

(SLIDE 1 – Cover)

What a year it's been since I last visited with you. Some good...some not-so-good. But mostly good! What I'd like to do this morning is to do a mayoral version of 20/20. I believe I can cover about 20 Big Ticket Items in about 20 minutes or so. Following President Freeman's remarks, we should both have time for any questions.

(SLIDE 2 – AGN)

We have made considerable progress in our Annie Glidden North Revitalization Project. Better lighting. Better crosswalks. A new Safe Streets parking ordinance. An exciting plan for Welsh Park redevelopment, and ongoing work on the establishment of a fresh food hub. We are putting the finishing touches on a Community Development Corporation, devising ways we can finance the revitalization. The AGN area can once again be an area of our City that is vibrant, alive and safe. It needs to be kept on our municipal radar screen.

(SLIDE 3 - Busses)

Some exciting news continues to evolve with DeKalb's public transit system. This past year, the Huskie Line's merger with TransVac has enabled us to establish new routes to better serve our diverse population. Students. Seniors. Those with disabilities. Of course, you're probably aware of our expanded daily service to the Metra station in Elburn. And,

beginning on October 28, we will be running more routes along Fairview Drive, hopefully putting more folks on busses and taking them to where they can find, and obtain, work at one of our major distribution facilities.

(SLIDE 4 - Cannabis)

Uncharted territory. That's where municipalities throughout Illinois find themselves in as Recreational Marijuana becomes legal on January 1, 2020. Our City Council has made it pretty clear that given our location as a College Town, and the fact that this business presents an opportunity to add revenue, we're postured to enter that marketplace. While we already have several potential applicants for a medical cannabis dispensary, it remains to be seen what the eventual outcome will be. The number of initial licenses will, in fact, be dictated by the State.

(SLIDE 5 – Census)

Counting our residents during a Census may not seem to be important, but...it's absolutely imperative that we do just that. While the actual counting process does not begin until March, the 2020 Census has been on City Hall's radar since this past summer. We have inaugurated a Complete Count Committee, comprised of organizations that will help the City determine who needs to be counted...especially those who may be hard to contact – the homeless, those who may have immigration concerns, and a few who just don't see the value in it for them. I'd argue that our underserved community will

actually benefit the most from an accurate census – since federal dollars that we receive, much of which serves the social service arena, depends on counting each and every DeKalb resident. Kudos here to NIU, which is spending significant resources to assure that a good student count is accomplished.

(SLIDE 6 – City Hall)

We've got all kinds of activity going on Downtown...and now City Hall is preparing to join the party! Our Municipal Building, just a block east of here, has served this City well. But, it has recently been showing its age. A chiller & boiler system that seemingly breaks down with more regularity...plumbing problems...not to mention considerable under-utilized space. We simply don't have as many folks in the building as we did when the building was first occupied in 1968. We could have probably decided to continue this inefficiency, but when the DeKalb Park District recently decided that the Nehring Building, a-k-a the old First National Bank Building, was not aligning with the District's overall mission, the City opted to purchase that building for a dollar. In doing so, we have given the three tenants time to seek other space, and we plan to begin City Hall's move to Second & Lincoln Highway sometime after the first of the year. Concurrent with that, we will put the Municipal Building, in actuality the entire city block, on the market. Stay tuned as we make the move to Downtown!

(SLIDE 7 - Clerk)

A year ago, shortly after I appointed a new City Clerk, I said – and these were my exact words – “This is going to work out very, very well.” Well, folks, I was very, very wrong. Nobody is more disappointed than me. We have had months of discussion on the City Seal...who can use it...where it’s located...what the role of the Clerk should be...appointed versus elected...frankly, it’s been a time-consuming distraction. Most residents I’ve talked to simply want those of us in government to get down to the business of effectively running this City. The clerk controversy was addressed by City Council action last night. This compromise should enable the candidates who run for the office in 2021 to have a clearer idea of what is expected.

