

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

TEMPLE MAYOR MICHAEL JOHNSON

Delivered to City Council during Meeting of February 3, 2020

Two years ago, specifically on January 8, 2018, I stood in this City Hall with my hand and arm raised and my mind focused on the solemn oath I was about to take as I began a four-year commitment of service and leadership to the City of Temple and its citizens as Mayor.

I now have started the second half of this journey – this tour of duty – and I am as excited about what lies ahead in 2020 and 2021 for all of us in the Temple community as I was when I took office two years ago. And one reason I am excited and optimistic about the upcoming two years is because of the numerous positive experiences and accomplishments that I and my colleagues in this municipal government have been a part of during the past two years.

I believe Temple is a better place now than it was at the start of 2018. And this is due to the work of many of our citizens in various ways in this community, as well as to the commitment, patience, and service of our City Council members, City staff, and those who faithfully serve on citizen boards and committees.

Now, at this point in tonight's City Council meeting, I want to talk about what we have achieved working together, with a focus on calendar 2019. From my perspective as your Mayor, I want to report on the State of our City. As I begin, I want to recognize my fellow elected officials in the City of Temple...the five men and women who are the members of the City Council. While the six of us on infrequent occasions may have different perspectives and may set forth different opinions, I believe all of us are committed to working together for the benefit of this community and the people who live and/or work here. It is a pleasure to serve with each of them.

I believe the residents of the City of Temple recognize and appreciate the dedication of their elected officials and our commitment of working together for the benefit of the people of Temple. To underscore my point, let me note that the four-year terms of three of the City Council members expired at the end of calendar 2019. All three – Richard Bracknell, Hiley Miller, and Tom Wallace – decided to run for re-election. Two had no opposition, and the other incumbent easily won re-election. To me, this shows a great majority of citizens understand and appreciate the service and the commitment of their elected representatives. Certainly, I appreciate these three Council members who now have embarked on a new four-year tour of duty. And I equally appreciate the same level and type of service from the other two Council members, Terron Bivins and Howard Walden.

So, while this is the State of the City Address from your Mayor, I believe it appropriately could be identified as a report from all of the City of Temple's elected leaders.

My report is divided into eight parts. While I could start with any one of several topics, I will start with the same subject as I did last year.

WATER AND SEWER. No action taken in 2019 by the City of Temple government was more important than the refinancing of our water bond debt. Through the work of your elected officials, the guidance and expertise of our bond counsel and financial advisors, and certainly through the solid cooperation of the Carroll County Water Authority (CCWA) officials and Board members, the City of Temple was able to eliminate the potential disaster of having a \$4.6 million balloon note due on January 1, 2021, with no way of making such a large payment.

Meetings involving City of Temple elected officials, staff members, and the City's legal and financial advisors, as well as similar representatives from the Carroll County Water Authority led to very successful October 17 events. At 7:30 that morning a special meeting of the our City Council was held to receive the results of The October 15 Validation Hearing in Carroll Superior Court and then to adopt a resolution authorizing the execution of an intergovernmental contract between this city government and the CCWA to provide for the refunding of the these bonds and the settling of the existing water bond debt.

Later in the morning, the CCWA Board of Directors took the necessary action to approve this refunding as well as a new plan for the City of Temple to retire the bonds under a new schedule which will reduce our annual repayment amount for the next few years to about half of the previous amount of some \$620,000. This not only eliminated the \$4.6 million balloon note but also made our annual debt payment much less difficult to handle, which is especially important since the current revenue of SPLOST funds may not exist after the first part of 2021.

The restructured bond debt for Temple shows annual payments over the next 12 years starting at \$300,000 in 2021 and increasing to \$410,000 in the final year of 2032. The total amount refinanced is \$4,225,000.

Without a successful conclusion to this major problem in 2019, we would not have the resources to deal with other water and sewer challenges in 2020. With this major financial obstacle now resolved, perhaps the number one challenge in our water system is the replacement of our current water meters. They must be read manually, but with the introduction of current technology to Temple, we would be able to do remote readings of our water meters.

