

## **State of the Village 2014**

The Village of Thornville continues on its path of strong financial performance and being a vibrant community in which to live. During this calendar year, the Village accomplished several key projects. These include infrastructure projects such as repainting the water tower, road crack sealing, installing a new UV system at the sewer plant and sewer lining for I&I. Additionally the Village did a number of changes to the way it does business including contracting new provider for trash service, and adjusting water and sewer rates. Finally the Village disposed of property that was no longer necessary for municipal purposes including the former Hardware Store lot, and village vehicles.

Fiscally the Village continues to do well. End of year bank balance is at \$1.8 million dollars. YTD expenditures were at \$1.3 million. Revenues were at \$1.36 million. The Village is well positioned to weather economic uncertainty. It is also well positioned for emergencies that may arise. It is important to note that these numbers have been arrived at over a number of years due to the hard work and diligence of Village employees, department heads and interested citizens. The Village will continue a stance of fiscal responsibility and conserve its resources appropriately.

Some major projects may be on the horizon. While the state has repaved SR 188 and plans to pave SR 204, the rest of the Village's roads continue to show their age and wear. Temporary measures of patching, crack sealing were initiated in 2013. The Village will continue with this program and look at roads that need more serious attention.

The Parks and Recreation levy is up for a renewal in 2014. Despite the strong performance in other Village funds, the parks fund remains depleted. In addition, the pool fund also remains at the bare minimum necessary to operate the Village Pool. The Pool itself is near a crisis point. Expenses to repair or refurbish the pool are not appropriated at the level necessary to keep the pool operational. Funds to outright replace the pool are not available. The Village plans to ask residents for a renewal of the levy at the same rate at which it currently sits. The Village will explore ways to keep the Pool open and the parks running. Funds may need to be moved for this purpose.

During the summer of 2013, the Village experienced a number of problems with vandalism and petty crime. The Village police department was instrumental in identifying and breaking up the groups of individuals that were responsible. Those individuals have been held accountable to the extent possible under law. Our police chief and auxiliary officers continue to provide exemplary service at low cost to Village residents. Our officers often flex their schedule to provide coverage on evenings and weekends. Additionally they apply their skills, knowledge and experience overseas to protect the residents of the Village.

As many residents now are likely seeing, adjustments were made to the water and sewer rates in the Village. While the rates were not raised, the initial per 2000 gallons of water and sewer capacity are no longer free. These changes were not made lightly. This was the result of a water and sewer rate study conducted by RCAP which forecast that expenditures will increase over time and that the Village should begin to save money in it's budgets to accommodate future repairs or replacement of water and sewer system infrastructure. While the Village was operating responsibly with it's current budget, an increase will keep the Village in a better position for the future. Also of note, more households in the Village have allowed the amount collected for the OWDA loan for sewer debt to be reduced from \$40 to \$38 dollars.

The Village remains an affordable and attractive community in which to purchase a home and raise a family. From a growth standpoint, the Village continues to see a modest number of new homes being built within the Village municipal limit. Particularly exciting to see is activity in the former Phase 2 subdivision of Thornhill. New lots are now available for members of the community. The Village remains cautiously optimistic that growth will continue in 2014.

During 2014 the Village will continue performing studies of the inflow and infiltration issues with the sewer system. Residents may be asked to look at their portion of the system to help meet EPA mandates. Unfortunately this may mean replacing clay and broken connections with new lines. This also may mean removing sump pumps and basement drains from the system. The Village will continue to keep residents posted.

From a business and commercial standpoint, the Village is faced with a number of challenges. Retail and commercial space within the Village remains vacant and a few businesses have closed in the last year. In addition, land reserved for future commercial development along state route 13 may be detached from the Village. While this area has not seen activity, the Village believes this territory is important for the future growth of the community and will continue to pursue its options.

While the downtown has vacancies, it is important to note that there are a number of operating businesses run by hard working individuals who continually demonstrate their commitment to the community. In addition, the gas station on SR 13 has undergone a renovation and is under new ownership. These give us hope that there is still opportunity to bring customers into the Village creating more opportunity for residents and business owners. The Village will continue to look for opportunities to improve the business landscape of its downtown and commercial areas.

Of final import, community support and the spirit of volunteerism continue to be a cornerstone upon which the Village operates. Many, many residents contribute their time to various local events, clubs, churches and other organizations. Their time and commitment helps make this community a great place to live. As we open 2014, I

would ask residents who have time and ability to consider spending their time helping a community organization. The Village government is also in need of volunteers. The Village Council currently has one opening for a council member. Additionally the planning and zoning board has two openings for resident members. While it is a lot to ask to spend time away from family given that we all have work and busy lives, I ask that you consider contributing your time toward making the Village of Thornville a better place to live, work and thrive.