

## 2020 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

It is certainly an honor and a privilege to spend some time with you this afternoon to discuss the state of our city. Indiana code 36-4 mandates that every year, the Mayor shall provide a statement of the finances and general conditions of the city. I suppose saying something to the effect that our checkbook is balanced and the city is in “good shape” would fulfill that requirement.

Well many of you have heard my past State of the City Addresses and know that probably isn't going to happen.... I might have a little more to say than that!

Good afternoon and welcome to the Center Lake Pavilion for the 2020 State of the City, hosted by the Kosciusko County Chamber of Commerce. Thank you for making this possible and thank each and every one of you for making the time to attend today.

It is certainly a pleasure to speak to you from the historical Center Lake Pavilion. We couldn't be anymore “Warsaw” than right here in Central Park!

Giving this my ninth State of the City address, it is a distinct privilege to represent all of our elected officials and city departments as we look back on the accomplishments and challenges of 2019. But even more important, what are our next moves for 2020 and beyond? As this world and our nation change rapidly, we know that how we adapt to change locally, will impact our growth and progress. Our nation continues to shift towards a more service oriented, more automated economy placing an even greater emphasis on the value of a skilled and educated workforce. Communication methods are literally changing daily before our eyes; Amazon has changed the way we buy things. We must understand the significant importance of local retail and find a balance with e-commerce. 2020 is here. We must sharpen our focus to defend what has gotten us to where we are and embrace change that will keep us relevant into the future.

Let's get started. Our credit rating was last reaffirmed by Standard and Poor's as an AA- in 2018. That favorable rating lowers our interest rates on bonds, which benefits our taxpayers. In 2019, working with Baker Tilly, we formalized a Comprehensive Financial Plan. The comprehensive financial plan provides us with solid financial

information to make data driven solutions as we wrestle with the annual budgeting process.

Having also formally adopted both a cash-reserve policy and debt management policy, all of these tools puts us in a more favorable position to improve our credit rating the next time it is reestablished.

In July of 2019, we completed another clean audit from the State Board of accounts review of our financial processes. A noteworthy accomplishment that deserves the acknowledgement of Lynne Christiansen and her staff in the Clerk Treasurers Office. As summarized in the current Comprehensive Financial Plan, the City currently enjoys a strong financial position.

Your elected officials have held the city portion of our property tax rate level for the past three years. We have been able to do that by keeping an eye on spending, leveraging our revenue, and growing our tax base. For 2020, the council passed a budget that lowered the property tax rate almost ten cents per hundred! So, if your home value is \$100,000 you will save \$100 on the city portion of your property taxes. Likewise, a \$200,000 house would save \$200 a year and so on. Our city property tax rates are some of the lowest in the state.

The main reason our tax rate dropped was simple. We experienced a significant increase in our assessed value or tax base. The larger the tax base, the smaller the rate needed to achieve the necessary tax levy.

Increasing our AV 151M was the result of many projects coming to the tax roles in 2019. 40% of the increase was due to the annexation of the airport industrial park and several hundreds of acres for residential expansion.

How do you grow assessed value? All of this is the result of a very purposeful local economic development strategy utilizing regional and state growth resources. Many Midwestern states are faced with challenges that hinder growth. A skilled ready workforce supported by an attractive quality of life, and investment in infrastructure stimulates growth and development. And that is what continues to move the needle. Our story this afternoon would be much different if we were headed in the other direction. We are all very proud of the strength of our local economy and the skilled manufacturing opportunities that drive it. The City of Warsaw continued its steady rise in population. The latest estimates show Warsaw has just under 15,000 residents. That growth should translate into a 12% increase in the 2020 Census.

The 2020 Census count is very critical. It will determine the actual 10-year population growth and set our funding formulas and legislative districts. The importance of complete local participation in Census 2020 cannot be over emphasized. The invitation to participate in the census should be hitting mailboxes this week.

The growth of our Assessed Value and an increasing local population are strong indicators of a community that is vibrant and moving ahead.

While growth is good for our community it is not without challenges.

Constitutional property tax caps continue to hamper Indiana cities and towns ability to sustain the property tax revenue growth necessary to fund essential services and accommodate additional growth.

Limiting our property tax revenue every year are circuit breaker losses. A circuit breaker loss is the amount of tax a city cannot collect because it exceeds, in the case of a residential property, 1% of the assessed value of the home. In 2019, the city of Warsaw lost over one million dollars of revenue in circuit breaker losses. That accounted for over 7 % of our total revenue and has doubled from 5 years ago.