In 2019 the City of Temple completed most of the necessary preparations for the changeover with its water meter operations. We knew this changeover would require engineering and other technical assistance beyond our small staff's available time and past experience. After looking at several options, the City Council selected the engineering firm of Keck and Wood to assist us in the meter replacement project. Now, we are getting ready for Keck and Wood to solicit proposals for the purchase and installation of the new water meters.

In 2019 even as we were working on the restructuring of our water bond debt so the City could initiate a water meter replacement program, the City was looking at several engineering firms before choosing Keck and Wood. Also, we were taking steps to restructure our billing schedule for water and sewer services. For too long the City had not revised and implemented a billing schedule which would generate the revenues needed in order to provide needed water and sewer services. The result was a new schedule of rates, which went into effect in February. Then, in December the City Council revised the rate schedule due primarily to an increase in the CCWA's wholesale water price charged to the City, with the stipulation that these would be the rates for at least most of 2020.

From a staffing standpoint, we had a couple of major changes in 2019. Temple's water system is part of our Public Works Department. As the new year started, our Public Works Director for the past three-plus years resigned; and on an interim basis we assigned these duties to the City's Code Enforcement Director George Skala. Based on Mr. Skala's handling of these new duties, in August he was appointed to be the new Public Works Director. He is doing a very good job for us, and has been willing to continue to handle code enforcement duties until that position is filled.

Secondly, Sewer Treatment Plant Superintendent Vernon Harris resigned late in the year. His assistant Jimmy Jenkins is serving in an interim capacity until a new superintendent is employed.

Now, next in this annual report, I want to make a few comments concerning a service where the City made major changes in 2019. Let me explain.

SANITATION. Early in calendar year 2019, the City Council and I decided we needed to make some changes in our garbage collection and disposal program. The three-year contract with Waste Industries was to end on June 30, and we notified this company of the City's intention to solicit bids from qualified companies. In addition to continuing to offer residential sanitation services, Temple decided to include commercial and industrial customers as part of an exclusive franchise package. With this arrangement, for the first time commercial and industrial customers would be a part of City's program and would pay a surcharge to this local government. In response to our solicitation of sealed bids, the City received two proposals. One was from Waste Industries, the other from Waste Pro USA. The City Council voted for Waste Pro to become the new provider of sanitation services in Temple.

Waste Pro's bid included lower monthly rates for all customers; thus, a transition occurred late in June with residential customers. And for those residential households who had been disposing of their own garbage, the City let these households continue to disposal of their own garbage at a nearby Carroll County collection point if the customer notified the City of Temple of his/her decision by a certain deadline. After that deadline, the City of Temple exercised its authority to be the exclusive provider of sanitation collection and disposal services in this municipality. Also, with local commercial businesses and industries, by the end of 2019 this transition from Waste Industries to Waste Pro USA basically had been completed.

As a result of this change in 2019, the monthly rate charged to participating homeowners had decreased. And even though the City now receives funds from a 7 percent surcharge on the monthly bills of non-residential customers, the lower container charges by Waste Pro has resulted in lower monthly bills for most commercial and industrial customers in Temple.

Our annual Spring Clean-Up Day continues. It was a success in 2019 with Waste Industries. It will be held in 2020 on Saturday, April 25, on City property at the corner of Johnson Street and Milner Street, with Waste Pro as our partner. So, to our citizens, here's an invitation to bring your "spring clean up" trash to this location and have it disposed for you at no cost.

STREETS, SIDEWALKS, AND TRAIN TRACKS. In terms of actual projects, 2019 was a quiet year for work on local streets. The City Public Works Department's focus was on fixing potholes and dealing with limited maintenance problems. Normally, the Carroll County Public Works Department late in the calendar year handles resurfacing projects on several City streets, with funds from the Georgia Department of Transportation's Local Improvements and Maintenance Grant (LMIG) program paying the County for doing this work. But the County Public Works Department was not able to do this work late in the year, so it now is scheduled to be done this coming spring.

While another year passed without GDOT undertaking the intersection improvement project at Georgia 113 (Carrollton Street) and U.S. Highway 78, I am delighted to report that actual construction work began at the start of 2020 and soon will be completed on this State project.

Locally in 2019 the major road project continued to be the widening of Interstate 20 between Villa Rica and Bremen. Most of I-20 near and in Temple throughout the year was a construction zone; and although it made travel on the interstate less pleasant and more dangerous, we were able to look ahead with great anticipation to having an improved major highway in the future.

