

Dear Mr. Mayor:

As requested, I hereby submit a summary of accomplishments, on-going projects/programs and challenges for your review. Any success listed herein is a collective effort by an engaged City Council and an incredible City team of employees who give their all each and every day. Any challenges are my responsibility as your City Manager. I look forward to your review and guidance and look forward to a strategic planning process with our new Council next year.

I am pleased to summarize our accomplishments, in part, as follows:

## **FINANCE, BUDGETING, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

- a. **Budget Presentation** - We completely overhauled the budget format used in Aiken since the 1950's to bring more detail, transparency and clarity to the budget document. After completely rewriting and reformatting the budget, we were honored to receive national recognition from the Government Finance Officers Association as the recipient of the Distinguished Budget Award.
- b. **Pension Reform** - We evaluated our existing Pension Program and researched national trends in pension reform. We drafted and presented a major change to our pension program from a defined benefit to a defined contribution plan. The new plan meets the requirements necessary to serve our employees well but save millions of tax dollars over the next several decades and beyond. We held a Pension workshop to finalize program design. We are planning to collaborate with the Council before making a final decision on the Plan.
- c. **Health Cost Containment** - We have made several changes to our health care plan to contain escalating costs while minimizing cost to the taxpayers and our employees.
- d. **Purchasing/Procurement** - The City of Aiken did not have a centralized, professional office of procurement and purchasing but has had a decentralized system where hundreds of employees were making purchases through the use of purchase cards. We researched national models and implemented a procurement/purchase system that is state of the art, fully implemented and well managed.

- e. **Operational Audits** - We have conducted operational audits in several Departments resulting in numerous reforms in Public Safety and in decisions on buying more efficient vehicles and a recommendation not to pursue a transfer station in Public Works.
- f. **Annual Audit** - Our annual audit was conducted and resulted in a clean audit report with no material findings.
- g. **Compensation** - After conducting a thorough and confidential employee survey, we begin to work on their major concern, compensation. We heard that employees were concerned not only about the lack of competitive wages but also present internal unfairness between positions and departments. We designed and implemented a New Compensation Plan which was implemented for our Department of Public Safety, as promised, in July and are working on one for the entire Organization to be implemented by the end of the year.
- h. **CPST 4** - We are beginning to prepare a Project list for discussion regarding CPST 4. It is our strong recommendation that, if we do pursue CPST 4, that most of it be committed to funding infrastructure repair and repair of existing City buildings.
- i. **Grants Funding** - We have significantly increased our efforts to search for, and apply for, grants over the past year. We have had some considerable success and have retained the services of a nationally recognized grants firm to assist us in this effort. We have received two grants for Eustis Park and several Public Safety grants to date.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Due to your leadership, we have fundamentally changed the way we address infrastructure maintenance and repair in our City from one resulting in neglect to a comprehensive, pro-active and cost effective system.

- a. **Roads Maintenance Program** - A Roads Maintenance Plan has been funded through the adoption of a roads maintenance fee and an evaluation program is being finalized and will be completed by the end of the year. In 2018, for the first time, a comprehensive Roads Maintenance Program will begin.
- b. **Traffic Mitigation Program** - We are working on a proposal to alleviate traffic on Whiskey Road by developing new roads to divert traffic. We have adopted an additional Franchise Fee to fund new road infrastructure, are working with the County on a comprehensive approach including road redesign and drainage issues and are preparing a grant package through the State Infrastructure Bank to fund the project.
- c. **Water, Sewer, Storm Water Infrastructure Program** - We have begun to implement a complete infrastructure repair program. We have evaluated hundreds of miles of city infrastructure and have begun to implement a long range infrastructure repair and maintenance program starting with Downtown Infrastructure work which has been designed and is on schedule to be completed by the Spring of 2018.
- d. **University Parkway** - We have prepared and will present to you an alternative so that we can begin improvement work on University Parkway that stays within our budgetary resources.
- e. **Bridges** - We have worked with SCDOT to complete the York Street Bridges Replacement Project. We are working with SCDOT to resolve the future of the Fairfield Street and Union Street Bridges.
- f. **Undergrounding Utilities** - We have worked with SCEG on accessing their program which helps finance the undergrounding of utilities, especially in the downtown and surrounding areas. We have begun to research a program for South Boundary Road to preserve the magnificent trees.

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- a. **Eustis Park** - We have restarted the Eustis Park Community Senior Center Project by successfully negotiating with the School District to acquire needed additional land and are finalizing architectural plans to ready for construction. We successfully prepared a grant to assist with this project.
- b. **Northside Park** - We have designed Phase 1 of the Park Project and are moving ahead with a groundbreaking soon.
- c. **Osbon Park** - We are working to make Osbon Park more usable especially for young children with the addition of recreational equipment.
- d. **Department of Public Safety Headquarters** - We commissioned a study to look at the existing DPS Headquarters and it concluded that if we were to use that existing site, that we should demolish and rebuild, which was not financially feasible at this time. We explored alternatives and successfully developed a concept of using an existing building in an area of the City with a higher incidence of crime. We will have a ground breaking for the new project on Oct 29, 2017.
- e. **Airport** - Our Airport Apron Expansion project was completed, a \$2 million project 95% funded by the FAA and State Aeronautics Commission.
- f. **Downtown** - The Alley has been revitalized and it and Bee Lane have been closed to motor vehicular traffic and, with new planters and furnishings, is a centerpiece for downtown revitalization.
- g. **Downtown Stormwater/Hitchcock Woods Conflict** - For over 30 years, the City and the Hitchcock Woods Foundation have been at odds relative to stormwater flow into the Woods. We have been working with a representative group of citizens on resolution. A draft plan has been presented to implement Phase 1 of the project.

