

# Aurora

From the Mayor's Office

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## LET'S GET CONNECTED!

Dear Neighbor,

My first year in office has been a time of incredible

opportunity. I have a passion for effective, accountable government with a goal of making government open and responsive to you. Together with my staff, we are getting things done! Here's an update on some key accomplishments...



- **Personnel savings, overtime reductions and health care cost containment** measures.
- A new **business-friendly sign code** that also includes Historic District requirements.
- **Passage of Issue 11** creating the Geauga Lake Development District and new opportunities, along with the implementation of **design standards** for the area.
- New **Law Director; Planning, Zoning & Building**

Continued on page 2

Many of you have expressed your wish to see more connectivity in Aurora, so people can walk or bike to favorite places with greater ease and safety. Plans for a first phase of sidewalks in the Town Center have been approved and are being designed by an engineer, and a second phase will be included in the 2015 budget. The initial focus is connectivity on Route 82 and South Chillicothe, with a goal of tying in businesses in the Town Center and creating pathways to Aurora Farms.

While some of you might think it is an easy project, the city cannot just put sidewalks anywhere. City right-of-way must be used, and if the right-of-way is too small or non-existent (such as having been used up by the roadway), permission must be

obtained from the adjacent property owners. That can take time! Further, the city does have tentative plans to install bike lanes in the next several years as roadways are repaved as part of a federal project.

Meanwhile, the Parks and Recreation Director and I have been engaged in meetings with representatives of northern Portage County communities interested in connecting the Hike and Bike Trail across the area. Aurora is budgeting for an engineering plan for Aurora's portion next year.

**THANK YOU** to the residents of Aurora for supporting 15 Charter amendments.

Read more on page 4

## Aurora Services: It's beginning to look a lot like winter

### Road Salt Prices

Although many area communities are seeing a dramatic rise in road salt prices, Aurora is in very good shape thanks to the foresight and preparedness of the Service Department. Portage County reported this year's state bid pricing from

Morton Salt is \$108 per ton; however, Aurora will pay just under \$50 per ton. Aurora is part of a consortium of about 10 communities and school districts which has been able to get lower salt bids, good through this winter season.

**Director; Police Chief; and Assistant Director of Planning.**

- Commencement of the **river restoration work** at the Aurora golf course.
- Improved **access and new fields** at Kiwanis-Moore Park.
- **Action on storm water issues**, including close monitoring and cleaning of drains and retention basins.
- Approved plan for **new sidewalks and walkways** to

promote connectivity.

- Improved and updated **City Charter** with the passage of 15 amendments.
- Completion of 5 of the city's **6 union agreements**.

It has been an exciting year in the City of Aurora, and I wish you and your family a happy and healthy 2015.



Ann Womer Benjamin, Mayor

## Geauga Lake: Moving Forward

This year has entailed considerable focus on the redevelopment of the wonderful Geauga Lake area, and thanks to your approval of rezoning to mixed-use in May, opportunity is at hand. We have been working with Bainbridge and the owner, Cedar Fair, as potential buyers and developers come forward. In addition, Council imposed a moratorium on site development so that the city could craft detailed design standards for the mixed-use district, and those will be in effect by the first of the year. We envision a connected community blending residential, commercial, business, cultural, governmental and entertainment uses, with special features like streetscaping and public space.

### Coming Soon at Sunny Lake Park

Sunny Lake Park will soon see a new attraction, disc golf, along with improvements being executed by Hummel Construction Company. Expected to be completed in May 2015, they include the following:

- new concession stand with restrooms next to ball field #13
- redesigned and expanded parking lot adjacent to the existing boathouse
- new replacement bathrooms and exterior finish work on the existing boathouse

Further, in October, City Council approved conditional zoning for the Spring Hill property to be used as a public park, and new hiking trails are being planned.

