

I want to thank all of you for coming out tonight to attend the State of the City Address.

It has been 15 months since I was given the honor of leading this great city as your Mayor. When I took over, the city was on an uncertain financial path and facing an 8 million dollar deficit.

Working together with the City Council we passed a budget that lived within our means.

Building on the strong foundation of last year's fiscal sacrifices, this budget continues my pledge to be mindful about how WE spend YOUR money.

Tonight I am presenting a 98.6 million dollars budget that does not increase the property tax rate. The Budget I present tonight is balanced and let me emphasize, it is responsible.

This budget's only increases are the continued funding of the 2013 Union bargaining agreements, a required 8% increase in health insurance for our employees, an increase in our liability insurance, and debt service.

Our success over the past year would not be possible without the support of the city council. I want to thank each of you for your hard work and dedication. Although we have not always agreed, we have always found a way to work together.

I would also like to thank the team I have put in place over the past year. I would like to acknowledge my Department Heads that produce the quality services to our citizens day after day... doing so much more, with so much less. Would you please stand and be recognized.

From a budget point of view, it became clear to me that we could not continue to do things the same old way. Early in our budget process we looked for a better way to develop a budget that defines and prioritizes program and services, instead of just increasing or decreasing from what a department head had spent in the previous year.

Under the leadership of our new city manager, Tom Andrews, and our finance director , Bruce Miller, we implemented a new approach that defines and prioritizes programs and services versus the traditional line item approach.

Instead of doing things the same old way, we embraced a budget model that is recommended by the Government Finance Officers Association, International City Managers Association, the Center for Priority Budgeting, and others.

This type of budgeting creates an open and transparent dialogue among City Council members, citizens and department heads.

It defines the budget in terms of programs, making it easier for the public to clearly understand how their tax dollars are being spent.

It is also an exercise that requires the department heads to better define the programs they consider as the most important.

So just what are the City's priorities in the budget?

Our priorities focus on core services: Public Safety, programs that protect our environment, being business and consumer friendly and, of course, fixing our infrastructure.

Our public safety personnel continue to do a great job for our city.

Our fire department is a model for the state. The Annapolis Cardiac Arrest Save Rate... at 25%... is well above the National Average of between 10 to 13%.

Let's put a face with that statistic. The gentleman was in the Military Bowl Parade last December when he collapsed on the parade route... going into full cardiac arrest.

Seven Annapolis firefighters, who happened to be on a fire engine right behind him in the parade, saw the emergency and went to work, right there on the parade route.

Because of the firefighters' professional training and quick response, we are pleased to welcome **Mr. Fred Taylor**, also known as the City of Annapolis Town Crier to tonight's meeting.

WELCOME back my good friend! Would you please stand.

Also, would the firefighters who responded please stand and be recognized.

Along with training, our fire department has modernizing the way they do business. Chief David Stokes has managed to increase the Ambulance billing revenues by more than \$300,000.

This is revenue that offsets the costs of transporting patients instead of putting the burden on the taxpayer.

In addition, I will be asking for a change so we can charge the same EMS Transport Fee in Annapolis as they charge in the County.

Meanwhile... The Office of Emergency Management went after and collected \$743,000 in grant funding for the City of Annapolis last year... funding that allows the City to move forward with important public safety projects without the need to expend city resources.

One of these valuable projects was the “Prepare Me Annapolis” mobile app that can be downloaded free of charge that sends residents updated information on traffic congestion, severe weather, power outage status and school closings.

Public Safety continues to be a priority in my administration...and with that...I want to pause and let our men and women in blue know how proud I am of the continued crime reduction in our City.

Under the direction of Chief Michael Pristoop, Annapolis experienced another year of record low overall crime in 2014... 6% less than 2013.

This success may be due to the excellent community outreach by our Police Department... or it may be the officer’s constant commitment and dedication to our citizens.

APD has not only built relationships with our community, but its officers have built relationships with other police departments, AND other government agencies.

Currently, our police are working in partnership with Anne Arundel County to help fight heroin abuse and overdoses.

APD is part of a larger task force aimed at this problem, and the results are already measurable.

At my inauguration in 2013 I made a pledge to focus on drug abuse. The city is working with Governor Larry Hogan and County Executive Steve Schuh and I have made the heroin epidemic and drug abuse one of the top priorities for our law enforcement teams.

The city and county are not separate and drugs know no borders. To that end, Chief Pristoop and I are on the County Executive's Task Force and we are committed to keeping our children and citizens safe from these dangerous drugs and the terrible consequences that affect all families.

The increased enforcement in the city has resulted in more arrests. While this is positive, the amount of time spent in the courtrooms by officers is responsible for nearly ½ of the police department's overtime. I am talking with our State's Attorney, Wes Adams, to better coordinate the officer's presence in the courtroom, so we can keep our officers on the street, protecting our citizens.

It was just 4 days ago that 5.3 inches of snow fell, and I know a group of people that will be happy when winter is over!

As you and I were all warm and dry in our homes throughout each of the recent winter weather episodes, this dedicated team was out salting, plowing, shoveling, and clearing 90 miles of streets to ensure the city was open for business!

Let's give a round of applause to David Jarrell and his team for a job well done!

Also, WE ALL KNOW THERE ARE POT HOLES IN ANNAPOLIS... AND Needless to say, the recent winter weather has added insult to injury on our aging roads.

Seeing this pattern last year, I put aside money in the FY15 budget and that million dollars will be available for street repairs this year.

I am putting an additional \$1 million dollars in the FY2016 budget, so we are prepared for next year.

I have directed Pubic Works to make a full court press on repairing all potholes with 48 hours of a report.

If you see a pothole, let us know on the "REPORT IT" icon on our City's webpage, or call 410-263-7967.