## PLANNING, COMMUNITY AFFAIRS AND TOURISM/ HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

- a. **Comprehensive Plan** - We have hired both a Planning Director and Planner and have completed the legally required community Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan. We are evaluating City entryways for improvement and have held several workshops on Richland Avenue.
- b. **Property Maintenance** - We have held a workshop on Property Maintenance issues and, in cooperation with the Aiken Council of Neighborhoods, have drafted several proposed ordinances to address property maintenance issues as well as boarded up buildings.
- c. **Division Consolidation** - We have consolidated several economic development entities into a Community Affairs and Tourism Division that works to market Aiken on multiple levels.
- d. **CSRA Alliance** - The City has gained a seat on the board of the CSRA Alliance for Fort Gordon, which advocates for cyber security projects in the Aiken/Augusta area.
- e. **Crosland Park Property Transfer** - We have partnered with Second Baptist Community Development Corporation to transfer over a dozen properties in Crosland Park and along Abbeville Avenue NW for future redevelopment work and rehabilitated housing.
- f. **Affordable Rental Units** - We approved the construction of affordable rental units by Developer Kevin Connolly that will provide housing opportunities for our residents.
- g. **Aiken Together Partnership** - We have worked with Aiken Together and have committed funding for four museums in the City to celebrate our heritage and support our tourism efforts.

## PUBLIC SAFETY

- a. **Operational Audit** - We have completed a Public Safety operational audit that has resulted in over 90 recommendations that are being implemented.
- b. **Compensation Plan** - As a result of an employee survey, we have drafted and implemented a Compensation Plan designed to address issues of wage competitiveness and fairness in DPS.
- c. **Crime Analytics** - We have researched and introduced a new data-based management system, called Aiken Stat, and are in the process of implementation.
- d. **ADPS Rehabilitation Project** - We have fully researched, proposed and are implementing a rehabilitation project for our new Public Safety Headquarters. The project will cost millions of dollars less than the original tear down and rebuild option recommended earlier.
- e. **Property Responsibility** - We have employed a new strategy, based on Aiken Stat, of holding property owners where there is a high incidence of crime, responsible for implementing safety measures.
- f. **One Aiken** - In response to the Pontoon case, we implemented an initiative known as One Aiken, including the establishment of a Citizens Review Board, an anonymous Complaint Line, more efforts to diversify our workforce and regular sensitivity training for our staff.

## COMMUNICATIONS

- a. **Partnerships** - I have had multiple meetings and have created partnerships with many community stakeholders, which include, but are not limited to:

President and CEO of the Aiken Chamber of Commerce David Jameson, Aiken County School Superintendent Sean Alford, SRS Community Reuse Organization Executive Director Rick McLeod, Aiken Regional Medical Center CEO Vance Reynolds, Lower Savannah River Council of Governments Executive Director Bill Molnar, USC-Aiken Chancellor Sandra Jordan, DOE Savannah River Operations Office Manager Jack Craig, Aiken Corporation Chairman Buzz Rich, ADDA Director Avery Spears-Mahoney, Aiken County Administrator Clay Killian, Woodside POA President Larry Whittenmyer, Aiken Council of Neighborhoods President Gary Yount and Concerned Ministers Fellowship President Paul Bush, to name but a few.

- b. **Citizens Survey** - We commissioned a comprehensive community citizens survey by an outside independent survey expert and have reviewed results with the Council and community. (Survey attached)
- c. **Broadcast Expansion** - We have significantly increased our capability and volume of TV Programming to broadcasting of various City Boards and Commissions, and have created TV programming such as Aiken This Week, Aiken Business Matters, etc. We have brought TV production in-house to increase the amount of programming at a reduced cost.
- d. **Web / Social Media Expansion** - We have significantly increased our presence on Social Media and have made major improvements to our website.

## PUBLIC WORKS

- a. **Operational Audits** - We have conducted two Operational Audits in the Solid Waste Division, one to evaluate our solid waste vehicle efficiency and one to evaluate the feasibility of building a transfer station for solid waste. We adopted recommendations to both evaluate a robotic solid waste vehicle and decided not to move forward with the transfer station option due to a lack of cost effectiveness.
- b. **Consolidation** - We have consolidated DPW operations and are evaluating greater cross training and utilization of personnel across divisions.
- c. **Staff Building** - We continue to build engineering staff capacity to implement our Infrastructure Program.
- d. **Tree Program** - Due to the generosity of an Aiken resident and the Aiken Land Conservancy, we have embarked on a comprehensive program to catalog all significant trees on public lands in Aiken and are planning to draft a management plan.

Sincerely,

John Klimm  
*City Manager*