

Mayor's Address to the Residents of Ridley Park 2018

Good evening this is my 21st annual address to the residents of Ridley Park.

First, as a result of the recent election, I'd like to introduce our new council members. They are---

Dane Collins

Bill Kaelin

Sue McAtee

Those returning are---

Jim Glenn

Shelly Dalessio

Those who continue as council members---

Jared Brennan

Michael Gale

Council elected Jim Glenn as the new Council President.

Finance

2017 was a very good financial year for Ridley Park.

What is important to all of us is 5 years without a tax increase. This is due to our excellent financial position through this period of time. A measure of financial excellence is our cash flow. We were and are able to pay our current operating expenses and to meet our short and long-term obligations. Thanks to the hard work of our Finance and Personnel Committee and our department heads in the development of their individual budgets. We also took advantage of increases in our flow of funds.

Police and Fire Departments

The most important government responsibility is to provide for the safety, security, and protection of our residents and visitors to our community.

This is mostly accomplished by our Police and Fire Departments.

Police

In today's environment, policing has taken on a greater importance in maintaining increased vigilance for the safety of both our residents and visitors and most importantly, our own police officers. Greater awareness is needed for the unexpected.

The Chief and I believe it is of utmost importance to assure each shift has two officers on duty. This provides immediate back up in cases of emergencies. This goal is being met. This is helped by having a sufficient number of part timers.

The Chief, in addition to his police operations, is also responsible for the management of 13 to 15 crossing guards, two-meter officers, two part time secretaries, and prison watch officers.

The Chief is also responsible for the safety of 2000 students attending three schools in our town. Also included is a hospital, nursing home, and hospice house. We continue to communicate the increasing seriousness of the heroin, opioid plague that takes a great toll, not only on our young but people of all ages.

Ridley Park, for a small town, has been doing our share by conducting drug awareness programs over 10 years.

We conducted a drug awareness program at the middle school this autumn, In addition, Chief Frazer and Sergeant Nasella continue to conduct their Heroin Alert Program at Ridley and Interboro School Districts---thanks to funding from Taylor Community Foundation.

There is a good chance that legislation in Harrisburg finally approved the use of DADAR for speed control in local communities. This would give us a greater option for the safety of our residents, especially children, from speeders.

As your Mayor, responsible for police operation, I strongly appreciate and support our police effort in ensuring that we are a safe community. We have excellent professional and devoted police officers.

Fire Department

Volunteerism is key. It is important that we have sufficient number of volunteers to provide quality service to our community to assure residents protection in the event of fire or other emergencies. We currently have 35 volunteers.

The Fire Department runs various fundraisers during the year---I would suggest supporting them by being a contributor---volunteers are free---paid firefighters are expensive.

Firefighting is complex and subject to rigid safety standards due to obvious risks and especially the unknown. All calls have element of risks.

Firefighters must undergo rigorous training before they are qualified to be part of a firefighting crew in order to ensure safety not only to themselves but also to other members. Ongoing training is continuous and extensive.

Our fire department is developing a long-range plan for major maintenance on existing equipment and the replacement of older, obsolete and high maintenance equipment.

Our fire department, in addition to their great open house, also provides outreach programs at schools and other organizations. We thank our volunteer firefighters for their dedicated service to the safety of our community.

Trash Contract

Mascaro is our new trash hauler as a result of competitive bidding with a two-year contract with a one-year renewal. We feel this will significantly improve our service to our residents.

Recycling

We received a recycling grant of \$12,600. Also, as a result of recycling, we saved about \$20,000 in tipping fees. The more recycled, the less trash. Recycling is great for our environment and a final plus for our borough. I would urge a greater recycling on the part of our residents.

Town Beautification

This was initiated this past year. The two most notable areas were the Steward Avenue entrance to Ridley Park. The other was the planting of flowers and plants to replace weeds in our downtown business center. This will be an ongoing program with further expansion in our business district and beautification expansion into our lake. We thank John Hosbach, a certified arborist and resident for volunteering his professional guidance to the success of our Town Beautification Program.

Walking Path

A slow start is now moving forward rapidly under the leadership of Sue McAtee. The path has been discussed at previous council meetings---professional maps have been and now are available at the borough office. The path is now in two parts---around the lake and around the perimeter of Catania Park and Hetzel Park. Expenses up to \$2,500 come from a \$2,500 grant from Taylor Community Foundation.

Street Repaving

For 2017 through 2018, the largest street repaving plan in Ridley Park history. A cost of approximately \$450,000 of which a significant part comes from a grant.

