

State of the City Address October 2020

Good afternoon and thank you for coming today. Before we get started, I want to thank the people who have made this event possible. I want to thank the Chamber for hosting this event. Brad thank you and all the people at Security Savings Bank for sponsoring this event again this year. I would also like to thank our local radio station for broadcasting this event live.

I want to take a moment to thank the people who serve on the City Council. It's important to have people who are dedicated to improving our community. I feel privileged to work with this group of council members.

We face new challenges every day. I certainly don't deal with those problems alone. I want to thank our staff for all they do to make our City run so smoothly. The City of Monmouth is very fortunate to have such a dedicated staff of people who work hard every day to improve the lives of our citizens.

I also want to thank our public works and public safety departments for their dedicated service. These Departments deal with emergency issues around the clock every day.

When I was first elected Mayor, I felt that Monmouth's best days were ahead of it. Even though we've grown hundreds of new jobs, invested tens of millions of dollars in new infrastructure, and had hundreds of millions of dollars invested in our City and at Monmouth College I feel strongly that even better days are still ahead of us.

It has certainly been a challenging year so far for everyone in Monmouth and around the Country. The COVID pandemic and the related State mandated shutdowns and restrictions have caused major hardships on

our families, schools, businesses' and our local government's ability to continue to fund our basic municipal services.

During the initial stages of the shut down the City assisted several local small business' by preparing and submitting small business assistance grant applications with DCEO and we have continued to help as other grants have become available.

As soon as the Governor allowed outdoor service for our bars and restaurants the City Council acted to assist our local establishments by extending and expanding our sidewalk café ordinance to allow more hours and ease of access to outdoor seating service allowing them to operate and expand beyond just carryout or delivery service.

These temporary outdoor accommodations were then extended beyond the original 60-day time period to October 31st. Now the City is considering making the expanded outdoor seating arrangement permanent by amending the municipal sidewalk café ordinance.

The City continues to receive interest in new Commercial Development in all areas of Monmouth.

We have received a request for a TIF Development Agreement for a building rehabilitation/renovation grant for the renovation and redevelopment of the old Review Atlas Building on South Main Street. There was also a request for a rehabilitation grant for the Howard Medical / Glastex commercial site.

The City has assisted a number of businesses opening this past year. We worked with new owners in reopening a restaurant, North Side Trax, in the Monmouth Crossing, the construction of a new Arby's and the new brewpub, Patton Block Grill & Pub. We have assisted the new owner in

the rebuilding of the former Barnstormer property which will reopen this fall as Buffalo 67 featuring steak and seafood.

The City awarded ten building rehabilitation and façade improvement grants this past year, to assist building owners renovate and structurally secure their downtown commercial buildings.

One of those buildings houses the new Central American market and restaurant Supermercado.

The new owners of the Tin Cup Building utilized that program to move their home-based business to a new storefront in downtown Monmouth. They also built a new loft apartment in their building to complete the renovation of that building securing its future for another generation.

After several Community meetings a year ago, we have completed the engineering on the Downtown Public Square Streetscape Plan and have submitted a highly competitive \$2 million grant application under the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program. This project, once funded, will reshape the downtown into an attractive pedestrian friendly environment intended to trigger new private investment in the surrounding privately-owned buildings that will stimulate new retail businesses.

The City secured an \$80,000 State Grant to replace the roof and do some much needed tuckpointing on the walls and parapet on the City owned Strom Center Building. This was a much-needed project to help secure that building. Using State Grant funds for this project leaves the limited TIF funds available to renovate the privately owned downtown buildings.

The City was very instrumental in assisting the development of the new Love's Travel Stop this past year which had it's opening a few weeks ago. That 121/2-acre development was annexed into the City.

This project also enabled the City to extend its municipal water main infrastructure and to install new sanitary sewer infrastructure, and completely reconstruct West 11th Avenue from its intersection of Highways 34/67 to South D Street, to support the development of the Love's Travel Stop. The cost of the infrastructure improvements will be paid for by the revenues from the Love's business district. This project will definitely result in making more construction ready land available on the south side of Monmouth for additional Commercial Development. In the past we have had many inquiries about development in that area. A lack of infrastructure was the one thing that has stopped development in that southwest corridor. This new infrastructure will remove that obstacle.

Our traditional motor fuel tax funds have not been sufficient to keep up with our needed road repairs. We enacted a local gas tax to supplement our state motor fuel taxes. We just received notice that we will be receiving some additional funds from the state gas tax and license and title fee increases to allow us to invest more money in much needed road repairs.

We are also working to access Build Illinois funds for local road improvement projects.

The City had been working to replace Shopko after they were forced to close because of Corporate bankruptcy. We have been working to find a general merchandise retailer to replace them. However, the point of purchase retail sector is not opening new spaces at this time because of the growth of e-commerce and online purchases. We received word from

a realtor that a regional grocer had a tentative deal with the realtor representing the bankruptcy trustees, subject to due diligence. We eventually learned that Hy-Vee was interested in filling a vacant building and investing millions of dollars in our City to grow our market. We expressed our concerns about their presence and its effect on our other local grocers. They assured us that their market research showed that based on their sales data in their other markets such as Galesburg, Macomb, and Burlington that they will in fact grow our geographic market without significantly disrupting our existing grocery store market. Our responsibility as a City is to grow and expand our economy by making the overall marketable value of Monmouth bigger. We have filled a deteriorating empty building and there will be millions of dollars invested in our Community that will not only keep local shoppers from leaving town for groceries, but attracting new rural shoppers to Monmouth who currently shop in other towns.