Norfolk Southern trains certainly impacted local travel in Temple throughout the year. Sometimes it was because large trucks did not pay attention to warning signs; so they ended up stuck on the railroad tracks, thus slowing down vehicular traffic until the large truck had been removed by a wrecker. Sometimes there were delays because one train had pulled over on the parallel tracks in and near the downtown area until a "higher priority" train had passed through town; however, I will add that Norfolk Southern in 2019 did work more closely with the City of Temple to reduce the frequency and the length of delays for motorists.

At this point in my State of the City report, I want to change from talking about public works and utilities and talk about what might be identified as "people" topics.

SENIOR CENTER. I'll start with our senior citizens. I'm proud of the Temple Senior Center, and I am delighted we have a place where this important segment of our population can gather for fun, fellowship, nutrition, and other activities. Director Sandra Stillwell guides this program. And while I usually talk about the different activities at this facility located in the City Park, in my 2019 annual report I want to focus on improvements the City of Temple has made and is making in the building itself.

In 2019 we completed an important addition to the Senior Center kitchen. Monday through Friday, the staff daily prepares approximately 140 meals for seniors who have come to the Center for various activities and for seniors who can't leave home but enjoy a home-delivered meal made possible through our program. For many of these seniors, this lunch frequently is their main meal of the day. A great need for more freezer space, refrigeration space, and dry storage space caused City officials to

construct an addition to the kitchen. This addition was started in 2018 and was completed in 2019, and now is a big asset to our food service activities at the Senior Center.

Sometimes our seniors -- as well as visitors of all ages -- were not able to be comfortable as they participated in various events because the building's air conditioning system didn't work properly. And if you think it is uncomfortable to have lunch in a room where the AC is not working properly, just imagine how it is when the scheduled event is square dancing. Well, I'm delighted to report that this problem has been resolved through the installation of a new air conditioning system.

Our final building improvement originally was to be completed before the end of 2019. It is the renovation and remodeling of both the women's and the men's restrooms. However, the project was shifted to the first part of 2020. We expect construction work will start within the next few weeks.

RECREATION. Adjacent to the Temple Senior Center are the City Recreation Department offices, gymnasium, and multi-purpose rooms. In August 2019 the City hired local resident Lisa Jacobson to be our new Recreation Director. During the remaining months of 2019 she reinvigorated the Rec Department, started some new activities, and worked to improve and expand community involvement. And when the City had a vacancy for the position of Athletic and Leisure Coordinator, we brought back former employee Jeremy Ralston to be a part of our program again.

I and members of the City Council wanted our new Rec Director to be a "people person" who would encourage participation in our various programs and who would seek to expand our recreational activities. Ms. Jacobson has sought to instill new interest in our existing recreational programs which had operated under former City Rec Director Joe Wilson who resigned early last summer. Also, she has worked to initiate some new opportunities. For example, for 2020 we have added wrestling.

Primarily using 2015 SPLOST Program funds, the City of Temple completed a number of facility improvements during this past year. An elevated press box facility was constructed at the football field, with a storage area on the ground level. For safety reasons and especially with younger children in mind, the City built a security fence around the detention pond. The light poles at some of our ballfields were evaluated from a safety standpoint, and three of these have been removed and replaced due to their structural deterioration. While bad weather late in the year delayed completion of the repairing and improving of Field No. 4, that work soon will be finished. Then, similar work will begin on other fields, and the improved Field 4 will host a lot of ball games and practice sessions.

The parking lots adjacent to the gymnasium and the Senior Center were re-stripped. The old storage building near Johnson Street was torn down and the debris removed. For most of our ballfields, certain sections of the fencing had curled-up at ground level and/or had sustained other damage, and these sections of fencing were replaced.

Much of this work is part of the "master plan" for the City Park. I am delighted we are working to implement this plan. I look forward to the continuing implementation of our overall plan for the park.

Last fall we obtained two proposals for the renovation and remodeling of three buildings located adjacent to different ballfields in the park. The plan was (and is) to refurbish and improve the restroom facilities and the concession stand areas in these buildings. After reviewing the proposals, the

City Council decided to reject them and to advertise for sealed bids. That has been done, a contractor was selected at the start of 2020, and this work should be completed within several weeks.