## AURORA'S BUSINESS SECTOR IS GROWING

New businesses came to Aurora in 2014, and others expanded or are working on plans to do so. The industrial park welcomed AIM Manufacturing, Natural Essentials, Dearing Compressor, and Mytee Products. Metallics Systems, a division of Pyrotek, will soon break ground for its brand new Aurora operations a big win for Aurora. New buildings include the Atrium at Anna Maria, the Avenues of Aurora, and Dr. Cabi's new offices on 43, while expansion at the Aurora School of Music is expected early next year. New development will be

coming to the 82/43 intersection, and a new restaurant has opened – Mason Jar – on 82 with more expected next year. The Skin Care Studio opened a new business at 20 South Chillicothe, and the Aurora Inn – long a revered fixture in Aurora – is under new management with exciting renovations under way. Economic Development Director Jack Burge has his finger on the pulse, and the two of us have met with businesses and prospective businesses throughout the year.

## Wise Money Management

We started off 2014 focusing on controlling costs, particularly overtime costs and healthcare costs. Department heads were compelled to consider overtime expenses and plan schedules accordingly. In 2015

employees will begin contributing to their healthcare costs for the first time ever, reducing future taxpayer costs. All departments should end 2014 near or under budget.

# Thank You!

This has indeed been an exciting year. Thank you for your comments, thoughts and ideas. I have enjoyed meeting with many residents, businesses, groups of Girls Scouts and Boy Scouts, members of the Aurora Historical Society and American Legion Auxiliary, just to name a few. We have reached out to residents on

many issues including flooding and Geauga Lake rezoning. Aurora has much to offer and our employees are committed to excellence and service to our residents and businesses. Please feel free to stop by or contact my office at City Hall at 330-995-9126 or [mayor@auroraoh.com](mailto:mayor@auroraoh.com). Let's keep the forward momentum going!



## Message from Council

### Hello Aurora Residents!

City Council's Committee of the Whole, comprised of all members of Council, has become an integral part of the legislative operation of the city, assuming the work previously handled by Council's four standing committees. Under the prior system, items took months before they were forwarded to Council for action. Plus, all members of Council were not necessarily privy to the work of the committees and therefore made decisions that were based upon limited information without having had the benefit of a fuller discussion. Now legislative matters can be thoroughly reviewed by all nine members of Council through the Committee of the Whole. If an item needs more thorough examination, it can be referred to the appropriate standing committee, and citizens are provided ample opportunity to address concerns since each piece of legislation is typically subject to three readings. The new process better serves the concerns and needs of the community.

## Department Highlight

### Meet our new Police Chief

Aurora resident Brian Byard was sworn in as the city's new Police Chief on October 31, 2014. Chief Byard was a detective sergeant with Bedford where he worked since 1998. He also was a narcotics detective for the Southeast Area Law Enforcement Drug Task Force for eight years and was appointed by the multi-jurisdictional board to manage that operation,



Chief Brian Byard

while continuing to serve in Bedford. His appointment was unanimously confirmed by Council.

**Many thanks to Lt. Rob Hagquist who served as Interim Chief for more than four months.**



130 S. Chillicothe Road  
Aurora, Ohio 44202

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## Keep in Touch!

Please call me at 330-995-9123,  
or email me at [mayor@auroraoh.com](mailto:mayor@auroraoh.com).  
Thank you for working with us!

- Police/Fire Emergency** – 911
- City Hall** – 330-562-6131
- City Council** – 330-995-9125
- Mayor's Office** – 330-995-9126
- Parks & Recreation** – 330-562-4333
- Planning, Zoning & Building** – 330-562-9564
- Service** – 330-995-9116
- Water & Utilities** – 330-995-9109



Aurora City staff at the 2014  
Chamber Business Showcase.



**Issue 29**, one of the 16 Charter amendments that appeared on the November ballot, lost by three votes. The amendment would have increased the \$10,000 bid/purchase limit to \$25,000 and would have helped save time and money in the bidding process, encouraging smaller, local companies to compete. Council would still have to approve all expenditures!

## Mailbox Replacement Policy

The Service Department will repair or replace residential mailboxes damaged during snow removal efforts. Residents are asked to report the damage by calling the department at 330-995-9116. After assessing the damage, a city crew will repair the mailbox or replace it with a similar box. If the mailbox is a specialty item, the city is authorized by city ordinance to reimburse the homeowner up to \$60.

## Coming in 2015

### Keep your eye on...

- Installation of sidewalks and walkways to improve connectivity
- Relocation of the historic Deed House to Town Center
- Completion of restoration work at golf course property
- Waterline replacements
- Hike and Bike Trail planning