



**CITY OF NORTH COLLEGE HILL
MAYOR'S NEWSLETTER
APRIL 2004**



HAPPY SPRING! Yes, it's time again for the newsletter. This year we're going to try for three, one in April, one in July and one in October. That puts us back on the old schedule. That way I hope to keep you a little more up to date with what's going on around town. Speaking of which, I have the feeling there's going to be plenty of things happening this year.

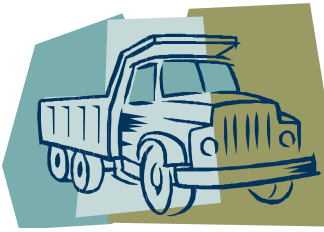
It seems everyone is having either State of the Country, State of the State, or State of the something, so I figured it may not be such a bad idea to start off this year with something that we did back in 1985 and 1986, and that is to talk about the State of our City. That's a fancy way of saying, "How are we doing". So, this newsletter will concentrate on telling you how we're doing as a City and plans for the future. Don't be too surprised if we get pretty blunt about some things, but we have always been pretty up front with you and there is no reason to change. So, here goes!

GENERAL CONDITIONS: During the past two years, we have done a terrific job of beating up on ourselves in one fashion or another. I think there was more energy spent on trying to find what was wrong than there was on trying to fix it! It is time to shelve those attitudes and get on with the building of our City. I am pleased to tell you that from what I can see, there is a new attitude, a new enthusiasm, and a new commitment to making our City the best it can be. The first three months of this year have been very productive and positive. There is no reason to believe that the upcoming months will be anything less.

All Departments and Commissions have, or are in the process of, assembling a list of short and long-term goals with definite dates for achieving those goals. The result is a clear plan of action that will allow all Departments as well as citizens to interact with one another while heading in the same direction. This sounds simple, but we must keep working at it.

Financially, we are in good shape. As always, as it will probably always be, we are not rich. We must continue to be frugal with our money while not being "penny wise and pound foolish". The product the City produces is **SERVICE TO OUR CITIZENS!** I learned many years ago that money is only of value when it is spent, so make sure what you spend it on has value." More on this later.

The Police, Fire and Public Works Departments are doing well. Obviously, the Fire Department received the most attention in 2002 & 2003 with the transition of becoming a 24 hour/7 day a week department. However, there are still adjustments being made and growing pains here and there, but I am proud of our people and the way they are representing our City. We need to concentrate on our Police Department next. We are short a couple of officers and we are going to take care of that situation as soon as possible. **SERVICE!** In the police area that means visibility, efficiency, and courtesy; 2004 will focus on those issues.



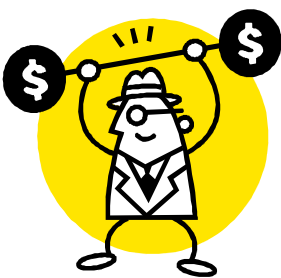
The Public Works Department is so good that we sometimes seem to forget that they are there. In one way that is the highest compliment one can receive. They do their job well with the minimum of equipment and facilities. Nonetheless, I am still looking at the department to see how we might provide more and improved services to our citizens.

There are several less publicized, but extremely important things happening that you should know about. Sue Benzinger, or I should say Saint Susan, is doing a fabulous and thankless job of cataloging all our records as required by State law, as well as founding and organizing a N.C.H. Historical Society. If you would like to help, call Tracy at City Hall. Concerned Citizens Groups, One Block at a Time Programs, Adult Education Programs, “How -To” Programs, and Block Watch Programs are either now active or will become so within two months. We will expand on all of these later in this newsletter but, suffice it to say, the state of the City of North College Hill is VERY GOOD; it is NOT perfect! There is room for improvement and, when necessary, changes. However, you can rest easy in the knowledge that our City is alive, well and back on a positive track for the future.

