**State of the City 2016**

2015 was a year of incremental growth, despite the challenge of having an extremely tight budget the City was able to push forward maintaining all services and making new strides into the future.

Many of the changes were in house, behind the scenes. Many administrative processes were completed incorrectly in the past but were changed this year. Board Ordinances were passed to fix past errors in their appointment. In addition, all City Department Heads had their ordinances redone to correct past errors. We’ve created a new personnel policy, the first one passed in almost 20 years. This new policy is much more in depth and is much more equipped to deal with the issues we face today with employment.

This year the City mandated a policy that all pool employees must be lifeguards, this cut down on our summer employment and made the pool a more efficient and safe atmosphere. It is now a rule of the City that all children 13 and under must be chaperoned by an adult. This corrects the issue where the Pool staff were used as a baby sitting service. We want all people in the community to enjoy the park and pool and this was a step in the right direction for the City in making that happen. We began the year with six officers but currently have five. One our officers left for another position and I chose not to fill the position to save on payroll costs to ensure that the City maintained its low budget for the year.

At the beginning of my term, I lowered the fee for the Community Center. Before, the fees were at such a rate that many in the community could not afford to use this PUBLIC facility.

We have passed several ordinances this year, including the allowance of golf carts on City streets, we no longer allow road blocks for people to solicit funds at intersection (a practice that the City found to be very unsafe for drivers and those out on the roadways) We also created a more in depth procedure that created more oversight into how City donations paid by taxpayers was used by those requesting the funds.

The City increased its Property Tax for the first time in over 30 years, this small increment, (one penny per 100 dollars) was a small step to maintain a balanced, well rounded budget. The City finished its sidewalk project that connected the downtown district to the rest of Main Street. We’ve seen a very positive impact in the community by the use of these sidewalks and I’m sure we will see it continue and grow in the warmer seasons.

During the year the City passed a resolution to assist ARC Automotive to receive a $325,00 grant. A grant that has helped them expand their operations and has given them the opportunity to add on up to an additional 150 jobs. The city also received money from the State Transportation Department in the amount of 86,000 dollars to repair boat Factory Road, a project we will be completing in 2016.

In 2015, We introduced the Morgantown Clean Up Program as our main initiative for the City. We enforced ordinances that had previously been cast aside. We were committed to making Morgantown a better place to live by making property owners accountable for maintaining their properties. While that is an ongoing battle we did have success in sending and correcting over 50 properties in the City.

The entrepreneurial committee and myself met with a high ranking Chinese delegation and showcased to them what Morgantown has to offer, they then invited us to the Chinese Embassy in Washington. This is an exciting relationship that we intend to pursue more fully in the future.

Like last year, I cannot speak about the State of the City without mentioning our ongoing saga with Kentucky Copper. The City did reach an agreement with banks that were backing the company, extending their lease for six months. During this time period the City did receive payments of approximately $745,000 dollars in payments and back pay. The company did not fulfill their decision of purchasing the building in December, this leaves uncertainty in the future of the financial direction of the City in the coming year.

Financially the City has doubled its cash reserves in the General Fund this year from approximately 250,000 to 500,00 dollars. This was made possible by sticking to our original tight budget that was passed for this fiscal year. While financially the City is better than a year ago we must also be cautious and play it safe for the next coming year as Kentucky Copper leaves us in very uncertain times.

Despite this warning, it is the position of the City that we must persevere and make it our mission to make the City a better place to live and be for all the community. We intend to fulfill that goal in 2016. The City will be announcing a new direction for the coming year, a mission that will move us into the right direction.