

Mayor Randy Mills and the Conyers City Council held their annual State of the City Address at Cherokee Run Golf Club on Wednesday, January 6, 2016. More than 150 invited guests, citizens and city staff members were in attendance for the address with the theme of “Connection, Community, Conyers.”

Roll Call – Present: Mayor Randy Mills; Council Members Chris Bowen, Vince Evans, John Fountain, Gerald Hinesley, and Cleveland Stroud.

Welcome – City Manager Tony Lucas welcomed everyone to the celebration.

At 7:17 p.m. Mayor Mills called the meeting of the Conyers, Georgia, City Council to order.

Invocation – Mayor Mills introduced the Reverend David Benson, Senior Minister of Conyers First United Methodist Church, and asked him to give the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance – Mayor Mills led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

New Business:

Mayor Mills administered the oath of office to the three councilmen who ran unopposed in the fall election: Vince Evans, John Fountain and Gerald Hinesley. After introducing all of the council members and their respective committees, each council member delivered remarks on accomplishments from their respective committees from 2015.

Council Member Gerald Hinesley, Co-Chairman of the Finance Oversight Committee and Chairman of the Transportation Committee, spoke about the city’s 24th consecutive GFOA Distinguished Budget Award in 2015 and the 22nd consecutive Certificate for Annual Financial Reporting (CAFR) awarded by GFOA also in 2015. Councilman Hinesley highlighted transportation projects such as the Irwin Bridge Road corridor improvement project and the highly anticipated extension of the Olde Town PATH Trail from Olde Town Conyers to Pine Log Park. He also shared stormwater improvement projects throughout Conyers in 2015 totaling more than \$40,400 in improvements.

Council Member Cleveland Stroud, Chairman of the Public Safety Committee, gave a report of accomplishments of the Conyers Police Department in 2015. Councilman Stroud announced the 1.2% decrease in crime over calendar year 2014 and praised the Conyers Police Department for their efforts. Other highlights of Councilman Stroud’s committee report included the CPD’s Curtis E. McClung/Motorola Award of Excellence for its 21st century policing model featuring the Clergy Police Academy, the “Thinking Under Fire” project and the Conyers Police Cadet Program. Councilman Stroud also reported on significant police department arrests and collaborations with other agencies during the year. He emphasized the importance of the recently issued body-worn cameras to officers and the first reaccreditation of the department with CALEA.

Council Member Vince Evans, Co-Chairman of the Finance Oversight Committee and Chairman of the Economic Development Committee, made comments on the state of economic development in the city of Conyers. Councilman Evans highlighted achievements of the Conyers Downtown Development Authority including the reinstatement of the façade grant program and introduced the new Outstanding Achievement Award presented to Sovereign Partners for their efforts in restoring 882 Main Street. Councilman Evans shared figures of the filming industry’s impact on Conyers citing a payroll in excess of \$35 million. Councilman Evans also remarked that Conyers and Rockdale County are ranked an impressive 29th out of Georgia’s 159 counties in the ranking of counties by tourists’ expenditure levels.

Councilman Evans recognized industries that brought new jobs to Conyers in 2015 including Competition Clutch, Atlanta Pallet Rack and an influx of 300 jobs with Acuity Brands Lighting. Councilman Evans highlighted local healthcare mainstay Rockdale Medical Center and their contributions to the health and wellbeing of the community. He also praised the efforts of the arts community through the Conyers-Rockdale Council for the Arts, numerous shows, puppet shows, musical performances and the upcoming 40th season of the New Depot Players.

Council Member Chris Bowen, Chairman of the Georgia International Horse Park, Big Hayes Creek Nature Center, Cherokee Run Golf Club and the Cemetery Committee, provided highlights of the Georgia International Horse Park’s year in 2015 with a variety of events including a number of obstacle runs, cross country races and mountain bike races. The GIHP was also named “Best Outdoor Event Space” by Unique Venues Magazine in their “Best of Awards.” In 2015, the GIHP celebrated three shows that have been at the facility since it officially opened in 1995: the Southeastern Charity Horse Show, the Georgia Dressage and Combined Training Association and Atlanta National Fall Dressage Show and the Atlanta Fall Classic Horse Show. In its 20 years of operations, the GIHP was in dire need of updates and one such significant improvement was upgrading the footing in the Grand Prix Stadium, Charles Walker Covered Arena, and other arenas, which was met with high praise from customers throughout the industry.

Councilman Bowen remarked that the North Georgia Live Steamers at the GIHP saw 1,750 guests treated to miniature train rides on six public ride days in 2015. Cherokee Run Golf Club saw 26,000 rounds played on the pristine greens in 2015. Also in 2015, a fleet of 64 2016 Club Car Precedent electric carts replaced the old fleet of carts.

Council Member John Fountain, Chairman of the Community Development Committee, spoke about the city's efforts in working with Heery International on a master plan study. The study suggests the Oakland Avenue corridor as a potential site in the future for a new city hall complex, city center, park-like gathering space and increased connectivity to Olde Town Conyers.

Councilman Fountain praised the efforts of the city's strategic planning committee and shared that the plan would be incorporated into the city's plan of work in the coming years. Councilman Fountain highlighted corporate citizen Pratt Industries and the opening of its Material Recovery Facility (MRF) and Transfer Station at its Sigman Road eco-campus in 2015 and previewed the first phase of residential development, Eastmore, on property owned by Four A International.


Mayor Mills closed the program by emphasizing the strengths of the community: (1) Connection through collaboration among government agencies, the Chamber of Commerce, Conyers-Rockdale Economic Development Council, the healthcare system and Rockdale County Public Schools; (2) Community through the efforts of generosity and kindness of numerous local churches, faith-based organizations and non-profits; and (3) Claiming Conyers as a one-of-a-kind place to live where citizens should embrace and celebrate its unique identity. Mayor Mills shared a Thomas Jefferson quote, "Do you want to know who you are? Don't ask. Act! Action will delineate and define you." He implored the crowd in attendance to act now to set Conyers apart and make it a contender to be a great place to live now and for future generations.

1. Employee of the Year

City Manager Tony Lucas announced that the city's 2015 Employee of the Year and recipient of the Dee Buggay Award of Excellence was named at an employee breakfast earlier that morning. Jerry Gulledge of the city's public works and transportation department was the recipient of the award and was presented an engraved crystal bowl and surprised by his wife, who was in attendance to see him receive the award.


City Manager Tony Lucas thanked everyone for coming tonight to hear the Mayor's State of the City address, and invited them to stay for the reception.

There being no further business to come before the Council the meeting was adjourned at 8:15p.m.



Randal S. Mills, Mayor

Attest:



Lana Lane, City Clerk