We faced a similar dilemma when Casey's purchased their corner site for a new Casey's. The City had been actively recruiting other businesses for that prime commercial property when the purchase was made. At the time we expressed our concerns about losing one of the other Casey's stores that were already in town. Especially the neighborhood store on South Main Street. They also assured us they had no plans in closing their other local stores because they knew from their sales data that the new store would not negatively impact either of their existing local stores. They would grow the market and that, is in fact what happened.

We are very fortunate to have a number of strong Commercial-Industrial businesses in Monmouth. Smithfield Foods, Cloverleaf Cold Storage, Hirshbach Trucking, IMI Cornelius, Midwestern Pet Foods, and Parkins Trucking are all growing and continuing to invest in their businesses and

creating new good paying jobs to the base economy of Monmouth, thus enhancing future opportunities for both commercial and residential development.

Our Commercial and Industrial businesses continue to provide a strong economic and employment base for Monmouth and constitute the foundation for much of the direct and indirect generation of financial resources that support municipal services delivered to the City's residents.

Smithfield Foods, Monmouth College and Midwestern Pet Foods are the City's three largest water and sewer users. They generate over \$3,200,000 in water & sewer revenue which is over 40% of our total water sewer revenues. The revenues these three directly and indirectly generate for our City helps to pay for many of our municipal services. Which in turn helps to control our residential water and sewer costs.

The City and Smithfield Foods are currently working on over \$101/2 million dollars of capital improvements at the North Waste Water Pre-Treatment Facility that exclusively treats the effluent from the hog processing plant, again to ensure continued nonstop operation of the region's largest employer. These improvements are being paid for by our industrial partner Smithfield Foods.

It is equally important to note that the City is pursuing USDA federal funding to replace the 100 plus year-old vitrified clay and brick combined sewer pipe that is located under a number of commercial buildings in the downtown. This existing sewer is beginning to show deterioration of its structural integrity that could result in collapse and cause considerable damage to the buildings above it. Additionally, this sewer collects both wastewater and surface water runoff from rain events, sometimes causing hydraulic overloads in the treatment process.

The replacement of this aged combined sewer pipe is a high priority for the City of Monmouth.

The City completed a \$1.25 million project to replace an old storm water storage pumping system with a new larger pump station designed to rapidly empty the storm water storage lagoon of water during and after heavy rain events. This project like the majority of our infrastructure projects was mandated by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. The new pump system will pump much more water, when necessary, and keeps the City in compliance with state and federal environmental regulations.

We are now working on ways, like the Illinois green energy grant to possibly eliminate the need for phase 3 of our combined sewer overflow plan as mandated. We are pursuing this grant with the support of the Monmouth Roseville School District. It is designed to greatly reduce the runoff from the School's large paved parking lot that is at the beginning of our largest sewer that runs through downtown. The grant would utilize runoff diversion gardens and features which also may become part of a new school curriculum as part of the project. This project will significantly reduce stormwater surface runoff from entering the sewer system.

The US and Illinois EPA mandate that the City must do various sewer projects without providing any source of funds.

We always provide financial facts and statistics to these agencies that show that the City and its residents cannot afford these projects. We are nonetheless ordered to do them and its up to us to figure out the best way to pay for it while minimizing the financial impact on our residents.

We have received yet another new set of treatment requirements from the EPA for mandated projects that we will be required to do before

releasing water from the treatment plant. The economic impact of this new set of requirements will be significant. We are in the process of working with our Engineers to evaluate the impact and we will formulate a plan utilizing our experience and expertise in public financing to minimize the impact on our Citizens as much as possible.

The City also received a \$500,000 federal Community Development Block Grant to replace sections of water main and fire hydrants on East Euclid Avenue to benefit a neighborhood comprised primarily of low-to-moderate income households and improve flow of water through the distribution system to other parts of town. That project has now been completed. The City has submitted another \$500,000 CDBG application to the State of Illinois to replace the existing old watermain on West Harlem Avenue, which has experienced numerous major breaks in recent years. We expect to know if we will receive this Grant later this year. This watermain must be replaced before reconstruction of the Harlem Avenue roadway can occur.

The City undertook and completed a Housing Needs Study which identified and quantified the demand for market rate housing units, including new single-family homes, condominiums and market rate rental units. The study concluded that Monmouth can support 75 new homes which is being used to attract private land developers and housing contractors. This report provides a much better understanding of Monmouth's unique opportunities to address the needs of new perspective home owners and/or residents. The City is currently in final discussions with a private residential developer with plans to build a new subdivision for 22 duplexes for a total of 44 new rental units and a Community center for their residents.

In an era of ever-shrinking federal and state assistance, our State of Illinois is still issuing unfunded mandates. It's certainly a challenging time, and it once again reminds us that to prosper and to grow, we must look to our own strengths and create our own opportunities.

We continue to make great strides by taking advantage of our Monmouth work ethic and getting down to the hard work of making our community prosper – using state and federal grants when available to maximize our own local resources.

We've done great things here in Monmouth, but as I said at the start of my remarks, I think our best days are still ahead of us. We have the right team in place, and the knowledge and experience to follow through on the important work ahead of us. Thank you all for being here today and have a great afternoon.