GOALS: Here is a list of our goals that the Administration and Council have set:

- Investigate ways and means to make our Departments more efficient
- Facilitate citizen/government communications
- Increase Police and Fire Department visibility
- Remodel the City Hall Annex building and existing City Hall to alleviate overcrowded conditions
- Establish “One Block at a Time” Program
- Develop Hamilton and Galbraith corner
- Hold contractors for MSD accountable for projects within the city
- Assist businesses in re-establishing the Business Association
- Maximize communication/cooperation between the school district and city
- Expand number of city owned recreational parks and playgrounds
- Minimize and/or eliminate any cost overruns to established budgets

Some of these will not be easy but if we work hard and think positive, we’ll do it!



FINANCE: You may have read about the financial condition of our State, our Country and some of our neighboring communities. They are all pretty bleak. We are pleased to tell you that the sky is not falling in N.C.H. We ended 2003 with \$246,000 cash carry-over. Thanks to a vigilant Council, equally stingy Auditor (who slaps my hand regularly), super-human efforts in our Tax Department, a cooperative effort by all of our employees, and a little luck, we were able to achieve the things we set as priorities and pay for some unforeseeable expenses. Our total expenses increased slightly over those of 2002 but we also achieved more.

The biggest thank-you goes to the citizens. Without the increase in income tax, we would have been in serious trouble. The credit goes to you. The LUCK part is the fact that we were expecting only about \$100,000 in Inheritance Tax. We ended up receiving over \$500,000; that's luck. Somebody up there still likes us. However, we cannot rely on this every year. Ohio is eliminating the Inheritance Tax, so that whole stream of income will end in a year or two. We must continue to push economic development or we will be in trouble, just like our neighbors. Oh yes, we can always balance the budget, as we must, without increasing income, but to do so means we must cut services. Remember what a city's primary product is? When those cuts happen, good people leave, nobody moves in, the city goes out of business. We are not going to let that happen! All indications are positive right now so, let's keep it rolling.

POLICE: Our Police had a busy year in 2003. They had 13,888 total details, 1,154 arrests, and about 2,882 court cases. While our population is around 10,500, our Police Department and Mayor's Court is one of the five busiest in the county. Many thanks to all of our Officers, Police Clerk Lisa Pfaffl, Clerk of Courts Virginia Link, and Law Director Mark Basil for their diligent efforts.



In particular, there is some great news about the recent Huntington Bank robbery. PO/Specialist Dan Fritz was able to coordinate the services of several law enforcement agencies in apprehending the individuals that recently held up the Huntington Bank on Hamilton Ave. NCHPD was the lead agency in apprehending the actual hold-up man, the get-away car driver and an additional accomplice. Thanks to a key tip to Crime Stoppers, our officers were able to arrest the suspects in Sharonville. Also, the November 2003 Huntington Bank robbery case has been closed out; the suspect in that robbery was killed in a potential drug transition in downtown Cincinnati. Need any more proof that crime doesn't pay?

Please welcome part-time Officers Dave Palmisano, Doug Ferrell, and Joe Ramsey. However, we are still short on fulltime officers and we hope to add at least one within the next few months. Also, congratulations to Frank Petrocelli who has been promoted to Sergeant and is now in charge of third shift patrol operations.

The total General Fund Budget for the City is approximately \$3,200,000. Of that, nearly \$1,500,000 is spent on Police protection. Citizen safety is one of the most valuable "services" we can offer. Remember the maxim about value? Our focus this year will be to maximize our coverage through efficiency. What can you do? Get involved with your Police and City. Get your kids involved with the Police and City. Additionally, we are looking at ways of having picnics and socials involving our Police and Firefighters. We are organizing a "Welcome Wagon" packet for new citizens and we may include home visits from a Police Officer and/or Firefighter so our new citizens can meet these officers on a positive note. Our Police need to know you and you need to know them. They are good people trying to help us and we appreciate it. By the way, our officers received numerous commendations in 2003.



