

THE BLUE LETTER



333 James E. Bohanan Drive • Vandalia, OH 45377 • (937) 898-5891

June 4, 2021

Honorable Mayor Herbst & Esteemed City Councilmembers:

Public service is a privilege and a public trust. We are on the precipice of exciting developments abound. Decades of sound policymaking, strategic fiscal management, development of staff through professional training, and community engagement have led us to this point. **Great ideas come from all levels of our organization, across disciplines, and among varying experiences. Let's be wise enough to run with good concepts and build on our practice of purposeful action to inch-up the Vandalia bar.**

I want to thank our Vandalia Police Division, Communications Manager Hopkins, and the greater community for helping to reunite a lost four-year-old with his family this week. This rescue started with a good Samaritan who saw a young boy attempting to cross Dixie Dr. by himself. The good Samaritan delivered the boy to the Police Department, cared for him, and ultimately leveraged our resources to return him safely. That's a team and community that I am proud to be a part of.

The rain is breaking, the grass is high, and June is upon us. The City is hard at work to ensure that our staff and contractors conduct a level of property maintenance that aligns with our desire to be regarded as a top-tier suburb. Likewise, we are experiencing an uptick in complaints surrounding commercial and residential maintenance. I assure you that our team will work with our residents and business people to promote compliance, while maintaining exceptional customer service.

You may be interested to know, that the Butler High School baseball team is alive and strong in regionals. I share this with you because Parks & Recreation Director Steve Clark is retiring from his duties as a coach on the team and his son Carson was recently named to the 1st Team of the 2021 All-Ohio Poll. So please do what baseball players do by lighting a candle, putting on your clothes from left to right, taking three steps backwards, and wearing your luckiest of shirts. Good luck Aviators!



This week was packed. We held some second-round interviews for aspiring City Planner candidates. This position will be crucial for helping us realize the Vision Vandalia Comprehensive Plan and the assembly of our future downtown.

I met with our team extensively about opportunities relating to utility infrastructure, analyzed the implications of likely changes to municipal income tax withholding laws in the state legislature, and held a video conference with our lobbyists about commercial truck traffic. In addition, last week, I had the opportunity to sit down with Sheriff Rob Streck and Chief Althouse to discuss collaborative opportunities for improving the health, safety, and well-being of our community. *Little Known Fact of the Day: Chief Althouse was Sheriff Streck's field training officer at the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office.*

As we go about serving the community, let's consider that today is a good day to make someone's day. Tomorrow works too. Please consider the following updates.

- 1. Welcome Police Lieutenant Brandon Sucher:** Lt. Sucher joined the Vandalia Police Division on Wednesday, June 2. Lt. Sucher holds a Master of Public Administration, he is a life-long Vandalia resident, and was most recently a Police Sergeant in Huber Heights. Locally, Lt. Sucher participates in Sister Cities. Lt. Sucher will be attend the City Council meeting on June 21 for a ceremonial swear-in.
- 2. Airshow Parade:** Please let me know if you will be participating in the Air Show Parade this year. As has been done in past years, the City will provide golf carts and name placards. Human Resources Manager Shannetta Dewberry will prepare and submit your float application once you advise me of your plan to participate.
- 3. Municipal Income Tax Withholding:** This week, I met with Finance Director Leiter and Tax Supervisor Emily Huwer to discuss the potential implications of language that was amended into the budget bill, which may negatively impact income tax revenues – the City's primary revenue source. **I want to be clear in stating that it will take some time to understand the impact of this revision by the legislature. Also, this could result in the City issuing refunds for Tax Year 2020 several years to come.** The language amended into the budget bill would retroactively mandate municipalities to comply with refund requests made by employees who, if not for the orders related to the prevention of the spread of the pandemic, would be working at their principal place of work. The senate increased the potential financial loss to municipalities across the state by allowing for refunds to be requested all the way back to March 9, 2020, when HB 197 was enacted, impacting the closed tax year's revenue collections. **To date, the City has received refund requests totaling \$19,271.99.** This number will likely increase. **While the City will refund some withholdings, taxing municipalities will share information and such a change may lead to revenues that would not otherwise be realized – although these funds may be harder to collect in practice.** The Finance Department is working from guidance under the Government Finance Officers Association to estimate potential worst-case impacts. I will continue to update you with regard to the financial position of the City.
- 4. American Rescue Plan Act:** This week, the U.S. Treasury released additional guidance to assist states with the distribution of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to non-entitlement units of local government (e.g., Vandalia), which are local governments typically serving a population under 50,000. This new guidance includes step-by-step guide for states regarding the allocation and



distribution of ARPA funds. The City is prepared to receive the initial tranche of \$1.45 million; however, it is now likely that these funds will not arrive until at least July. Law Director McDonald, Finance Director Leiter, and I are juxtaposing the impact of COVID-19 on the City's coffers against the permitted uses to ensure that funds are spent in accordance with evolving guidance from the Department of Treasury.

5. **Cassel Hills Pool:** The pool is open, Swim Safe – the new contractor – has their systems in place to ensure the safety of our patrons, and it appears that the weather may cooperate this weekend.
6. **Commercial Truck Traffic:** Next week, I am meeting with City Manager Applegate of Union, Director Stanley of the Montgomery County Transportation Improvement District, and County Commissioner (and Vandalia resident) Judy Dodge to continue building relationships. Public Service Director Cron, Assistant City Manager Holloway, Chief Althouse, and I continue to work with our partners to lessen the impacts of commercial truck traffic through town. We continue to explore ideas relating to signage, speed limit modifications, altering our built environment, and working with public information officers to alter the routes that navigation systems suggest from the west side of the airport. In the next few weeks, the I-70 East / I-75 North interchange is scheduled to reopen, which may lessen the presence of errant vehicles. Also, ACM Holloway and I had the pleasure of visiting Mr. Brian Thigpen at the Carter Express cross dock. Mr. Thigpen was complimentary of the City and was very open and understanding of issues relating to commercial truck traffic in town. I shared developments relating to the Montgomery County Engineer's submission of the ODOT TRAC grant application for a ring road around the north side of town.
7. **Blood Drive:** The City is hosting a blood drive in the Justice Center on June 18. The region is currently experiencing a shortage and now is a great time to sign up! Visit: www.donortime.com.
8. **Corporate Challenge:** Corporate Challenge starts Sunday. I am really looking forward to handicapping the effectiveness of the City's volleyball team. Stay tuned to our social media accounts for updates.

Our next meeting of City Council is on June 21, 2021. Senator Niraj Antani has indicated that he plans to attend to understand how he can serve the interests of Vandalia. I will make sure that he is prepared to understand the City's position regarding commercial truck traffic and our desire to receive funding in the next state capital budget for a shovel-ready project (to be determined) - among other interesting developments.

Please contact me directly with questions or comments.

Your partner in service,



Dan Wendt
City Manager

CC:

Board and Commission Members
All City Employees