Bonnes Park

The Bonnes Park Redevelopment is just about completed once a lighting issue is settled. This was funded by a grant of about \$215,000.

Hillside Safe School Project

Hopefully construction is scheduled to start after the middle of the year. Construction from the beginning to end takes about 9 months to a year. This is funded by about a \$530,000 grant of which the borough assumes a portion of the costs. A series of public meetings were held to arrive at their final decision.

Sellers Avenue Bridge Replacement

We have indications from PennDOT that ground breaking for the bridge replacement could be scheduled for the later part of this year. The time from beginning to end is about 18

months. This time period takes in to account that close coordination with Amtrak is required. A series of public meetings were held to take into account suggested changes by members of the public.

Activities

One of the measures of the vitality of a community is the events we have for our residents.

Ridley Park Athletic Club – Provides activities for some 800 of our youth supported by over 100 volunteers. Girls softball, football, baseball, cheerleaders, including competitive cheerleading---includes the great Opening Day Softball/Baseball Season Parade with some 500 participants. They have been a part of our community since 1961.

Borough Fireworks – Great community social event and best fireworks around our lake. The borough also provides for the 4th of July Parade and Games.

Main Streets – A separate organization whose primary purpose is to promote our downtown business community. Events that work toward this purpose are

Fall Festival – In October draws about 5,000 residents and visitors to our downtown are providing great sales opportunities for our streets.

Farmers' Market – Great outdoor event with opportunities for social interaction. It is my understanding that the Main Streets organization is currently looking for ways to further improve this current.

The Main Streets Organization provided funding for the attractive signs at the main entrances to Ridley park and paid for a better sound system for the community room and outside activities.

Seniors – Celebrated their 35th anniversary this year with a great luncheon with a huge turnout. They provide events throughout the year with monthly luncheon meetings, bingo, trips, and a great Christmas luncheon.

Recreation Board – Their main event is the Town Fair at the lake in September which has been a successful event for over 30 years. They also are responsible for the Borough-wide yard sale and the Summer Playground.

Business and Professional Association – In conjunction with the borough is responsible for Santa Clause Comes to Town---one of our community's largest, traditional, and best attended event. Santa was visited by many of our children.

Halloween Parade – It is now sponsored by the borough. One of the largest crowds in years.

Barnstormers – A gem in Ridley Park. Five to six professional performances during the year. Longest continuing play house in Pennsylvania. More Ridley Parkers should support by attending. I was formerly on their board of directors.

Memorial Day – A very patriotic event at Veterans’ Park---speakers are combat veterans of various wars.

Library – The friendliest and best around. 231 new members for a total of 2,991 patrons. 13,589 people visited the library. There were 97 children’s programs with 1,210 children attending. 320 people attended 37 adult programs. The Friends of the Library contributed \$7,300 for library programs. To raise funds, the Friends held fundraisers at Applebee’s, sponsored Zumba classes, and coordinated the annual book sale in May.

2018

The aforementioned Hillside Safe Schools Project and the Sellers Avenue bridge replacement: there is a reasonable possibility that both projects could get their start this year. Obviously, the bridge replacement will have the greatest impact on most of us. Those of us who have been around for a while will remember surviving the Swarthmore Avenue bridge replacement.

As pertinent information becomes available, we will keep residents informed.

Dredging of Lake – Work with Delaware County Council to procure funding (Marcellus Shale) for dredging of the silt basin and other select areas. This dredging is necessary to reduce sedimentation form accumulating in the general lake area to prevent the need to dredge the whole lake. We fell this is not just a grant for Ridley Park, but also for the many visitors from surrounding communities who enjoy our lake.

Beautification Plan – Continued what was started last year and expanded in the downtown area and consider planting at the lake as was done in years past.

Walking Path – Progress is being made to preserve our \$2,500 TCF grant. It is necessary to complete part of or all by May to show expenditures for the walking path.

Update of Master Plan for Our Lake – I recommend to Council planning that we consider on update of our Master Plan for the lake. The current plan is dated 12/31/2001.

An updated plan is extremely helpful in obtaining grants.

Conclusion

Ridley Park is a great town with a great reputation. As I walk through our town, I continue to observe how well maintained and well landscaped our residents keeps their homes and apartments. It’s obvious that our residents are proud of the Ridley Park experience. Importantly, many of you volunteer on our committees and organizations and participate in the success of our town’s many activities which make Ridley Park a great place to live. We do this while maintaining our rich heritage and traditions and recognize the need to meet the challenges of the future.

My goal, our goal, since my 1st year as Mayor is to maintain and enhance Ridley Park as a quality residential community. Working together we can continue to achieve this worthy goal.