

Message from Mayor Ann Womer Benjamin



Happy 2017!

I pledged to get things done in Aurora and 2016 was certainly a case in point. Major paving projects on 43 and 306, another new water line, this time on Harmon Road, and storm water projects in Hawthorn and on Sherwood were completed. I also pledged to be accessible, and we had many constituent meetings at City Hall including with Boy Scouts and Girl

Scouts. I enjoyed four events at Leighton, was a guest reader at Craddock, participated in the Harmon Mock Congress and Honors Luncheon, and attended the Veterans' Day Breakfast at the High School. Students are a lot of fun and love to learn about government.

The 2017 budget recently approved by Council reflects conservative spending with about a 1.2% increase in General Fund expenditures over 2016. We are working hard to keep expenses and city operations under control, using revenue surpluses for infrastructure needs where appropriate. We added a Service Supervisor position in this year's budget, but with our personnel management our headcount is the same as when I became Mayor. Our constant effort is to balance wishes and needs, so that you are best served by your tax dollars.

We are implementing some "wishes" along with the needed improvements noted above. Among them, we are getting an outdoor athletic complex under way at Hartman Farm on Townline Road. Engineering for soccer and ball fields in 2016 revealed underground gas lines we have to relocate, which will be accomplished early in 2017, then we will complete soccer fields and an arboretum. You undoubtedly noticed more holiday decorations this past Christmas season, and new city signs should be installed soon at our borders.

Meanwhile, to preserve our character and our historic charm, we created the new Pioneer Park, across from the Library, with the historic Deed House now located there. The Aurora Historical Society is managing the building, which is open to the public, so come see a piece of Aurora history! We are working for you and getting things done, and I hope you never hesitate to call or email me if you have a concern or a question.

330-995-9126 mayor@auroraoh.com

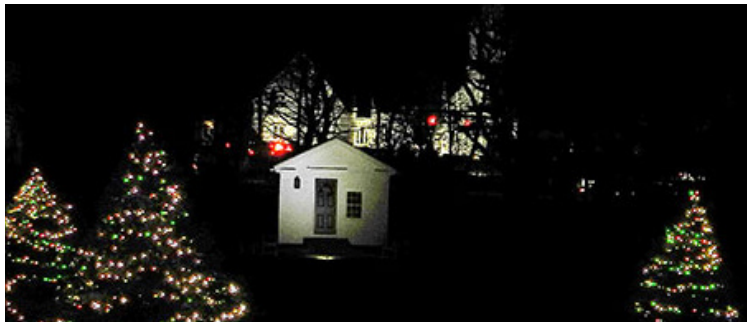


Photo by Charisse Louis

Master Plan Review Commission

Nine residents were appointed in December to review and make recommendations to update the city's Master Plan under the guidance of Planning, Zoning and Building Director Denise Januska and with assistance from an outside consulting firm. Thank you to members Jennifer Stanley, Shannon Keibler, Joan Tomko, Dale Moravec, Matt Gilmore, Evan Webster, Nicholas Austin, Laura Stith and Lucy Zmary for volunteering to serve on this important commission.

Aurora maintains top rating from Fitch

In December, Fitch Ratings affirmed Aurora's "AAA" bond rating, the highest possible, following a detailed review which employed a stricter methodology in the rating process than in previous years. Aurora's conservative budgeting and control of expenditures contributed to the high rating and "stable outlook." Congratulations to the city's financial team, led by Finance Director Tim Clymer, for continuing to chart a course of careful spending, secure reserves, and conservative planning.

New Programs Launched

Two new pilot programs were started in 2016. The **Aurora Transportation Program** provides transportation for Aurora seniors who are at least 65 years of age and adults with disabilities for medical appointments and routine errands. The program is free for locations within Aurora; \$5 each way for distances 10 miles or less; and \$8 each way for distances greater than 10 miles. The service is not available to residents in nursing, assisted living or retirement facilities.



Call
330-995-8795
for more information
or an application

The **Sidewalk Transitional Assistance Repair (STAR) Program** is a sidewalk repair program which assists homeowners with sidewalk repair and rehabilitation. The city budgeted \$50,000 and 43 applications were received. Most of the work was completed prior to the winter weather with the remainder scheduled for the spring of 2017. Additional funding is included in the 2017 budget and applications are available now.