(SLIDE 8 – Economic Development)

When we put our U.S. Representative Adam Kinzinger on a bus and showed him around our fair city a few months ago, he remarked that our development downtown was very visible. That becomes increasingly evident, as new construction rises alongside refurbished older buildings. But, there’s more than just downtown. We are working hard to attract new industry...manufacturing, commercial, and retail. Our recent efforts have brought new visibility and vitality...as

we assist business like Aldi and Planet Fitness take over space in former Big Box stores along Sycamore Road, not to mention the earth-moving scenario now taking place in the Chicago West Industrial Park just south of the tollway. On this, I cannot say much this morning...but we're keeping our municipal fingers crossed that our work will result in an exciting, transformational announcement.

(SLIDE 9 - Enhancement)

Quality of life. That's a term we use in describing what makes DeKalb a great place to live, work, and raise a family. We want to expand our recreational attractions, like the Kishwaukee Kiwanis Multi-Use Pathway. This trail runs under the Union Pacific and West Lincoln Highway, linking Prairie Park with the NIU lagoon area. You may have noticed how residents have responded to our Paint-a-Plug program, putting their colorful talents to our fire hydrants. We're continuing to engage the local Arts community in devising a Public Arts initiative to make our City attractive to residents, and visitors, alike.

(SLIDE 10 - Entertainment)

We've gotta take time to have some fun...and our entertainment scene continues to grow. Our grand 'ol lady – the Egyptian Theatre – is about to take on a new look! Granted, it's been a hectic construction scene on North Second as the theatre and Plaza DeKalb across the street are both abuzz with men and machines! As for the Egyptian, the

new construction will include air-conditioning (finally!) enabling the theatre to operate, effective, year-round. And, ladies, I'm told that there will be about 20+ toilet facilities instead of just two! It's going to be a sensational addition to our town...and I can't wait to see the New Egyptian Theatre. Hats off also to Mike Embrey and his collaboration with the Park District, as they celebrated another successful Music at the Mansion series. This year, we presented keys to the City to DeKalb natives – actor Richard Jenkins and author Richard Powers. And kudos to the Corn Classic 5K/10K committee that grew that race to nearly 700 participants just last month. I may add that despite the rain, all I heard were compliments about how the race is run...and how many different parts of our community are featured...from our older historic neighborhood to trekking across Huskie Stadium! And, speaking of the Stadium, we'll be working with the IHSA once again in November, when the State High School Football Championships are hosted right here in DeKalb. And, if you've been following prep football lately, who knows...we may see DeKalb, Sycamore, G-K, Kaneland, even Hiawatha as participants. Heck of a year for high school football.

(SLIDE 11 - Environment)

Part of that quality of life mentioned is the quality of the air we breathe and the manner in which we appreciate the climate that we enjoy. Our Environmental Commission – one of 14 Boards and Commissions made up of residents who volunteer their time and talents – has been very active. Over the past year, considerable discussion, some of which has resulted in ordinance revisions, has taken place on such issues as smoking, native plants, electric vehicles, back-yard chickens, and LED lights.

(SLIDE 12 – Health & Medicine)

The Kishwaukee Health System has served this community very well over the last 50 years...and now that Northwestern Medicine has hung its shingle, we're very fortunate to see a tremendous impact in the health care we have right here at home. The new Wellness Center on Bethany Road is an architectural masterpiece, anchoring the northwest part of the Northwestern campus. Most recently, the Breast Health addition at the hospital includes the latest technological advances, addressing this critical need. The DeKalb-Sycamore community welcomes these new buildings...these new docs...and these new innovations in health care.

(SLIDE 13 – Landlords & Tenants)

What a Domino Effect the decreasing enrollment at NIU has had on this City...in so many ways. At the center of all this has been an oversupply of what once was student housing...and a resulting backfilling of some of that housing with families looking for economical places to live. Unfortunately, we've also experienced a dramatic deterioration of some of our multi-family and apartment stock. While a majority of our landlords are offering quality, some simply do not. Hunter Properties now owns about 1,000 units in town. One of its major holdings, 808 Ridgebrook, is still condemned today...months after a fire displaced nearly 150 residents, and revealed a host of code violations. At other properties this company owns, over \$100,000 in citations remain unpaid. This entire scenario is unacceptable to me. We need to get it fixed.