FIRE: The state of our Fire Department is excellent. We became a 24 hour a day/7day a week Fire Department in 2003. This was a huge step forward and something we needed years ago. The result is better service and a safer N.C.H. We now have 31 Firefighters in our Department. We have remodeled our firehouse to provide offices, a training room, appropriate shower/restroom facilities, and sleeping quarters. Much of the work was done by the firefighters themselves. They did a great job and it saved us a bunch of money. Not only are they good at taking care of us when we are sick but they are pretty darn good carpenters too!

If you missed the first Open House, we are going to have another one on Saturday, May 29th, right after the Memorial Day Parade. If interested in becoming one of the best, stop by the Fire House and pick up an application.

Unfortunately, 2003 was a tragic year relative to fire loss. Losing property is bad but losing life is tragic. This past year, we had two fatalities in N.C.H. due to fire. We all hate to see this happen and that goes double for our firefighters. PLEASE be careful around the house, especially if you smoke. Install smoke detectors for early warning.

STREETS AND HIGHWAYS: We really need to add sewers onto this subject because of the enormous project going through our town. I'll try to BRIEFLY describe what's going on. Let's start with the streets. We will finish Marvin, Richard, and Telford Avenues this spring. The latest word is the contractors will be out of our hair in 6-8 weeks. We sure hope so! Nevertheless, it is looking better and we will have new streets and curbs. It is a real pain going through the winter with these projects but we really don't have a choice. Why, you ask? Well here it is. We receive 80% of the cost of these projects from state grants. Because the state's fiscal year ends in June, the funds for new projects are not given out until July. Part of the criteria for getting grants is the ability to start the project quickly. Also, most projects must be completed before the next funding cycle in order to have a good track record for additional grants. So, that is why we start these projects in late summer. The down side is that almost EVERY project ends up being a royal pain in the neck during the late fall and winter. So, now you know.



The Catalpa project will get into high gear this spring so get ready for more mess. We are hoping to be able to award a contract for W. Belmar and Meis Avenues this summer so the long awaited repairs on those streets will finally happen.

For those of us who travel Galbraith Road, east of Hamilton, I have great news. It looks like we will soon have "smooth sailing". The front-end alignment people will be sad but a contractor will begin replacing the curbs and aprons and repave Galbraith Road. Work should be complete by the end of May. Alleluia!

Now the BIGGEE! Unless you have been out of town for the past 6 months, you have noticed Goodman Avenue and Hamilton Avenue near Walgreen's. If you have been in town and haven't noticed the work, you really need to get out more. Anyway, on a scale of 1 to 10 in being a headache, this project is an 11! The good news is that after 20 years, yes 20, the project finally started. The bad news is I'm beginning to think it will take another 20 years to complete. So, what is the project? Metropolitan Sewer District, the folks that take care of our wastewater, is replacing one of the largest and oldest sewers in the county. The sewer line ends at Winton Woods but it starts on North Bend Road. It goes right smack through the middle of N.C.H. All the digging, trenching, mud, detours, etc., are a result of this sewer replacement. They are literally digging a tunnel under some of our streets and pushing the new pipe through the tunnel on Goodman Avenue. They hit rock and were forced to actually hand dig the tunnel because their machines couldn't accurately dig. They dug at a rate of about 7 feet per day. Thus, it is taking a lot longer than anticipated. By the way, these holes are up to 40 feet deep. All of this would be interesting if it wasn't in the middle of our streets and blocking the front doors of our businesses. PLEASE help our businesses along Goodman Avenue. They are all open during the construction despite the road-closed signs. They are all good businesses and worth the effort to get there.

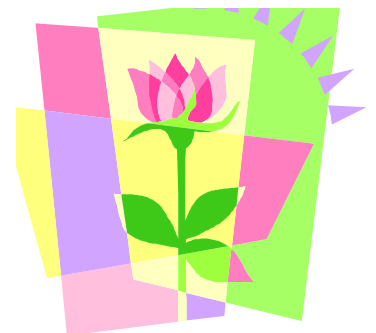
Now, the rest of the story. The next sanitary sewer project will start on Goodman at Hamilton, run west to Bake Avenue, south on Bake to DeArmand, west on DeArmand, to Betts, and south on Betts to Sterling. They are telling us that this will go a lot faster and will only be a minimum of disruption but I'm telling you it's going to be rough. We are going to let everyone along the path know what's happening far in advance to minimize surprises. The good news is that our sanitary flooding problems will be gone for our lifetime in most areas of our city; AND, we get a new street.

