

ANNUAL REPORT

2009

Ohio's Best Hometown

The City was selected as one of Ohio's Best Hometowns by Ohio Magazine, and appeared as part of a cover story in their November, 2009 issue. This is a wonderful award for our community, recognizing our many community assets and the high quality of life Sylvania has to offer.

Quality of life issues have always been important to us in Sylvania. Sylvania has excellent schools and a vibrant Lourdes College. Sylvania is recognized around northwest Ohio for terrific recreation programs and venues. Our neighborhoods are safe and well maintained, we have beautiful parks, and our public services are efficiently delivered. We have excellent health care facilities at Flower Hospital, an active Senior Center, and we have maintained a friendly environment for business and job growth, attracting new jobs and investments.

I thank the Sylvania Chamber of Commerce for their work in nominating Sylvania to Ohio Magazine and their efforts to have our community recognized. Pat Nowak and the staff of the Chamber created a unique and exciting presentation putting forth the best our community has to offer, bringing this recognition to Sylvania.

The publication of Sylvania as one of Ohio's Best Hometowns in Ohio Magazine will help foster new interest in Sylvania, both from new businesses and new residents. Sylvania has been successful in recent years attracting new jobs and new families, even in the current economic downturn, and that has helped keep our property values high. There are many communities competing for the same businesses and residents, however, and our appearance in Ohio Magazine helps give us an edge in promoting Sylvania.

Sylvania has a lot to offer and is a great place to live, work and raise a family. It is wonderful to have our community recognized for all the terrific assets we have. My thanks to all who work every day to make Sylvania a great place, and I look forward to even greater things to come.

Updated City of Sylvania Website

The City of Sylvania launched a newly updated website early in 2009. The address is www.cityofsylvania.com, and I encourage you to visit and take a look at our community's updated presence on the worldwide web.

The City had been using an older website designed in the 1990's as part of the Sylvania Electronic Village. Sylvania City Council made a commitment at that time to provide residents with affordable access to the internet, and as a result ended up being named one of the top ten wired communities in America.

Time moves on, though, and a new website with expanded information and updated functions was needed to serve our residents and visitors. The new website is far more comprehensive and interactive, and more accurately reflects the vibrancy of the Sylvania community.

The most obvious change at www.cityofsylvania.com is its new visual appearance, designed to engage users and make using the site more intuitive. New features include:

- Enhanced usability, with topics cross-linked and official forms available in print form.
- Improved navigation with many drop-down menus.
- Comprehensive listings of local services, businesses, churches, etc.
- Quick Links including a fill in the blank search offering.
- Map access with street guides and route directions.
- Events Calendar for local activities.
- Local news of interest in Sylvania.
- Local weather.

The updated website includes a Content Management System that allows in-house revisions to keep information current.

My thanks to all who assisted with the new website, especially City Councilmember Mark Luetke for his valuable help and to City employees Mike Tansey and Laura Bigelow for their hard work.

Video Arraignment Saving Tax Dollars

In an effort to save tax dollars, Judge Scott Ramey of the Sylvania Municipal Court and Sylvania City Council worked together to initiate video arraignment of criminal cases to increase court efficiency and reduce prisoner transport costs.

During their regular meeting on February 2, 2009, Sylvania City Council approved legislation authorizing \$18,567.19 for the purchase of video equipment to connect with similar equipment at the Lucas County Corrections Center (LCCC) in downtown Toledo.

The video connection allows prisoners at the LCCC to be arraigned in Sylvania Municipal Court without being transported and actually being present in the courtroom. A second older and refurbished video system provided by Lucas County allows attorney/client conferences separate from the courtroom proceedings.

Video arraignment has significantly reduced the number of prisoners being transported, and that in turn has reduced costs and increased overall safety for our court, our community and our police officers. The City has reduced the cost of our prisoner transport contract with Sylvania Township from \$20,833 to \$5,300.

Expenses for prisoner jail time, however, are continuing to go up. The cost of the City of Sylvania's five bed contract at the Corrections Center of Northwest Ohio (CCNO) in Stryker for 2009 is \$71.15 per day per bed adding up to a 2009 contract total of \$129,848.75, up from \$119,701.75 in 2006. The booking rate and cost per day at the Lucas County Corrections Center for 2009 is \$145.63, up from \$125.00 last year. Sylvania uses the LCCC to hold prisoners about 50-70 days per year.

These rising costs of prisoner jail time are required to be paid out of the City of Sylvania General Fund, as is the overall operation cost of the Sylvania Municipal Court. Additional opportunities for cost savings are being explored, as well the possibility of increasing court costs paid by those individuals appearing before the Court, most of who reside outside of Sylvania.

New Police Cars Placed in Service

Sylvania City Council authorized the purchase of seven new marked police patrol cars as part of the 2009 Budget. The new cars were ordered in late 2008 and were delivered in April, 2009. They replaced the 2006 Ford Crown Victoria patrol cars, each with 80,000 to 100,000 miles on their odometers.

