A Message from Mayor Annette M. Blackwell

These past few months have been examples of the real life experiences of a public servant.

The city was featured on national news platforms with a story about “cutting grass while Black” and then again on several local news outlets when two very young people lost their lives in senseless acts of violence.

Our city gained international exposure when I was asked to meet with elected officials from Afghanistan who were here in Cleveland on the program “Deputy Governors’ Oversight and Advisory Capacity” which was sponsored by the U.S. Department of State through the International Visitor Leadership Program. The officials were here to examine the connections between federal, state and local governments, and the principles of representative democracy.

Also, newsworthy in city news is the real estate recovery. More specifically, the increase in median home sales prices; the number of homes sold and the most recent news from the Cuyahoga County Fiscal Officer which announced an increase in our property values! When in 2012, residential property values fell by 33.1% in the state-mandated property reappraisal.

The Music-in-the-Park series this summer has been very well attended and I am seeing new faces at every concert. A “BIG” thank you to all of the sponsors who make this event possible. We are hoping to expand the series next summer given the feedback from the attendees, they want “more.”

While, speaking of summer, I can’t help but remember how happy, excited and proud so many residents, businesses, city employees, elected local, county, state and park officials were at the Metroparks’ Ceremonial Dedication on June 22, 2018. Our Dunham Park is now Dunham Park – Bedford Reservation.

Lastly, we are continuing to pursue grant dollars to make infrastructure improvements in our city, parks and roads, for senior and youth services, Cutbacks in the recreation department over the years led to a somewhat blighted park, but Mayor Blackwell believed in its potential, and decided to explore the possibility of a Metropark partnership. Maple Heights is one of the largest communities in Cuyahoga County that Cleveland Metroparks did not have an active presence and it was believed, this might help make this 50 acre parcel all the more appealing.

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During the year, both Maple Heights and Metropark attorneys and engineers worked out some “housekeeping” issues.

Phase 1. of the Dunham Park revitalization followed in November, as a Cuyahoga County grant was utilized to remove blighted fences, structures and equipment – with plans to construct a new, gently winding main entrance and parking lot off Schreiber Road in 2018. Unseasonably cool and rainy weather created a slight delay, but by late April construction resumed, along with new drainage.

On June 22, CEO Brian Zimmerman met Mayor Blackwell for a formal signing – accompanied by many Metropark officials, media, curious neighbors, and several Maple Heights councilmembers and administration.

Rangers are now actively patrolling the park, while Metropark personnel are at the new Dunham Park/Bedford Reservation – cutting grass, removing diseased trees, cleaning and maintaining the park on a daily basis. Things may appear slow in its infancy, but behind the scenes the Cleveland Metroparks announced in their late June meeting almost $195,000 in improvements for walking trails, new pavilion and playground at Dunham Park – along with improvements to the bathrooms and general park area. Additional plans include converting the Dunham shopping plaza entrance to a “walk in” entrance.

Dunham Park is now officially a jewel in the Cleveland Metroparks Emerald Necklace, and neighbors and residents can be assured the park will see many improvements in the years ahead. (Additional images of the work performed, along with updates to the park, can be found on the city website link – http://citymapleheights.com/dunham-park)
Why Is Stafford Pool Not Opened?

Many residents are asking Mayor Blackwell when she is going to open Stafford Pool. That is not a simple question to answer. Let’s start from the beginning.

In June of 2005, citing a deficit of $1.5 million, the layoff of many City employees and unsafe conditions at the two City pools, Mayor Michael Ciaramino closed the Stafford and Dunham Pools. Due to their safety issues and age, City Council allocated money to demolish both of them.

With the passage of an income tax increase and a campaign promise, Mayor Jeffrey Lansky was elected in 2007 and began plans to build a state of the art pool and spray ground for $1.4 million and make other needed improvements to the City. City Council approved the borrowing of $5 million and the improvements commenced.

On June 6, 2009, the grand opening of Stafford Pool took place. In the four (4) years the pool was opened, fees remained constant: $30.00 for an individual and $80.00 for a family of four (4). Daycares paid $15.00 for each child to use the pool three (3) days a week. $5.00 each time you came to swim, if you did not have a pass.

The pool was opened from the first week of June until the week that school began in August. That amounts to about ten (10) weeks give or take a week. At its peak, approximately 325 residents in a City of about 22,000 residents used the pool.