We want our Rec Department to facilitate the availability of activities for all ages. We have children involved; and if you visit the gymnasium on many mornings, you will see some senior citizens involved in an exercise program. Through our Recreation Department, we want to offer a variety of enrichment activities and experiences.

A major initiative started in 2019 which I believe will be an on-going community focus. As we enjoy the present and look forward to the future, we also want to preserve certain memories from the past. And this City took an important step in 2019 by purchasing a residential structure and property across Sage Street from Temple High School in order to implement a long-time goal of many local residents, namely, establishment of the Temple Museum. This will be a place where various pieces of local history can be retained and displayed. Photos, printed materials, furnishings, and other important linkages to past generations of people in this part of Georgia will be collected and exhibited. Certainly, this is a long-range project, but in 2019 we started the journey.

Various people in our community who have talked for a long time about having a Temple Museum are becoming more and more involved in the step-by-step development of this community resource. Volunteers have begun the series of tasks to improve the appearance of the grounds and the building. This will continue in 2020. For residents and employees of local businesses who want to be involved in any aspect of the work to prepare the museum and/or who have historic items that you would like to donate to the museum, please contact me or the City Clerk at City Hall (770/562-3369).

Now, before I move to the next part of this State of the City presentation, let me point out that the City of Temple provides a building in the downtown area to serve our community as a Branch Library in the West Georgia Regional Library System. This is an important asset in our community, and I encourage our citizens to check out the library and then check out a book or other library offerings.

PUBLIC SAFETY. Next, I want to report on our Police Department and Municipal Court. We certainly appreciate the great job that Chief Creig Lee and our police offices do 24-7. There are many ways to measure the effectiveness of our Police Department. Certainly, one of them is the overall safety of the community. And in 2019, once again the City of Temple was rated as one of top 50 safest cities in the State of Georgia. (Let me point out this puts us in the top 10 percent, from a community safety standpoint.) Temple was the only city in our part of west Georgia to achieve this distinction. For several years, Temple has been included in this list prepared by Nation Home Security, based on FBI crime report statistics. In this most recent ranking, Temple was number 45 on the list.

The Police Department is the largest department in the City of Temple government. I am pleased to report again that we had virtually no staff turnover in the department in 2019. Our officers stay very busy, both with the work they do in our residential and commercial areas and also the work they do pertaining to the busy Interstate 20 corridor. I-20, as we know, always offers its challenges, and especially is this the case with all of the construction which continues to occur on this highway.

Crime statistics reflect the actions and reactions of the Temple Police Department personnel as they work to keep our community safe. And there are other statistics which reflect the part of policing

which is not what I would refer to “as dealing with the bad guys” but instead is what may come to mind when you recall a picture of an officer helping a young child or an elderly citizen. The Temple Police Department, from the top down, does a wonderful job with the positive aspects of community policing. Our department’s involvement in Founder’s Day is one example. So too are the examples of officers at other special events in the City, on special trips to the Senior Center, and certainly being seen in the annual and very successful Christmas season event “Shop with a Cop”.

The Police Department provides the staffing for Municipal Court, and this involves certified officers and civilian employees.

To illustrate the diversity of what our Police Department deals with, let me quickly read a few notes that Chief Lee included in his December monthly report to me and the City Council; and similar instances occurred throughout 2019 as our police officers carried out their duties: “Officer Cox recovered a stolen vehicle that had been taken from” – and I won’t mention the specific address – “earlier in the week.” “Pfc. Foughty and Officer Cox made an arrest of an entering auto suspect at the Pilot Travel Center after he had stolen items from a Pilot employee’s vehicle.” “Officer Thompson and Lt. Hollowood assisted CCSO (the Carroll County Sheriff’s Office) with an impaired driver and made an arrest just south of the city limits.” “Another successful Shop with a Cop; 96 kids received gifts this year.”