Our sanitary and storm water infrastructure is old and failing.

Annexation and expanding service areas from interlocal agreements

increase the demand to provide services. In addition, revenue necessary to keep up with state mandates, technology improvements and inflation the revenue from property taxes is not there.

The findings of the Comprehensive Financial Plan show that as a result our cash reserves, while strong, are projected to be strained to meet our needs as we look to the future.

The following are the Comprehensive Financial Plan recommendations to address those losses:

1. A **citywide operational and organizational review** is advised to assess our processes and cost efficiency. With growth, we have more road miles to plow and maintain. We have more residential units to provide police and fire protection for. Digital solutions from the advances in technology and communication we have invested in, must be utilized to improve and efficiently provide the services that are expected of us.

2. While our municipal sewage works has a strong cash position and the rate structure is adequate to meet the requirements of the utility.

We will need to evaluate our Stormwater Utility fee this year.

While the rate is one of the lowest in the state, projections show that it is

insufficient to meet the significant capital project requirements of the next 4 years. In a lake community with high water tables and challenging soils, controlling flooding and erosion while protecting our lakes and streams creates an overwhelming list of capital project demands. I have instructed the City Council Utility Rate Committee to study the storm water utility rate and make recommendations to the Council.

3. The city of Warsaw, unlike most Hoosier cities and towns, does **not** charge a user fee for garbage, recycling, and yard-waste pickup.

I am very proud of the quality service we provide and even more proud of the necessary steps we have taken to reduce our costs by automating the trash and recycling pickup. As tax cap losses increase, we must look very closely at our costs to provide these services and consider if a modest monthly fee may be necessary to sustain these services.

I will ask the council to reconvene the curbside waste task force, to look at the problem and make a recommendation to the Council.

4. Improving our creditworthiness to save on interest expense, finding grants to leverage our taxpayer dollars, evaluating all user and utility

fees, and looking for opportunity to refinance existing bonds in this low interest environment are other cost measures we have instituted.

The conclusion here is that our financial position is strong. By promoting growth to expand our tax base, we have been able to enjoy some of the lowest property tax rates in the state. The significant drop in our tax rate this year will no doubt benefit our taxpayers. But our ability to raise revenue continues to be negatively impacted every year as the negative effect of the property tax caps increases. Circuit breaker losses will erode our reserves if we do nothing.

## HOUSING

Our county, like many in the state is experiencing a housing shortage.

A big concern of our local employers is the lack of workforce housing.

That has a negative impact when trying to attract qualified workforce

talent. In addition, affordable subsidized housing is in limited supply for

families and seniors in our community. In 2019, the city engaged with

Kosciusko County and the Kosciusko County Community Foundation, for

a data driven housing strategy. Formulating an effective solution is the

goal of a steering committee of community leaders. While the specific

results and recommendations are expected to be announced later this

spring, I think it is safe to assume that the demand for workforce and affordable housing is significant.

Also last year, the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority awarded a significant matching grant to Zimmer Biomet that is intended to stimulate anchor industry workforce housing projects. The initiative will create opportunity to address the shortage of market rate workforce housing in our county.

The Indiana General Assembly created the framework for residential TIF districts in 2019. Designed to be used as an incentive to stimulate new home construction, the city wasted no time establishing two residential TIF districts. Working with the Warsaw Community School Corporation, the residential TIF districts were targeted in areas that currently have infrastructure and are ready for new single-family home construction. In addition to Workforce Housing, the availability of affordable (or subsidized) housing is also being studied. The Warsaw Housing Authority is experiencing a significant backlog of applicants that is primarily due to a shortage of qualified eligible housing units.

In another project, the city is collaborating with a developer to build new 72-unit affordable senior housing on East Market Street. The project is

slated to begin in 2020 and will feature senior housing with aging in place amenities.

The city issued 86 housing permits in 2019, up over 100% from 2018.

This is an encouraging sign. The annexation of several hundred acres of residential property in 2018 will create opportunity to further expand housing options in 2020

We expect to continue this upward trend with some significant initiatives from the Housing Steering Committee as the strategy is finalized.

### US 30

Our concerns about safety on US 30 continue to grow. Chief Scott Whitaker just released traffic statistics for 2019 and the percentage of accidents on US 30 within the city limits continued to increase. There were 193 accidents on US 30 in 2019, up from 166 in 2018, a 16% increase.

