



Office of Mayor Peter Schwartzman

State of the City, delivered on 11/20/2023 at the Chamber of Commerce's Thanksgiving Luncheon:

Hello everyone, all distinguished guests. I am here to give the State of the City. I must be honest with all of you. Things are grim, quite grim in fact. The leaders are at odds and the prospects for future progress appear bleak. (pause, scan the entire audience)

Whoops, that was the wrong speech! That was the one written by some of our online commentators and other curmudgeons in the area!

Let me give you the REAL State of our City!

We are doing fantastic and 2023 is turning out to be one of our best years, despite many of the government challenges and hiccups that occurred.

What makes 2023 so good?

- We took down the monstrosity on the public square! (something that took too long but now that it is down, that lot is prime for a significant positive re-development)
- We learned that 2022 was in the black by over \$7.5 million (meaning, revenues exceeded expenditures by a lot)! This allowed us to pay (nearly \$2 million) for the next phase of our newly remodeled and reopened Hawthorne Pool. It also allowed us to pay three years of prior Fire & Police pension obligations, over \$3.5 million! It allowed us to put in \$230,000 for Public Safety Locker Room improvements as well as an additional \$200,000 to make HT Custer Park more accessible to residents with physical challenges.
- We spent \$1.5 million on roads and streets in 2023.

What about PUBLIC SAFETY, a major priority of mine?

- We hired and trained 13 new police officers since last December and simultaneously reduced overtime by \$132,000! And these new officers dramatically improve the diversity of our police force as well (to better reflect the demographics of our community). This effort fulfills one of our 23 strategic goals! Nice going!
- We increased the Fire Department staffing by 3 firefighters, the first increase in 42 years! We also reduced firefighter overtime costs substantially.
- These additions and savings improved the quality of life of our officers and fire fighters, something that is our priority for the men and women who serve us so bravely and valiantly.
- What about BUSINESS you ask?
 - The women/minority startup grant program, that started in April 2022, which brought us 9 new businesses in 2022, was surpassed by 13 new ones in 2023. These businesses are set to create 55 new jobs over the next two years! Great work Ken & Abby



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- In 2023, we also saw two new businesses add significant good paying jobs as well: FCA added 100 jobs; and Natures Treatment's \$4M expansion will add another 30.
 - Future skilled employees in our community will be available given our booming Vocational Center (with more students enrolled than ever) and our rocking CEO Program!
- In 2023, we will have paid off Logistics Park Bond, opening up \$320K in future years for sound, impactful investments!
- PROJECT 350 is way ahead of schedule...we expected about 70 trees a year...we are averaging over 130 a year! (thanks team Simkins!)
- In 2023, the impressive Food Bank (River Bend) completed its first year located in our community.
- In 2023, we continue to take ENDING homelessness seriously (another of the City Council's strategic goals):
 - This winter's Warming Shelter is our best yet: best services, best finances, best coordination of community partners ever & earliest opening
- We invested \$1 million in HT Custer Park and make significant improvements to paths on North side of Lake Storey.
- 2023 saw record numbers at Bunker Links, our incredible municipal golf course!
- In 2023 visitors to Galesburg have been up, hotel stays have been up up...all signs that the Galesburg Tourism and Visitors Bureau is operating better than ever. Thanks to Randy & Tessa for their hard work!
- 2023 saw major improvements to our downtown! I already mentioned the razing of the Broadview but let's not forget the tearing down the Harrington Home & the upcoming demolition of 140-144 East Main (to allow the expansion Park Plaza!). Thanks Steve G and your staff!

I could go on and on!

Mind you, all these things were done despite:

- an election that brought on 3 new council members;
- a revolving door of City Managers (all dedicated but revolving nonetheless);
- a vacancy in the position of Public Works director for several months;
- and the switching of our City's legal counsel!

Just imagine what we could do without these challenges!

And this is just what we have going for us as we venture into 2024!

2024 will be BIGGGGGGG

- Starting with the New Library (a \$20 million project)!
- The Major Loop around LAKE STOREY will be completed! (\$2 million project!)
- \$3 million will be dedicated to improved roads, sidewalks and curbs
- We will finalize a NEW and impactful community center!



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- A new frisbee golf course will be erected at Lake Storey!

But the Community has shown great ambition as well! Cases in point: The Civic Arts Center major move and renovation, the Knox-Galesburg Symphony multiphase expansion, a new outdoor performance center at the old OT Johnson site across from Park Plaza, tons of new murals, and more

- A new housing study's findings will breed New housing developments & investments.
- An extensive Transportation study's findings will yield better public transportation (including routes into the County)
- We will have a new park on East Main entrance (thanks Team Simkins)
- We will inject roughly a half-a-million dollars into Lancaster Park (on the southwest side of town)
- And perhaps biggest of all, there will be \$220 million of new investment in renewable energy in the COUNTY!
- And, hopefully, we can finalize the RAILROAD HALL OF FAME dream!

And surely there will be MORE great things!

And who is going to lead us through all of this greatness?

A visionary new City Manager: Eric Hanson...a man who is very ambitious, well-versed in the grand opportunities in the 21st Century cities, and perhaps most importantly, someone communicative, transparent, and respectful to all members of our diverse community!

So you can see why I am VERY excited about Galesburg, its present and its FUTURE!

We have our challenges, as do all communities, but we are going to meet those head on and make further progress on all FRONTS!

While I hope I have reminded you of Galesburg's greatness today, I know most of you weren't surprised to hear it. Why? Because you have been a major part of bringing all of this to FRUITION. We have done it all together. We can and will continue to do more! Working together and being bold and confident, our collective future is very bright indeed!

Thank you for allowing me to serve you for another year.

It is truly a blessing to be a member of the Galesburg community! We are Galesburg!

Have a happy and restful holiday season!

Thank you!

Mayor Schwartzman