Now the eighth and final part of this annual report is identified under the overall heading of ADMINISTRATION. Actually, under this general heading of ADMINISTRATION, I shall talk about code enforcement, planning and community development, human resources, finance, and overall city management. Therefore, let me report the following:

CODE ENFORCEMENT. Most of the work in Code Enforcement done by the City of Temple is in response to complaints from individual citizens. Current Public Works Director George Skala began work with this local government as our part-time Code Enforcement Officer, and throughout 2019 he handled major responsibilities in public works and in code enforcement. Now although we hope soon to hire a new person to handle code enforcement, Mr. Skala continues to carry out two different jobs as a City of Temple employee.

Let me note that in 2019 stormwater enforcement was increased due to the pace of new construction in Temple. Also, to help keep neighborhoods safe, code enforcement spent more time looking into the operations of unlicensed businesses in residential areas. Several cases ended up in court as we dealt with old unusable vehicles and derelict buildings.

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT. The City of Temple has a six-member citizen Planning Commission. Unfortunately, several weeks ago the Planning Commission Chair, Randy Williams, resigned due to illness; and not long after this, Randy left this world to go to his eternal home.

2019 was a busy year for the Planning Commission. In addition to its regular mission of dealing with rezoning, subdivision creation, certain variances, etc., these members worked closely with me and the City Council to update Temple’s Future Land Use Plan and Map. This work continues but should be completed by the spring of 2020. Certainly, we need elected officials, our staff, and private citizens to work together on a plan for how land in Temple might best be used in the future.

The year 2019 started with the Planning Commission, the City Council, and myself finishing work on Temple's first Development Code. The project had taken several months to complete. After a public hearing, the Development Code was adopted by the City Council in March.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND OVERALL CITY MANAGEMENT. City Administrator Bill Osborne and City Clerk Kristin Etheredge in 2019 continued to be responsible for administering the City's human resources (personnel office) responsibilities. Ms. Etheredge also had certain responsibilities with our web site, City records, and various duties with City Council members, as well as assisting other staff members at City Hall. Our City Administrator was responsible for the day-to-day operation of this local government under the direction of myself and members of the City Council. These two staff members worked together throughout 2019 to prepare information for the City Council meetings, including our workbooks which present background information on the various matters which are to come before us.

FINANCE. To conclude my State of the City address, I shall provide a financial report on Fiscal Year 2019. The City of Temple's fiscal year coincides with the calendar year. Overall, the City of Temple's financial status is good. In my opinion, the steps taken by me and the City Council are enabling this local government to continue to have a stable fiscal condition. Of course, the refinancing of the City's Water Bond debt – which was a key part of my opening comments in this State of the City report – was an extremely important step for the City of Temple in maintaining a sound financial position.

The City of Temple has three major funds: the General Fund, the Water Fund, and the Capital Fund. For 2019, let me comment on each of these.

Like many other local governments, the primary revenue source for capital projects is the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). All local governments in Carroll County currently depend very heavily on SPLOST funds as the revenue source for capital projects. We did so in 2019, and we will do so in 2020. Beyond that, the City of Temple and its sister local governments in Carroll County do not know what the future holds. The current SPLOST program ends early in 2021, and future funding will depend on what the voters decide on November 6 of this year. As we all know, SPLOST funding in 2019 and in other recent years has been very important to Temple.

Among the SPLOST projects funded in Temple's 2019 Fiscal Year Capital Fund budget were: a new HVAC system at the Senior Center, as previously mentioned; various Recreation facility improvements that I reported on earlier; purchase of the property for the future location of the Temple Museum; new computers and printers at City Hall; several improvements to the Sewer Treatment Plant and to the larger Public Works Building; and purchase of needed vehicles for the Police Department and Code Enforcement. Also, we set aside \$88,000 in 2019 SPLOST revenues in order to have those funds available to help pay for the new replacement water meters; and this amount was added to the \$312,000 in Water Fund revenues previously set aside for this purpose.

For F.Y. 2019, the City's Capital Fund budget from 2015 SPLOST funds totaled \$696,100.

Now I will point to the 2019 General Fund, where the key revenue sources were taxes, licenses, building permits and other permit fees, Municipal Court fines and forfeitures, recreation registrations and related activities, Senior Center revenues, interest earned, and several relatively small miscellaneous sources. The City Finance Department reported at the end of December that the City had received General Fund revenues totaling \$3,262,562, with the great majority (\$2,164,494) being from

taxes. And I might note that income from taxes includes franchise fees, insurance premiums, business licenses, and alcohol taxes, as well as sales taxes and property taxes.