Average Daily Traffic counts on us 30 between Meijer Drive and Springhill Road have increased 31% in 6.5 years to almost 33,000 cars/day. In his year-end report, Chief Whitaker is also recommending that we create a third patrol district in the city that includes US 30. He

will be seeking additional sworn personnel to service that request for increased enforcement to improve safety.

The Fort Wayne INDOT district completed two road widening projects at US 30 intersections this past summer. Extra lanes were added to Anchorage Road and Parker Street. The traffic backup at those intersections has improved and now clear more quickly. I have received many positive comments on these changes. While we are appreciative of these types of safety improvements, our unwavering long-term objective on US 30 is to create a freeway solution to eliminate at grade conflicts along US 30 to SR 49 in Porter County.

Working to get the project recognized and funded is the goal of the US 30 coalition, which includes representatives from seven counties. We have been working with state legislators, regional and state advocates, INDOT officials, the Lt. Governor, and Governors Offices to get this project recognized and committing to begin the engineering by initiating an Environmental Impact Study this year. This study will look at many route options and assess the challenges, costs, and environmental impact of each. The final route will be based upon the results of the EIS. The EIS is required before the project construction can be funded.

Next week, I will travel to Indianapolis to meet with Governor Eric Holcomb and INDOT Commissioner Joe McGuinness. We will discuss the significant safety concerns on US 30 caused by increasing traffic congestion and semi-truck traffic volumes. As mentioned, a Freeway is the long term permanent solution proposed by the US 30 coalition. We are opposed to anything less. We estimate that it could take anywhere from 8-12 years to get construction started. We are hopeful that we will get direction and a commitment from the state for this problem. In the meantime, I will continue to fight for more short term, meaningful local safety improvements on US 30.

Locally, we held our first public meeting last fall to look at local options of a reconfigured US 30 in our community. There was significant turnout as three options were discussed and much public comment was taken.

Our local stakeholder group met in October and gave more detailed input on the strength and weaknesses of each option. That information will be presented when we host a second public meeting in April to look for additional input on the options being presented.

2019 saw a large number of public works projects that progressed through various stages of development, many of which will continue into this year and beyond. Our Ride-Walk Master-Plan projects are prioritized by the ride walk committee and initiated as funds are available. Phase 2 of the Market Street Reconstruction from Bronson to Hickory streets was completed in 2019 and opened this fall. Connecting neighborhoods, three city parks, and linking our downtown with the Town of Winona Lake, the entire East Market Street Neighborhood Corridor Project is complete. Shared use side paths, pedestrian bump outs for intersection safety, curbs, parking, and decorative lighting are featured along this major segment of the backbone of our city trail. With only one final segment remaining to be constructed, a bicycle and pedestrian traffic connection from the CCAC all the way to Southtown Estates in Winona Lake, will be a reality. Design work on that final link through our downtown, continues!

Other ride walk projects being studied include a segment of Country Club Road to complete a loop around Winona Lake and connect to Eisenhower School. A multi-use trail on 47 acres of protected wetlands is being studied. This recreational trail would serve the residents of the

Forest Park Mobile Home Park and provide better connection for the residents. Our community trails have come a long way in seven years!

In 2020, the city will continue to engineer two 80:20 federally funded road projects that were awarded in 2018. The reconstruction of Anchorage Road will include road widening with curbs and sidewalks and will extend from SR 15 to Biomet Drive. The second project will construct 2.5 miles of new sidewalk in an approximate 15 square block area west of the new Lincoln School. This project will complement the street and sidewalk safety improvements that were finished in 2018 around the new school and the bicycle lanes added to East Fort Wayne Street in 2019 and East Main Street this year. Both projects are slated to go to construction in 2022.

Significant progress occurred in 2019 on the 300 North road reconstruction project, highlighted by a new roundabout at Shelden Street. Safely getting to and from Madison School is a high priority and will be facilitated with a ten-foot shared-use ride-walk side path to be constructed this spring.

Safety improvements in 2019 at Harrison School include new flashing school zone signs with speed indicators on Husky Trail. The North

Pointe Drive reconstruction was also completed last year with new sidewalks tying into the Husky Trail sidewalks and connecting pedestrian travel to Mariner Drive and up to the YMCA and Parkview Hospital. Other modifications are being looked at to improve school safety around Harrison School.