The new patrol cars are 2009 Ford Crown Victorias and were ordered under state term contract purchasing, meaning the State of Ohio previously received competitive bidding for local governments to purchase vehicles. The total price was \$27,539.57 x 7 vehicles = \$192,776.99. The older cars were sold to the Toledo Police Department for the total trade-in price quoted by the dealer of \$18,500.00.

The City also purchased new Mobile Data Terminals (in-car computers) for the vehicles at a cost of \$5,323.00 each, or a total of \$37,261.00. The in-car computers previously used were purchased in 2002 with a federal grant, but were old technology and no longer supported by the manufacturer. The new in-car computers will provide additional programming to the officers including the ability to access records and reports, and will include countywide mapping, GPS and vehicle locating software.

The in-car camera system in the vehicles was also replaced. The old cameras were purchased in 2001 and operated on a VHS tape format. The new camera system is fully digital and wireless. The recordings are downloaded to a department server using a wireless system. The transfer is made automatically as the vehicle passes within a designated distance from the police building. The quality of the recordings is better than the VHS tape format and the retrieval of recording for court or other purposes is through a computer program making the retrieval and copying much easier. Cost for the new digital camera system was \$5,280.00 per vehicle for a total cost of \$36,960.00.

Marked police patrol vehicles are a major budget expense, especially when you figure in all the additional equipment required for the police officer to safely and efficiently do his job. The in-car camera and computer have become standard equipment for modern police vehicles where information is critical for police officers to properly do their job.

2009 Street Improvements

The City of Sylvania street improvement projects for 2009 get underway in May. The projects included improvements to both neighborhood streets and to main thoroughfares. The projects were paid for with capital improvement funds. None of the projects resulted in special assessments to property owners.

The City of Sylvania continued for the thirteenth year a program to mill and repave neighborhood asphalt streets and pay for the improvements out of current capital funds. The program is intended to maintain the appearance of our neighborhoods, keep them desirable and maintain property values. The contract for milling off of the old asphalt was awarded in May. Once the milling contractor's work was completed in June, the asphalt repaving was done by City Streets Division crews during the summer using the City's asphalt paving equipment. Total project cost was \$240,000.

The neighborhood streets milled and repaved were Eagle Trace (northerly portion), Ivywood, Fox Hollow, Indian Creek, Summer Place, Heidaway, Meghan, Country Commons, Caracole, Dressage and Allen. For the fifth year, the milling bid package also included some Sylvania Township streets bid by the City in cooperation with the Township and to be paid for by the Township.

Several aging neighborhood streets were replaced in 2009. City Council awarded contracts for the reconstruction of Acres Road (north phase), Elliott Drive, Roan Road (Alexis to Marshall), Arrowhead

Drive and Indian Trail. Total cost of these projects was \$3,146,000. Municipal bonds will be sold to provide long-term financing these street replacements.

In addition to these residential street improvements, paving improvements were completed on two major thoroughfares. Monroe Street was milled and repaved from the railroad tracks west to Silica Road. South Main Street between Brint and Ravine was also milled and repaved.

Annual Audit Changes

For many years, the financial records of the City of Sylvania have been audited every two years by the Ohio Auditor of State. In late 2008, however, the City was contacted by the Ohio Auditor's office and informed State personnel would no longer be available to perform those audits.

The City was directed that an independent public accounting firm, approved by the State, should be selected to perform audits each year, rather than at the current two year intervals. The expedited schedule would make the audits more timely and useful, both for City officials and for financial statement users, such as bond rating companies and investors.

Proposals were received from six independent public accounting firms, all qualified and approved by the State of Ohio, to complete the annual auditing work. After careful review of the proposals, the local firm of Webber-O'Brien, Ltd. was selected for their government auditing experience and for their efficient approach to the audit, and a five year contract was awarded to that firm. There is no additional cost to the taxpayers for the audit this year, and savings are anticipated in future years.

Webber-O'Brien, Ltd. completed the 2008 Audit of the City of Sylvania during the first half of 2009. No findings were made of the City's financial records by the auditors. The audit was forwarded to the Ohio Auditor of State for review and approval.

The audit was reviewed by the City of Sylvania's Audit Committee, consisting of the Mayor, City Council's Finance Committee Chairman, Finance Director, Law Director and two community representatives. The audit was forwarded to Sylvania City Council for their review and approval.

Safety City Graduated 180

I was pleased to attend the Safety City graduation of 180 Sylvania five year old children on Friday, June 19th. This was Sylvania Safety City's 24th year and over 4,500 students have attended over the years. Sylvania's children are our most important asset, and Sylvania's version of Safety City helps to get them off to a safe start before they enter school.

The children attended either a morning or an afternoon class for five days at Highland Elementary School. Important topics covered included:

- Memorization of Name, Address and Telephone Number
- Classroom Skills
- Safely Crossing the Street
- Traffic Signs and Signals
- Seat Belt Safety
- Fire Prevention
- Stop, Drop and Roll
- Stranger Danger
- School Bus Safety and going for a short school bus ride.
- Bicycle Safety including always wearing a helmet

Railroad Crossings
Safety around animals
Medical Emergencies and Ambulances
Hospitals

A neighborhood of streets, sidewalks, signs, crosswalks, lights, etc. was set up to help practice safety. The children met police officers, firefighters and other emergency personnel and learn they are there to help and protect them.