On the expenditure side, not surprisingly the City's largest department – the Police Department – had the largest budget: \$1,201,975. As most of you know, all City government departments basically are funded through the General Fund except for the Water Distribution component of the Public Works Department and the Sewer Treatment Plant; and these basically are funded through the Water Fund.

Thus, General Fund expenditures include the Police, Senior Center, Recreation, the City's support of the Library, Municipal Court, City Administration, the Governing Body (being the Mayor and City Council), and most of Public Works.

For F.Y. 2019, the General Fund budget showed projected expenditures of \$3,256,771. Thus, our budget anticipated \$5,791 more in revenues than in expenditures. Although the final accounting for the just-concluded fiscal year still is being completed, we certainly expect our 2019 Fiscal Year revenues in the General Fund to exceed this fund's actual expenditures during the year.

Turning now to the City's Water Fund in 2019, our anticipated revenues totaled \$2,918,564. The largest revenue source is from the City's Sewer services; and for 2019, the budget projected revenues of \$1,057,000. Water service revenues were anticipated at \$836,000. For the City's Sanitation services – which, as I reported earlier, are handled through a contract between this local government and a private waste services company – the projected revenues were \$215,000. The remaining \$28,500 in revenue was from miscellaneous sources.

Projected expenditures in 2019 were at \$1,348,226 for water services, \$570,595 for sewer services, \$230,640 for sanitary services, and \$626,788 for debt service on the Water Bonds. These total \$2,776,249. Thus, the budget anticipated \$142,315 more in revenues than in expenditures; however, we knew most of this amount would need to be transferred to the General Fund which had covered costs throughout the 2019 fiscal year for central services such as budget, accounting, City administrative functions applicable to water and sewer, and other central services.

CLOSING COMMENTS. In 2019 I believe the men and women who form the work force for the City of Temple government did a very good job. Overall, they worked hard and produced positive results. I appreciate their dedication, attention to detail, loyalty, and commitment. And this extends from our department directors through our entry-level employees.

Concerning my elected colleagues in the City of Temple government, I want to express my sincere thanks to them for working together and continuously being concerned about the current conditions and the future outlook for this community. It is an honor to serve with them, as I mentioned during my opening comments.

I believe 2019 was a very good year in Temple, but I certainly have the goal of 2020 being an even better year. And I am convinced that my elected colleagues and our City employees basically share my interest and my desire to keep moving Temple forward. We are not where we want to go, but we are closer. We still have scheduled projects to complete, as well as needs which I hope we can address in some future projects.

Each of us who is in an elected or an appointed position – including citizens who serve on City of Temple boards and commissions – can make a contribution to this community. And as we do so, it will make Temple a better place for those who come after us. With that in mind, I want to point to two individuals who left their mark on this community as a result of their years of service to Temple and its citizens and who we are honoring so future generations will know these men made their mark on this community.

On December 2, the City Council passed separate resolutions and then I proudly signed both of them. One honored the memory of long-time City Council member William Simmons by naming the City Hall Building to be the William Simmons City Administration Building, and the other honored the memory of former long-time Police Chief J. M. Rutledge by naming the Police Station to be the J. M. Rutledge Public Safety Building.

A special ceremony will be held this spring when appropriate signage will be erected at City Hall and at the Police Station, respectively, to honor each of these men who meant so much to Temple.

In addition, I want to call attention to the passing of former Temple City Councilman Larry Mann, and to express to his family this community's appreciation for the many years of service he gave to the City of Temple and its citizens. He is missed.

Now, as I close my 2019 State of the City message, I want to repeat what I said one year ago when I delivered my 2018 State of the City address. I concluded then with these words, which I again want to say:

“My final comment and my final thanks concern my wonderful wife Donna. We are a team; and have been a team for years, including our service at Temple High School. So, thank you Donna for making it possible for me to give of my time to the Office of Mayor. And thank you for your advice and counsel along the way.

“May God bless this City Council, this City's employees, this City's businesses, and all of this City's citizens.”

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