I've just highlighted three schools that safety improvements are being acted upon by the city: Lincoln, Madison, and Harrison. We continue to work with Warsaw Schools in every way possible to assist them with the safety of all of our students as they go to and from school on a daily basis. We continue our enforcement in school zones for violators who endanger both school bus transportation and pedestrians as they make their way to school.

I know as drivers, we all get in a hurry, get impatient with all of the construction, trains, and congestion in our city and get distracted.

**I CANNOT STRESS ENOUGH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OUR MOTORISTS TO SLOW DOWN AND PAY ATTENTION WHEN DRIVING near our schools, in fact everywhere in the COMMUNITY. Slowing down may increase our commute time a few minutes, but carelessness never ends well.**

Our street department continues to employ asset management and preservation practices that have significantly extended the life of our roads. We are being noticed by our peers for the positive impact these practices have on our road ratings. We are extremely proud of our progress!

Last year, the city spent 1.49M dollars to improve and preserve over 46 miles of city streets and 600 feet of sidewalk. Fifteen streets received new asphalt surfaces, 132,000 feet of restriping was completed, 94 streets were crack sealed, 37 streets were micro sealed, and 20 streets received asphalt rejuvenation.

In 2020, the street department will update their asphaltting equipment and no longer need to rely on contracting for the smaller road and alley projects. Cost savings and more flexible scheduling will improve our ability to do more improvements.

Our state legislators provided a significant increase in support for road funding several years ago and it is being noticed in our community.

A collaborative Norfolk/Southern and INDOT railroad/traffic safety project is now underway. From the Pope Street to Lyon Street railroad track crossings and parallel intersections along the same stretch of

Detroit Street, the project is designed to improve safety and traffic flow. Railroad safety warning devices are being replaced. Hickory Street will be reconfigured and limited to one-way traffic to improve train/traffic safety.

New traffic lights and pedestrian crossings will concurrently be installed along state road 15 from Prairie Street to East Fort Wayne. These improvements are designed to improve traffic flow coinciding with train traffic. The project is slated to be completed in the late fall. This project has been a long time coming (funds were first approved in 2013!) and the safety improvements are long overdue. I am very optimistic that the inconvenience to our motorists should be much less than the retracking project from a few summers ago.

Another issue we will need to address with the Curbside Waste Task force is how to eliminate plastic bags from the yard waste stream. Street department workers had to cut open and remove over 22,000 plastic bags last year in order to process yard waste. Different methods of collection or the use of paper bags are among the options to be considered.

Despite current funding limitations our stormwater utility continues to address flooding, erosion, and protecting our waterways from pollution. Successful projects to date include drainage improvements on the South Side and Central Park and Pike Lake shoreline stabilization. The 30M Warsaw Wastewater Treatment Plant expansion is now half way finished. An anticipated completion date of October 2020 will be none too soon. The plant operated at an average of 95% capacity in 2019. We also anticipate completing improvements to meet the mandated deadline to comply with our new phosphorus removal limit.

With the majority of almost 85,000 feet of small and large diameter wastewater pipe being either relined or replaced, our \$10M dollar sewer rehabilitation project was for the most part completed late last year. It improved just over 16 miles of wastewater collection system.

While we have gotten a great jump on some of our most seriously deteriorated sewer pipe, we have much work to do. 80,000 additional feet of storm and sanitary sewer were cleaned and video inspected in 2019. Having lined or replaced essentially all of the level five, poorest condition pipe in our system, we have taken a significant step to stabilize the deterioration of our aging infrastructure. With a total collection

system of over 103 miles of pipe, we must continue to commit significant dollars to repair the costly deterioration and damage that these problems create. Aging water infrastructure is of critical concern on the state and federal level and we will continue to engage their support of this costly issue.

A significant expansion of the wastewater system at the newly annexed airport industrial park got underway last year. With the annexation in 2018, the city made a commitment to sewer the area and improve the existing underbuilt roads. The sewer improvements are scheduled to be completed later this year and road improvements will follow. The City's investment in these improvements is expected to stimulate expansion of existing industry in the park and attract new development. IMD has already announced plans to expand its current facility by 26,000 sq ft with over 4 million dollars of investment and fifteen new jobs.

Work also continues on the development of the Warsaw Technology Park. With the extension of Polk Drive west to 200 completed, the sanitary sewer was extended to the west end of the park in 2019.

