort to identify and correct problems. Incentive programs for individual homeowner improvement will be investigated and opportunities for reduction of infiltration will be pursued as they present themselves in other projects.

A long range capital plan will be developed for the sanitary sewer system and upgrades will be identified to support growth areas in the city. Problem areas that have been identified and corrective action will be incorporated into the plan. Particular attention will be directed to areas where infiltration can be catastrophic as it was in the August 2004 flood of the system.

Storm sewers

Phase I of the Rosewae/Charles storm sewer project was completed in 2004. Funds for the completion of the remainder of this project are being requested for 2005. A long range capital plan will be developed for the storm sewer system and upgrades will be identified to correct problem areas in the city.

Mapping of the entire system will be a priority for 2005. Particular attention will be directed to areas where improvement can be made to areas affected by the August 2004 flood. Efforts to work with residents to resolve yard flooding issues will continue.

Streets and Roads

Several projects were completed to improve the condition of streets in the city. A grant was utilized to construct a sidewalk along West Main Street from Mecca Street to the city limits. A complete resurfacing of North High Street from Walnut Creek to Philips Rice Road was completed. Streets were resurfaced in the vicinity of the High School and Middle School including, Hillman, Natale, Wakefield, and portions of Portal and Lakeview and curbs were replaced on Wakefield. Deer Creek Trail was also included in this resurfacing.

An inventory of city streets and the year of the last resurfacing has been completed and a 10 year paving and curb replacement plan will be completed in 2005.

City Properties & Parks

There were no additions to city properties during 2004. Several improvements were made to Willow Park including new playground equipment in the children's play area, resurfacing of tennis and basketball courts, and a bocce court and horseshoe court were constructed as an Eagle Scout Project.

Discussions with the county and State Park resulted in a preliminary plan for a phased approach to a new park on North Mecca Street. This Strategic Plan project will be aggressively pursued in 2005.

An appearance committee was formed in accordance with the Strategic Plan. This group recommended and helped complete improvements to Rotary and Point Park. They also recommended the formation of a group to oversee volunteer efforts to improve the appearance of parks and city property.

Police Department

The Police Levy fund balance increased by 36% to \$207,000 with total expenditures of \$826,000 to support the Police department. The primary contributing factor to this increase in fund balance was the delay of contract renewal until 2005.

Fire Department

The Fire Levy fund balance decreased by 7% to \$146,000 with total expenditures of \$886,000 to support the Fire department. A fund for Fire Department Improvements was established to provide for major expenditures. Ambulance billings of \$160,000 were about equal to 2003 billings.

Strategic Plan Initiatives

Other Strategic plan projects that were started in 2004 are:

Formation of an Historic District – A committee was formed to develop a plan to establish an historic district in the city. They have met regularly to pursue this goal and held a meeting in the fall to obtain residents' input. They are currently working on a proposal for the historic district legislation.

Recognize property owners who contribute to city beautification - The Appearance committee developed a process for selecting properties for an award. They obtained a sponsor for the award. The first award was presented in December for holiday decoration. Four residential awards and a business award are planned for 2005.

Increased enforcement of existing zoning laws – Several areas of concentration have been identified and enforcement of permits, abandoned/junk cars, and temporary signs are being pursued.

Create a Business Development Center – The Business Development Committee was formed and plans were completed for a Community Improvement Corporation. The city agreement and CIC by-laws are complete. Legislation will be submitted to council for approval and the forms for incorporation will be filed in 2005.

New Business startup packet – A booklet was developed that includes a welcome letter and all information that a new business requires to comply with city regulations.

Parking – An area along Erie Street has been identified as potential parking for downtown. The property owner has been contacted and lease agreement is in negotiation.

Welcome Packet - A welcome letter, useful city information and a process for collecting local business and non-profit information were completed. Plastic Welcome to Cortland bags were purchased and the packets are being distributed to all new water customers and other identified new residents.

Additional city event sign at City Hall – Installed in 2004.

Cortland Foundation – A charter has been completed and application made for incorporation of a Cortland Foundation.

Attract Fine Dining –Local option ballot issues were passed for three potential locations for dining establishments.

Respectfully Submitted,

Curt Moll