Thank you to all who help to make Safety City a great experience for our children, including all the teachers, police officers, firefighters and other personnel and volunteers who helped out. Also, our thanks to Flower Hospital, the Lucas County Dog Warden, Norfolk-Southern RR/Operation Lifesaver, Allied Waste, the Sylvania Township Fire Department, Sylvania Rotary and Sylvania Schools for their assistance. Sylvania Safety City 2009 was a great success because of all of you. And thank you to all the parents for entrusting your children to us and for supporting the program and attending the graduation ceremony.

Incidentally, another great program of the Sylvania Police Division is the Child Safety Seat Program. Sergeant Danilynn Miller, Officer William Dryer, and Officer Stacy Pack have trained to become Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians. Since the program started in 2001 with the help of Dave White Chevrolet, they have checked or installed over 2000 child safety seats at a variety of events around town resulting in over 150 unsafe child seats being turned in and replaced at cost. If you would like to have a Child Safety Seat checked, please call the City of Sylvania Police at 419/885-8902 to set up an appointment, or look for them at upcoming community events.

Arbor Day Celebration

The City of Sylvania hosted its annual Arbor Day Celebration on Friday, April 24, 2009 at the City Administration Building grounds, 6730 Monroe Street from 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The City of Sylvania was named a Tree City USA by the National Arbor Day Foundation for the 28th consecutive year.

The Tree City USA program is sponsored by the National Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with the National Association of State Foresters and the USDA Forest Service. To become a Tree City USA, a community must meet four standards: a tree board or department, a tree care ordinance, a comprehensive community forestry program, and an Arbor Day observance. Sylvania has met these standards for twenty-seven years, leading to a better quality of life for all of our residents.

Since 1975, over 7,700 street trees have been planted by the City of Sylvania Parks and Forestry Division. City forestry funds are used not only to plant new trees, but also to prune and take care of trees in our parks, public lands and street right-of-ways. Tree planting is scheduled every year to replace damaged or missing trees along neighborhood streets.

Also this spring, 480 acres in the Olander Park area were sprayed for gypsy moths where entomologists earlier found egg clusters. The Ohio Department of Agriculture notified property owners by mail of the aerial spray with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT), an insecticide non toxic to humans, pets, birds, fish, bees, etc. This spraying was timed for when the larvas hatch from the eggs and begin their climb to the top of the tree.

Gypsy moths thrive primarily on oak trees. They do a lot of damage, even killing them, by eating leaves, beginning at the top of the tree. In past years aerial spraying has proven to be an effective method of control. Cost of this spray application is paid by the Ohio Department of Agriculture and the City Parks and Forestry Division.

Being a Tree City USA is just part of the City of Sylvania's commitment to the quality of our natural environment. Sylvania's urban forestry program is recognized around the state for our green waste recycling program - collecting, grinding and composting tons of yard waste each year instead of sending it to a landfill. Further, the City was among the first in Ohio sixteen years ago to begin a materials recycling program.

In a city named Sylvania, Arbor Day is certainly an important day to recognize. Our thanks to the Sylvania Rotary Club, who again donated a tree planted during the program. Many residents and students attended the Arbor Day Celebration on Friday, April 24th and assisted in planting that tree.

Sylvania Welcomed Jamie Farr LPGA

We look forward each summer to the excitement and national attention the Jamie Farr LPGA Tournament brings to our community. This year's tournament was the 25th annual, and the last year of the LPGA tournament contract.

This year's tournament was held July 2nd through 5th with pro-am events earlier in the week. The Jamie Farr LPGA Classic brings thousands of fans and media representatives into Sylvania every year. Our local restaurants, shops, and hotel benefit from the many visitors to our community. Even though the crowds at times can lead to congestion on our roads, the tournament also greatly benefits local charities serving Sylvania and Lucas County.

An exciting downtown Sylvania celebration welcomed tournament visitors to our community on Thursday, July 2nd from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. Main Street was closed to vehicles from Monroe Street north to the historic village. There was entertainment, music, children's activities, a car show, a farmers market and food from eight local restaurants. My thanks to the Sylvania Area Chamber of Commerce for organizing this exciting downtown Sylvania event.

Highland Meadows Golf Club and the many volunteers and sponsors who make this tournament a success every year also deserve our thanks. The members of Highland Meadows have hosted this tournament since 1990 and each year the course and facilities are better than the year before. Local residents and golf fans each year donate thousands of hours for hole marshalling and the many jobs that must be done well for a successful tournament.

Sylvania prides itself on being a great place to live, work and raise a family, and the Jamie Farr LPGA Classic helps enliven and enrich the lives of our residents every year. The tournament brings the excitement of national attention to our community. Our residents are treated to competitive golf at the highest level, and our young people see first hand from world class athletes that hard work and practice can lead to success.

Later in the year, new leadership at the LPGA granted a new one year contract to hold the Jamie Farr tournament again in 2010. We look forward to hosting and supporting the tournament in Sylvania in 2010, and again bringing national attention to our Sylvania community.