A 50,000 square foot shell building (the parks second) is now available and to be finished off and can also be subdivided if necessary.

Construction of the first new townhomes on North Buffalo Street are nearing completion. Mathews LLC are now marketing the first units for sale. Construction is expected to continue in 2020 on additional townhomes and mews.

The North Buffalo Street park plaza along Center Lake will begin construction this spring. This project, funded by the regional cities grant, will include an interactive handicapped accessible water feature. A new boardwalk style connection will be featured at the plaza and will link the Nye Youth Cabin to the Pavilion. There will also be a permanent outdoor sculpture, managed by the Warsaw Public Arts Commission, as a key feature of the plaza. (Later this month, the WPAC will unveil a new Robert Mishler Sculpture, inspired by the late Mary Ellen Jordan at the City Hall Plaza)

Plans are in the final stages to construct a new mixed use building on the site of the old water works facility. Look for those plans to be unveiled this spring as construction is preceded by the demolition of the water works.

The 2018 Central Park master plan is a publicly vetted plan that presents options to address new opportunities of both space and programming in

the park. For example, the city acquired and has demolished the old gas station at the east entrance of Central Park on Canal street. A new opportunity for space and programming now exists. Through the public process, an idea hatched that would create a new space for the Warsaw Biblical Gardens and the Maish Community Gardens to collaborate on a greenhouse concept. While much work still needs to be completed, the elimination of an eyesore now gives the community a new opportunity. Another example is the Center Lake Pavilion. Wouldn't you think this building should have a nice view of the lake? And did you know that over my shoulder, right up there, is a large, already existing space that simply needs to be finished to house our park offices? With some remodeling and a facelift, this local landmark will be enhanced. Final work is underway to make this project a reality.

In late 2019, the city was awarded probably the largest grant in city history. The FAA notified the city in mid-November that it had been awarded 6.4 Million Dollars of supplemental funds to lower the high voltage powerlines to the east of the east west runway. The project has been considered for over 20 years. Through the determined efforts of our board, staff, consultants, and congressional delegation, the FAA was

finally convinced to fund the project. Final engineering is being coordinated and construction is set to begin in 2021. The Phase 2 extension of the east west runway to almost 6,500 feet, would significantly enhance the takeoff and landing capabilities of our corporate partners in all types of weather.

Other impactful parks projects include new pickle-ball courts at Kelly Park (thanks to K21 and Dane and Mary Louise Miller Foundations), a completely rebuilt outdoor amphitheater at Lucerne Park, and continued shoreline stabilization work at Pike Lake

Oakwood Cemetery continues to be a very large source of pride for the community with maintenance and improvements of some of the finest and most beautiful grounds I have ever seen.

Now in its 14th year the Warsaw Deer Task Force continues to manage the effective local reduction of nuisance deer herds in the city... It is considered a model program that has been copied for its safety and effectiveness.

Significant improvements in code enforcement saw 52 of 56 compliance cases (2x the number of cases from 2018) resolved with 4 demolitions.

Building and plan department also issued 84 building permits and

oversaw \$10M in public works construction and redevelopment projects in our community. Quick facts from building and plan: There was a 100% increase in new home construction permits, sewer taps, and new home construction values from 2018.

The Mayors Youth Advisory Council developed and funded the first mural in our downtown in many years. Their excitement and initiative have generated community interest in several other mural projects.

Also, from the Mayor's office, our fiber connected city server project has been completed. The civic Ready APP was launched and notifies all who subscribe of emergency weather warnings, transportation conflicts, changes of city services, and other information that needs to be released in a time sensitive manner.

We also continue to work with the KCCF Launch Pad to develop an effective community solution for affordable child care.

Finally, the Warsaw Wayne Township Fire Territory response call volume continues to increase. There were 16% more calls in 2019, over 70% of them emergency response. Our emergency medical first response initiated 9 CPR saves in 2019! A fifth tornado siren was

installed on Bell Drive as we continue to broaden the emergency warning of approaching storms.