(SLIDE 14 - Nicklas)

As anyone who has followed city business knows, this City lacked sound, permanent management leadership since early 2018. Our City Council spent considerable time in searching for a new City Manager...and have we found a good one! When Bill Nicklas assumed this post on January 1, he had a pretty good idea of the challenges that lay ahead. Our City Council made it quite clear that the first item of business was to get our financial house in order. Nicklas moved quickly...and decisively....in reducing our municipal payroll.

He has continued to make firm, bold decisions resulting in key reorganizational changes in City Hall. This man does not beat around the bush when he feels an action is necessary...even when it comes to disagreement with the Mayor and Council. He's exactly what we need at this very moment.

(SLIDE 15 - Pensions)

Talk to virtually any Mayor across this state, and ask him or her what may be our largest obstacle in keeping their communities in sound financial shape...and I'd venture to say they'd reply PENSIONS. What our municipalities have learned, many the hard way, is that government must align fiscal forecasts in a realistic way. So, today, too many...including the City of DeKalb...have discovered that municipalities have very little control over decisions that impact fire and police pension costs. Nearly every penny that your City of DeKalb now collects from property tax goes to fund...you guessed it...pensions. And while we fully understand that the commitment we've made to our employees is something we intend to keep...we need to find a solution to this snowballing problem. A key solution now lies in Springfield, where consensus on consolidating the hundreds of pension funds into a more efficient, cost-effective, and manageable number – perhaps 2, 3, or a half-dozen – can reduce the burden on individual cities. We must continue to collaborate in solving this dilemma.

(SLIDE 16 – Public Safety)

As we arrived this morning, I hope we did so with a mindset that we were going to have a safe day. There's no doubt that the landscape we now enjoy is decidedly different than it may have been 10-20-30 years ago. In addition to Economic Development, Public Safety was the other component piece during the Smith Mayoral Campaign three years ago. Those two arenas remain my primary focus today. And, folks, I can stand here today and assure you that we have men and women comprising the DeKalb Police Department and the DeKalb Fire Department that we can all be very, very proud of. Whether it's a hard-line stance on gang and drug activity...or our Safe Streets Parking program...or the RAVE alert system that often awakens us in the middle of the night, the Police are indeed serving...and protecting. So goes it for the brave first responders in our Fire Department. They do it all...from Emergency Calls, to fire rescues, to collaborative programs with schools and hospitals. We simply cannot thank them enough!

(SLIDE 17 – Social Media)

Corrupt. Divisive. Hashtag, the WorstMayorEver. Those are just three of the slings that a few folks have used in describing me. Well, ladies and gentlemen, this Mayor not only has a pretty thick skin...but I'm also very supportive of every citizen's right of expression. So, regardless of the social media platform...it is what it is in our Society today.

Seemingly, anyone can say just about anything about anybody on a host of social media platforms. I only wish it could be more civil. But...having said that, the City has found these social media sites to be complementary to our own communication activities. We're making nice advances to our website...to our e-newsletter...and to our own Facebook page. I'd like to give a major shout-out this morning to our major media players – the Chronicle, Northern Star, WLBK, WNIJ, and DeKalb County Online – for their support of the City's effort to keep our residents informed.

(SLIDE 18 - Streets)

Ah..infrastructure. Streets. We've kicked this down the road too much over the years, and it's going to take some time to catch up. This year, our major improvement project was North First Street. It looks great...and we'll see what our budget will allow in the future. We should be spending \$5 million on streets...this past year, we've spent \$1.7 million. Hats off to our Public Works crews for helping to maintain our streets as best they can. Much of their work is with pothole filling...patching...striping, just enough to keep things navigable. We will need to identify new revenue if we're to do better in 2020. We also continue to work with DeKalb County, DeKalb Township, and IDOT to engage them in seeing where Intergovernmental Agreements may be workable. Working together on infrastructure like streets is imperative...now, more than ever.