Connectivity and Sidewalks

Connectivity efforts continue – more than 1,000 feet of sidewalks were installed in 2016 adding to the 2,000 feet installed in 2015. Planning and engineering have been done for about 3,000 additional feet along portions of South Chillicothe Road. Aurora is also working with Portage Parks, northern Portage communities, and the City of Solon in an effort to connect a hike and bike trail, and we are contracting for engineering work for a path connecting the former golf course path to East Pioneer Trail.

City Finances: General Fund Review

| | Expenses | Revenue |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| 2015 Actual | \$14,190,500 | \$16,264,619 |
| 2016 Actual | \$15,094,171 | \$16,759,218 |

Economic Development News

Aurora welcomed new businesses to the city in 2016, as well as new business construction. The Metallurgy division of **Pyrotek** built a new manufacturing plant resulting in about 100 new jobs and **Avenue at Aurora**, a skilled nursing facility, opened with 50 employees to start. **McMaster Carr** and **JIT Packaging** both expanded their facilities in Aurora. **Philpott Solutions**, a longtime successful company in the region, acquired the former Midwest Plastics building in Aurora and will move a manufacturing facility to Aurora early this year. Retail was also steady, with **Tire Max** breaking ground at Aurora Commons, **Starbucks** building a new store, and the **1815 Tavern** opening in the heart of the historical Town Center. Also in the Town Center, the renowned **Aurora School of Music** opened a new state-of-the-art Performing Arts Center. Meanwhile, at the entrance to the Historic District, the charming **Aurora Inn** has been beautifully renovated.

2016 Building Stats

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Residential Construction | \$26,031,577 |
| Commercial Construction | \$ 847,315 |
| Industrial Construction | \$ 6,790,897 |
| TOTAL CONSTRUCTION | \$33,669,789 |

Residential construction was up, but commercial and industrial construction was down following the completion of large projects in 2016.

Fire and EMS Stats

- Answered **2,193 total calls**, 1,750 EMS and 442 fire.
- Taught **CPR and First Aid to 727 people** and provided fire extinguisher training to 650 employees of local businesses.
- Purchased a **new rescue squad** vehicle which replaces a ten-year-old vehicle.
- Upgraded self-contained **breathing apparatuses** replacing thirteen-year-old units.

Department of Public Service

- Collected **9,127 cubic yards of brush** and tree limbs.
- Implemented **stormwater management** improvements on Sherwood Drive and Stone Hill Oval.
- Installed **GPS systems** on city vehicles to assist with routes and response efficiency.
- Continued **painting fire hydrants** throughout the community.
- Continued **mapping sanitary sewer** lines and manholes to digitize the data into a GIS System.
- Collected **5,817 tons of solid waste** under trash program, 2,517 pounds of electronics and used ink cartridges, and more than 1,200 tons of recycling.

Police Department

In the wake of state level changes for 911 consolidation, Aurora was proactive and purchased a new 911 system in 2015 and now provides dispatching services for Community EMS which serves Garrettsville, Freedom Township and Nelson Township; and for Garrettsville Fire Department, Hiram Police and Hiram Fire Departments. Aurora is charging for these services and Aurora residents continue to receive high quality service.



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2016 Year in Review

- A **Road Rating Report** was prepared by an outside consultant to assist in the prioritizing of annual road paving.
- Successfully negotiated and settled two **union contracts** in-house.
- The recently renovated **Deed House and Pioneer Park** were dedicated on June 9, 2016.
- Voters approved the **Road and Bridge Levy** renewal which underwrites road projects with about \$500,000 annually.
- Voters approved the **Fire-EMS Levy** renewal which provides about \$880,000 annually for paramedics, rescue vehicles and medical equipment.
- A new **Service Department Supervisor** position was created and David Frisbee has recently been hired. The supervisor will be responsible for daily supervision of 18-20 employees.

Looking ahead to 2017

- **Hurd Road waterline replacement** project was engineered in 2016 with construction slated to begin after it is publicly bid and contracted.
- Aurora will host the **2017 Tree City USA** celebration on May 10 at the Bertram while celebrating the city's 25th year as Tree City USA.
- Potential development of the **Geauga Lake Mixed-Use District** is closer pending approval of the Liberty Ford plans at Squires and 43 and continued negotiations with Bainbridge Township on a JEDD agreement.
- **New city signs** welcoming residents and visitors will be installed in the spring at the Twinsburg and Mantua borders, on Route 43 at the Bainbridge and Streetsboro borders, and on Route 306 at the Bainbridge border.
- **Residential Lock Box Program** is starting soon. Call City Hall after April 1.