I also want to acknowledge our DPW crew for quickly installing our bus stop shelters prior to the winter weather. To date, we have replaced 40 shelters and by May will have all 80 shelters back in place.

Weather is also responsible for flood issues that need addressing. As you all know we will begin phase 2 of our bulkhead replacement starting in October of this year.

Funding for the project was in last year's Capital budget so there will be no impact on the FY16 budget.

However, knowing that Annapolis has, on average, 50 incidents of nuisance flooding per year... I have met with both County and Federal Lawmakers, requesting an additional \$1 million in funding for planning and design to address long-term flooding at and around City Dock.

Along with the wet weather came one of the coldest winters on record.

I am proud of the work our recreation and parks department accomplished by offering the Stanton Center as a shelter of last resort.

It accommodated more than 360 individuals over the past few weeks, giving them a warm bed, a warm meal and shelter from the terrible cold.

Facility manager Archie Trader and We Care and Friends founder Larry Griffen, along with Deputy Chief Kevin Simmons should be acknowledged for their commitment to making sure that all our residents are cared for and no one is left on our streets, when help is available.

Thank you gentlemen for being there to help!

Since we are talking about the recreation and parks department staff, we recently welcomed a new director to the City.

Mike Morris is leading an award winning department that includes being ranked number 1 nationally for its "Let's Move" initiative... as well as being recognized as a "Healthy Eating Active Living" city.

We are making sure that being named a healthy City is symbolic of the way we operate.

Cost recovery from our recreation activities is close to 50% compared to the national rate of 28%.

Now, that's what I call a healthy Business Plan.

Another new face is our Planning and Zoning Director, Pete Gutwald.

Pete is working to create a system that is more predictable, efficient and user friendly. The department has nearly tripled the number of applications processed since July 1 of last year compared to the year before.... from 236 to 642

Over the year, the department has also responsible for revitalized the Historic Property Tax Credit program.

As we move into FY16, Pete and his team will focus on new initiatives including those that will surround the 50th anniversary of the Historic Landmark District.

The final member of the team, who should be confirmed tonight, is Rick Gordon , my recommendation for Transportation Director.

Mr. Gordon, Will you please stand

In my opinion, this man has the experience...drive and creativity to remake our transportation system into one of the best in the state.

Therefore, I am in negotiations with County Executive Schuh to develop a partnership where the county can assist in providing transit service to those county citizens who need it most.

Under the leadership of Maria Broadbent, DNEP has successfully opened or expanded 143 businesses in Annapolis since last year.

I have charged Director Broadbent to continue making improvements in the permitting and inspection system to make it more predictable and efficient.

Legislation, now before city council addresses a change to the permit process.

O -4-15 eliminates the need for a permit based solely on the cost of construction. This will allow some businesses to open without the need of a building permit.

DNEP is also responsible for spearheading our environmental priorities. Together with our partners, South River Federation, Spa Creek Conservancy, St. Luke's Church, and DNR, we have in excess of five million dollars worth of stream restoration projects are in the works.

Also, the city's Maritime Museum and the adjacent properties will install a living shoreline this spring, restoring the natural vegetation back to the water's edge.

DNEP continues to actively manage the city's urban forest. We are looking at ordinance changes with an eye toward growing the city's tree canopy.

DNEP also created an Environmental Stewardship program for area businesses and households to educate individuals about how to make their homes and businesses more environmentally friendly. A few years ago we partnered with the county, taking our program and increasing not only the education component, but increasing the number of Stewards making a difference in both the city and around the county.

My goal is to make Annapolis a leader in environmental stewardship and to become a model for environmental best practices.

Most recently, we had the first non-profit, St. Mary's school, join our program along with Baywood Senior Center. On St. Patrick's Day... we will be welcoming in our newest steward BAR-OAK COOKHOUSE and TAP ROOM.

Social and economic inclusion, along with public input has been the cornerstone of my administration.

I host an OPEN DOOR on the first Tuesday of every month where any citizen can sit down with me, one-on-one and talk about what is on their mind.

I have learned a great deal from these meetings and we have taken action where appropriate.

Annapolis is fortunate to have such a diverse population. However, after meeting with Hispanic leaders... It was clear to me that this population had been underserved in the past.

Because of this, I hired a liaison to increase our outreach to our Hispanic Community.

We continue to promote and educate the city on our African American heritage and leaders. The city played a major role in the 150th celebrations of Maryland's Emancipation... and the first Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade was a great success, and we all have to thank Pat Montague and the Annapolis Drum and Bugle Corps for their commitment to making this happen.

As part of my outreach, I continue to meet with our faith based community on a regular basis to see how we can work together to meet the needs of our citizens.

I think parking and transportation has been a topic of discussion since colonial times... It's time to get a comprehensive approach to address these issues, and I have issued a Request for Proposals, which will bring the way we do business out of the colonial period and into the 21st century.

In summary... Tonight I stand before you, proposing a 98.6 million dollar operating budget, \$68.7 of which is general funds.

The city continues to improve its financial stability and that is clearly evident by a \$35 million fund balance.

Being fiscally prudent takes constant effort. It is a never-ending challenge of finding better and more efficient ways to live within our means.

This month, I will be introducing legislation that will begin revising our fiscal policies and bring them in line with best practices.

We will move to automating our billing service, both the web and telephone, AND in both English and Spanish.

In conclusion...I submit to you tonight, a balanced budget that is lean, but still addresses the needs of our citizens, while providing valuable services that continue to make Annapolis great.

Now I ask all of you tonight to be part of the process.

Come to the public hearings, be a part of the dialogue, and hold us accountable for the choices we make!

This is your City, and we work for you!

Thank you.