(SLIDE 19 - TIF)

TIF...Tax Increment Financing. What's it all about? I must admit, this has been one of the more difficult things for me to wrap my mind around. This past year, we've been able to bring our partner taxing districts together to agree on what the City is doing...and intends to do with our TIF Districts. As you know, that spirit of cooperation has not always been the case, and last year's call for an audit of past TIF practices was put in place by the State's Attorney's Office. Final audit findings have yet to be released, but it appears that we'll discover that past record-keeping was shoddy, and not well monitored...happening since the late 90's. We're pretty sure that we have that rectified now. What we cannot lose sight of, folks, is how effectively our TIF programs have been in recent years. Look at Cornerstone...Plaza DeKalb...the Egyptian Theatre...Barb City Manor...and significant façade and site improvements throughout our City. TIF, in my opinion, will prove to be a major economic driver in revitalizing our City.

(SLIDE 20 - Veterans)

Take a walk down Locust Street some day...and you'll see an excellent Point-of-Pride for our town. Now, I must admit, that as a veteran myself, the Banners that align that vicinity warm my heart. Working alongside fellow veteran Mike Embrey and the American Legion, this project started small and continues to grow. Public support of our emphasis on the

red-white-and-blue, bolstered by veterans-only parking in key locations down, makes us one of the most Veteran-friendly cities around. We're very proud of those who have served, and we want to show them just how proud we are.

(SLIDE 21 – Doing the Right Thing)

I promised 20 Big Ticket Items when I began this review 20 minutes ago...and my last slide is extremely important to me. These folks comprise your City Council...First Ward Alderman Carolyn Morris...Second Ward Alderman Bill Finucane...the Third Ward's Tracy Smith...Scott McAdams from our Fifth Ward...Sixth Ward Alderman Mike Verbic...and Tony Faivre serving our Seventh Ward. Now, you'll see Pat Fagan pictured...but he recently resigned following a move to another neighborhood. As a result, I am currently interviewing six folks who have indicated an interest in filling out that Fourth Ward term until the 2021 election. I hope to bring my appointment to the Council for its approval in the next few weeks.

You notice Doing the Right Thing. I wholeheartedly feel that our alderman are genuinely attempting to do just that...day after day...City Council meeting to City Council meeting. While we have our disagreements, I'm heartened by this group's willingness to discuss...and to reach consensus on what is best for our citizens. We will continue to be responsive to those things that concern you...and will attempt

to be transparent and open in how we deal with you and the public at large.

Over the next several weeks, one of our major responsibilities will be to arrive at our FY 2020 Budget. We know the process will not be easy, but with the assistance of our Staff and Finance Advisory Committee, we will arrive at an initial, balanced draft that our public can then take a look at. Make no mistake about it...the City of DeKalb has major financial challenges. This Council has been elected to take on those challenges. I firmly believe we will work hard, together, to Do the Right Thing.

As I conclude my remarks this morning, perhaps you've gotten the idea that the City of DeKalb and Northern Illinois University are joined at the proverbial hip. In Safety...in Transportation...in the Census...in Housing...in Entertainment ...in offering more opportunities for your younger citizens...across the board!

I've said it publicly many times since I've been your Mayor...perhaps most recently at the Unity March on the NIU campus. In the 58 years that I've been a resident of this wonderful community, I don't believe the cooperation between City and NIU has ever been better. And, we pledge to keep it that way.

I know that pledge is shared by our next presenter this morning. In turning the podium over to NIU President Lisa Freeman, I'd like to thank you for your attention. I'm so very

**honored to have been asked to provide this report to
you...you who, like me, care so very, very much about your
community! Thank you!**

Lisa...