We have continued our efforts to solve the problems at the end of Jamar and along Devonwood. We've come up with the solution, given it a price tag, and are now working with MSD and Cincinnati to help us get it done. Keep your fingers crossed and light a candle.

RECREATION: It will soon be summer and that means it's pool time. It is still the best deal in town, so get your passes. Plans are being made to expand the services at the pool and in Schaepper Park.

Hey Kids! Be sure to sign up for soccer and baseball this year. Call City Hall at 521-7413 for more information. Also, the Fishing Derby will be held on Sunday, June 27th at Lake Nina. Registration opens at 9:30 am. Watch for flyers around town.

COMING AND GOING: We have several new appointments on our Boards and Commissions that I would like to introduce. On Recreation, Leslie Graves, Marcia Johnson and Andy Burton replace Elsie Heinechen, Richie Cooper and Steve West respectfully. We welcome Leslie, Marcia and Andy and offer a huge thanks to Elsie, Richie, and Steve for all of their help. Steve is now on Council and Elsie retired after over 20 years of service to our City. A big thanks for everything, Elsie! On Planning Commission, we've added Stacey Zanders



to replace Vern Finke who was elected to Council. Stacey is a nice young man and relative newcomer to our City and is anxious to help us be our best. We welcome everyone and thank all those who have served us so well.

PERCEPTIONS: Most of us know about the importance of first impressions. Unfortunately, the way we are perceived sometimes overrules the real facts. This applies directly to our City. First, we are often perceived as “College Hill”. I wish I had a dollar for each time I’ve been introduced as the Mayor of College Hill, a mistake that I quickly correct. How many times have you heard or read stories about events that happen in Cincinnati, Finneytown or Colerain Township that end up on the news as North College Hill? Sometimes it’s comical but most of the time, it gives those who don’t know better a poor conception of our City. Yes, we have our share of events that we would rather not have, but so has the most affluent neighborhoods in the State. One big difference; we catch them! Additionally, we have our own built-in perceptions of ourselves. For instance, I would guess that most of us would agree that the crime rate in N.C.H. has increased. We would be wrong! Our crime rate decreased in 2003 compared to 2002, a trend we are working hard to continue. Other perceptions are that our property values are going down. Wrong again! Check the latest real estate prices in N.C.H. They are up. How about the false perception that we are not doing anything about fighting drugs and crime? Surprise! We have active Block Watch and Safe Home Programs as well as two outstanding programs designed for senior health and safety. In cooperation with the N.C.H. School Board, we have a resource Officer in the school, as well as a crime prevention officer available to instruct any one or any group in ways to make your neighborhood a better place to live. We have become the model for other communities with our Citizens Police Academy and Citizens on Patrol Programs. We just initiated the “Officer Phil” program to help educate the very young children on safety issues. Finally, we have been successful in the past 12 months in shutting down several drug centers with our special drug enforcement group. My guess is that most of us had a different perception of many, if not all of these things.

Oh, did I mention the false perceptions about N.C.H. schools? Many believe our school system is terrible, right? Guess what? Last year’s graduating class at N.C.H. High School, a class containing about 100 students, received offers of over \$1,600,000 of scholarships or grants. The State Superintendent of Ohio Schools made a special visit to our schools and proclaimed our new system of education that is now being practiced in OUR schools is a model of what the rest of the State should be doing. I spoke with her directly and she said of all the districts in the state, N.C.H. has shown the most improvement. Do you want to talk about the music, drama, and athletic excellence? We don’t have enough paper. We have good reason to be proud of all our schools, Becker, Clovernook, St. Margaret Mary, the Middle school, and the High school. I only ask that you start looking at FACTS in lieu of perceptions. My only comment to those who ask, “Why should I either stay or move to North College Hill?” is simply WHY NOT? If someone has the wrong perception of us, why not set them straight?