The cost to maintain and run the pool for those ten (10) weeks was $75,000. Included in that cost was opening and closing (winterizing) the pool, the chemicals to keep it safe for our residents, lifeguards, cleaning all areas including restrooms, admission and concession staff and security. The revenue taken in for our highest grossing summer was $17,000. So on average, the City needed to subsidize the pool in the amount of $58,000. According to Dave Hastings of Hastings Water Works, CEO of a major pool company in Northeast Ohio, only 5% of all municipal pools in the State of Ohio break even or turn a profit.

At this same time from 2012 to 2014, Maple Heights was dealing with the State of Ohio cutting the municipal fund to the City by over $4 million and Cuyahoga County devaluing home values in our City costing us approximately $3 million. These were two of the main operating funds utilized by Maple Heights.

So, as Maple Heights was heading into fiscal emergency, the former administration made the very difficult decision to close Stafford Pool in June of 2014 to avoid additional layoffs in the Police, Fire and Service Departments. Mayor Blackwell and her administration are working diligently to reduce the deficit and get us on a firm, stable financial footing. As real estate values are something to look forward to. Market each day, the end of year values are something to look forward to. These strong values reflect about half of 2018, with more homes put on the market each day, the end of year values are something to look forward to.

Meet Our New Assistant Finance Director

The City hired Mr. Carl Macey, CPA as the Assistant Finance Director on June 12, 2018 after an extensive search for a highly qualified candidate to assist with the day-to-day of the Finance office as well as payroll.

Mr. Macey has had his CPA license for over 25 years. He has owned his own CPA firm and worked in manufacturing, health care, non-profits and government.

Carl lives in Westlake and has lived there for 25 years. He has two sons and one daughter with his wife Toni. Carl grew up in the West Park area of Cleveland. His favorite sports teams are the Indians and Browns, of course. And Carl enjoys going to see the games when he can.

One is his favorite pastimes is checking out new restaurants, new types of food with his favorite type being Greek. Carl also collects books from the 1700 and 1800’s by scouring book stores, antique stores, house sales, estate sales and online. He developed this collection while working overseas in England and France.

Carl is looking forward to implementing new policies and procedures, improving the City’s cash flow, streamlining the payroll process, and ensuring the completeness and accuracy of the City’s capital assets.

Maple Heights Real Estate Update

The 2008 recession and housing market foreclosure crisis had a great impact on Maple Heights, a bedroom community, with about 9,865 residential properties.

Traces of the recession and foreclosure crisis are becoming less evident within our community. Maple Heights’ real estate market is stabilizing while attracting and retaining new homeowners and residents.

As of April 2018 only 11 homes classified as a short sale, pre-foreclosure or foreclosure were for sale. This is an almost 60% decrease from April 2017 in which 27 homes under this classification were for sale. Having fewer homes that under this classification indicates that homeowners are able to financially maintain their homes, which cultivates strong neighborhoods.

Further evidence of Maple Heights’ post-recession real estate recovery is illustrated in Cuyahoga County’s 2018 reappraisal of all real estate values. Residential values increased by 7.2% and commercial/industrial values increased by 19.6%. These values show great improvement from Cuyahoga County’s 2012 reappraisal in which Maple Heights’ residential values decreased by 33.1%.

A total of 461 properties were sold in 2017 with a median sales prices of $42,100, a $5,100 increase from 2016 and a $7,100 increase from 2015. As of present there have been 344 properties sold in 2018 with a year-to-date median sales price of $49,000 and a year-to-date average sales price of $68,291.

These strong numbers reflect the investment that homeowners have put into their homes via home renovations, additions and remodels and continuous home maintenance.

These strong values reflect about half of 2018, with more homes put on the market each day, the end of year values are something to look forward to.
~Mayor’s Featured Business~

Gaines Funeral Home

William A. and Rosa M. Gaines worked together at the Ball Funeral Home and shared a dream of owning their own funeral home someday. That dream came true in 1972 when they went into business for themselves and purchased the Ferfolia Funeral Home at 9116 Union Avenue in Cleveland. Both families shared a strong work ethic and mutual respect for the service and kindness each provided to the families entrusted to their care.

After a lengthy illness, God called Mr. Gaines in 2006 and Mrs. Gaines in 2007. The torch of compassion, care, dignity and respect that has been the cornerstone of the Gaines Funeral Home business has been passed to Chief Executive Officer and second generation family member, Kaye Gaines.