Recently our City Council and Department Heads participated in a Strategic Planning Session to look at the goals and objectives of our city, a practice I have followed at the beginning of each of my terms. Our discussion focused on the following goals: 1. Aging Infrastructure with emphasis on our municipal utilities and roads. 2. Continued economic and community development with regional emphasis. 3. Review of our Internal Operations to improve service delivery as the demand for increases from annexation and internal growth. 4. Continuing with Quality of Life improvements as a means to attract and retain talent, and 5. The development of a comprehensive housing strategy. Our strategic plan is developed to give direction to decision making. For example, one of the goals from our 2016 plan, was to improve communication and transparency to our citizens. In four years, we have grown our dedicated followers on social media page from scratch to 11,126 (a 29% increase just last year), We now live stream and archive every public municipal board meeting, we have invested \$200,000 into a city server to improve communication and data sharing, and launched Civic

Ready, our mass notification app, to provide immediate warnings and important notifications to our citizens.

Tackling local drug issues, more specifically the methamphetamine and opioid scourge that plagues our community, is a complex, monumental challenge. With the resumption of a unified drug task force about a year ago, Net 43 utilizes the cooperative resources of all of the county jurisdictions to significantly improved our ability to fight the dealing and distribution of illicit methamphetamine and heroin that is finding its way into our County! We are all united in this fight to choke off the source of the drugs that ruins lives through addiction, destroys families, and drains community resources. Our enforcement efforts will continue to be an uphill struggle until we can break the cycle of addiction.

JCAP is a very compelling recovery program operated by the Kosciusko County Sheriff's Department. A significant number of local volunteers spend time with each JCAP class providing life skills education to facilitate recovery! Those volunteers time and commitment to JCAP members is a source of strength and encouragement to fight addiction and resume productive lives.

Systems of Care is a local initiative that is attempting to coordinate a large, sometimes overlapping number of community support organizations. This is another step to improve recovery treatment for those in need. We are seeing some progress. Overdose deaths in the county have been down an average of 60% in the past 2 years from their peak in 2017. The use of dangerous one-pot meth labs seem to have been curtailed. Education of our students continues as this year is the 30<sup>th</sup> dare graduation. We still have much work to do!

Another core community issue is the need for a more effective first-response to acute mental health crisis situations. The needs of those suffering from acute mental health issues are a priority as we evaluate our ability to provide and coordinate assistance in a time of crisis. Our emergency first responders are gathering data to further define the need. The goal is to develop a protocol to work with law enforcement and the medical community to address this issue. We are also looking at how other local communities successfully meet this important challenge! The right care at the right time is critical. We are very fortunate to have many young professional groups in the city including our Young Adult Professionals or YAP as they like to be called. Last fall, I hosted the

(YAPs) for a lunch at City Hall, as I do frequently. I asked them to write a question about the city for our discussion. Not sure of what to expect but knowing their responses be thoughtful, I was not disappointed. They were interested in how to get involved in the city. What is the short and long term plan for affordable housing? How can we improve transportation for seniors? What steps are being taken to form a more cohesive community in Warsaw? What does Warsaw look like in 2045? What are Warsaw's Core Values and Goals? The next generation of future leaders are asking the same questions that we are! But, being held accountable to a group of young professionals is where our current vision of the future is tested by the reality that whatever our vision is, they will have to live with it! Before I close, I want to acknowledge State Representative Dave Wolkins, who will be retiring from the Indiana General Assembly this year. Dave has served District 18 since 1988. Also, Suzie Light has given our community 25 years of service at the helm of the Kosciusko County Community Foundation. On behalf of the City, we are also most appreciative of her community vision and leadership.

Finally we honor the service of WPD Officer Jason Dobbins whom we lost earlier this year. His life cut short, the show of community support to his family at his passing was testimony to the impact he had on our City. As we have discussed this afternoon, the growth and progress of our city continues and is a source of pride for everyone! We are a community of doers, of collaborators. We are blessed with a heritage of advanced manufacturing, a talented, skilled workforce, and an industry that has spawned innovation and entrepreneurship. We have quality schools, a safe community, and a focus on quality of life. We have resources that we value and don't take for granted. But as our young adult professionals, our YAPS have questioned us, What are our core values and goals? What is next? My friends, our core values and goals will be measured by how we value each other. How we treat those who may not look like us or think like us. What we will do to help those suffering from drug addiction recover to return to our community? How will we meet the affordable housing needs of our workforce and seniors? What can we do to promote mental health and assist those so desperately in need?

Everyone of us has a role to affect change. I am often asked by young people how they can get involved in our community. My answer is to find your passion and volunteer, join a board, when problems arise, offer solutions instead of criticism. Watch out for your neighbor. Meeting the core values and goals of our community involves each and every one of us. We pledge to do our part and keep Warsaw moving forward.

Thank you!