BUILDING PRIDE ONE BLOCK AT A TIME: This new program is a result of several suggestions by various people and groups in town but the biggest thank you needs to go to Tom Graves. This is truly a unique and exciting neighbor-to-neighbor program. The concept

is easy. We revitalize our neighborhoods one block at a time. Here's how it works: The City will assist in helping the neighbors of a block to revitalize their block whether it's painting, clean up, landscape, or fence mending. The catch is this; EVERYONE on the block must participate. The sweat and money will be supplied by neighbors helping each other. The City will provide tools, trucks, and will approach corporate sponsors to either donate or sell at drastic discounts the materials necessary to complete the tasks. We can accomplish this one block at a time. We have received outstanding reviews about this program and are zeroing in on the first block. Wait till you see what a little pride can do.

Other elements of the program are free evening classes at the High School to assist those in basic home ownership. As many of us know, it's one thing to buy a home; it's another to keep it. These classes will range from budgeting, to basic maintenance, to remodeling tips. There will be guest "experts" to teach those of us who are interested. Those persons found guilty of repeated housing maintenance violations will be required to attend. We will advertise the class schedule when it is complete; look for it to start this fall.



BITS AND PIECES:

- Speaking of people helping people and pride, members of the Clovernook Christian Church gave the ultimate Christmas gift to the N.C.H. Middle School. Over the Christmas break, volunteers totally repainted and redecorated the entire interior of the Middle School at NO cost to the school. They saw a need and filled it. I think this is what God meant about taking care of your brother.
- How about our boys High School Varsity Basketball Team? The N.C.H. Trojan Boys Basketball Team went **undefeated** during regular season and won their league title. Although they were upset in the playoffs, they accomplished quite a lot and we are all proud of them. Hey, I need a ride to Columbus next year!
- Sue Benzinger is the guru of local history and she and the historical Society typically meet on the second Tuesday of each month at 11:00 am at City Hall. Call 521-7413 to confirm date and locations. Be there and share your knowledge and learn about our City's past.
- Spring is here and the schools will be letting out soon. Please remember to be careful!
- Please note that driving motorized bikes or scooters on the sidewalks is illegal and dangerous. Additionally, you need a license to drive them; it's the law.
- The Mayor's Ball was a huge success. We were able to give the Shrine Hospital \$5,800 this year; that's a record.
- Information regarding the Hamilton County Home Improvement Program (HIP) is available at City Hall. Qualifying homeowners can get special loan rates for home improvement projects.
- The next Town Meeting will be held at the Senior Center on Goodman Avenue on Tuesday April 20th at 7pm.
- The Great American Clean-up will be held on Saturday April 24th from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. We will meet at City Hall with refreshments and supplies provided. This is a great way for groups as well as individuals to make a positive difference for North College Hill!

- The 2004 Memorial Day Parade will be held Saturday, May 29th at 11:00 AM. Due to road construction, we will have to alter the usual parade route. Contact City Hall, watch for flyers, or visit our website at www.northcollegehill.org for the final parade route. The website also contains a history of North College Hill, various forms you can download, and information on upcoming events.

Well there you have it! It seems we never run out of challenges but, as they say, it keeps us out of trouble. All kidding aside, we have come through a rough period in our history. We find ourselves at a crossroads and decisions have to be made as to which direction we are going to go. Those decisions have been made and they weren't easy or cheap. But, thanks to you, we are now looking at a bright future and a clear vision of how to get there. With everyone on the same page, pulling in the same direction, the journey is a lot easier. As you have read, and will continue to read, several communities are facing severe challenges right now and the ones who decide to shape their own destinies will be successful. Those who wait will be left behind. We decided to act; and together, we're making it! Have a great spring and summer and, as always, THANKS for allowing me to part of the greatest City in the State! See you next time.

JUST A THOUGHT: "There are no problems we cannot solve together, and very few we can solve by ourselves."

-Lyndon B. Johnson