Ms. Gaines tells us that she and the Ferfolia family had an unwritten pact that if they ever considered selling the Maple Heights location, the Gaines family would be their first call. And so, in December of 2015, on the birthday of her beloved mother, Ms. Kaye Gaines was able to fulfill the dream and vision of her parents to have a second location from which to serve her families during the loss of their loved ones, while assisting them in their time of loss.

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Gaines Funeral Home is located at 5396 Lee Road in Maple Heights. They can be reached by calling (216)-475-4455.

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Enhancements to Continue as Lee-Libby Road Pocket Park Construction Enters Phase II

Residents will soon see additional improvements take place when construction begins on Phase II of the Lee-Libby Road Pocket Park Project. The city acquired this vacant property, located at the northeast corner of the Lee Road and Libby Road intersection, by donation in early 2018. The former gas station site had over the years developed into an enduring eyesore highlighted by sporadic areas of gravel, broken concrete and asphalt interspersed with areas of weeds and sporadic mud pits. Cars and semi-trailers frequently parked or illegally cut through the lot which, seeing over 20,000 vehicles pass every day, is arguably the gateway to the City of Maple Heights.

On May 17, 2018 Mayor Annette Blackwell was joined by over 30 volunteers and the Service Department to begin the transformation of this blighted property into a green oasis which will serve as a pocket park and transportation hub for pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transportation clients. With financial support from the Akron Cleveland Association of REALTORS, the Mill Creek Watershed Partnership, the Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District and the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, this dedicated group removed broken concrete and asphalt, spread topsoil and seed, placed straw mulch, and planted over 20 trees, on the almost half acre site. The transformation has been profound and is only the beginning.

Phase II of the Lee-Libby Road Pocket Park Project will include the removal of the concrete aprons which served the former gas station and the replacement of the broken concrete curbs and sidewalks on both the Lee Road and Libby Road of the sites. A bus shelter has been committed to for the Lee Road side of the site by GCRTA and the city is working to have a smaller bus shelter installed on the Libby Road side of the site. Benches and bicycle racks will also be placed along the perimeter of the parcel. Phase II of the project is scheduled for construction in September 2018 and is funded in part by a $50,000 grant received from the Cuyahoga County Department of Development through the Community Development Supplemental Grant.

Future improvements including walkways through the site, sitting areas, flower beds, and security lighting, are also planned as additional funding becomes available. The city recently applied for a Natureworks Grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to help plan and construct this next phase of improvements. The announcement of grant recipients will be made in later 2018 and if successful the construction of the additional site improvements would take place in the Summer 2019.

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City of Maple Heights City-Wide Garage Sale

Thursday, Sept 13th and Friday, Sept 14th from 10 am - 5 pm
Saturday, Sept 15th and Sunday, Sept 16th from 9 am - 5 pm

+ Garage sale will be held at your own home.
+ You will take care of all permits.
+ We will do the advertising!
+ Includes new logo!

Cost is $5.00 to participate
Fill out registration form at the Maple Heights Senior Center
Registration deadline is Friday, September 7th
Call 216.637.4461 for further information

Maple Heights Senior Center
10991 Libby Road
Maple Heights, Ohio 44137

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Book fully accessible travel with STC Plus for social, worship & personal needs.

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(216) 265-1489
www.ridestc.org

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Join us for a Clambake!

Come Join Mayor Annette M. Blackwell for the City of Maple's 3rd Annual Clambake!

Thursday, Sept 27th, 2018 from 6:30-9:00 PM
City Hall Lawn, Maple Heights City Hall

Cost is $25 per adult, $10 for children 10 & under. Beer, wine, & soda available.
Purchase your tickets at the Maple Heights Senior Center, 10991 Libby Road, Maple Heights, Ohio 44137

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Maple Heights Volunteer Fire Department
750 N. Lee Road, Maple Heights, OH 44137
(216) 475-1041
www.mapleheightsfire.com

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Maple Heights Fire Department
13600 E. Lee Road, Maple Heights, OH 44137
(216) 475-4455
www.mapleheightsfire.com

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Contact us:
Mayor’s Office
(216) 475-4400
City Hall, 13600 E. Lee Road, Maple Heights, OH 44137

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