



# REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

OLMSTED FALLS, OHIO • FALL 2023

## News Flash! Olmsted Falls – Safest City in Ohio!

*According to Newhomesource.com "The top 10 safest cities in Ohio: #1 Olmsted Falls"*

*"How do you define safe? Zero robberies, assaults, ... Thus, it's no surprise that Olmsted Falls tops our safest cities list for Ohio. This historic Cleveland suburb offers a high livability rating thanks to its combination of small-town living and urban proximity."*

## LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

Dear Residents,

I want to thank our police officers and firefighters for making our town the safest city in Ohio.

This #1 safety rating is a result of the hard work and dedication of our first responders, and because of the great working relationship our residents have with our police officers. We have also focused on equipping our police department with the most up-to-date equipment and technology.



This top ranking shows that our Community Contacts Program and outreach efforts are effective and making a positive impact for our city and residents. This has been a unified team effort between our citizens, police officers and firefighters, where when our residents see something out of the ordinary, they then notify the police department. I want to thank our citizens and first responders for their dedication to making our community safe.

I also want to update you on what an exciting and fun summer it was for our city. In May, we had our annual Memorial Day parade, and the city also held our annual Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Day on the last Saturday of June.

On July 31st our city held the first Junior Fire and Police Academy. Twenty children participated in the inaugural academy. The students were able to learn firsthand what our fire and police department do by watching a K9 presentation, experience pulling a fire hose, take a ride up in the fire bucket truck, ate pizza, and had a worthwhile learning experience. We look forward to offering the academy next year.



Junior Fire Academy



National Night Out

## LETTER FROM THE MAYOR (CONT.)



National Night Out



National Night Out

We celebrated our second annual National Night Out on August 1st. There were approximately 400 residents at this fun event. The children of our community had a great time. This night out promoted the unique relationship our first responders have with the citizens of our community. Residents were able to see up close, police cruisers, fire equipment, service trucks, witness a K9 police dog demonstration, and a life flight helicopter landing. The kids enjoyed free hot dogs, pizza, ice-cream, climbing walls, and face painting. For 2024, our National Night Out will be held on Tuesday, August 6th.

I hope you all had an enjoyable summer and can join us for our upcoming activities. There will be many more events going on in the city as fall arrives. We had Halfway to St. Patrick's Day in the middle of September, Falls Day was held in October and the Santa Claus ride will be in mid-December.

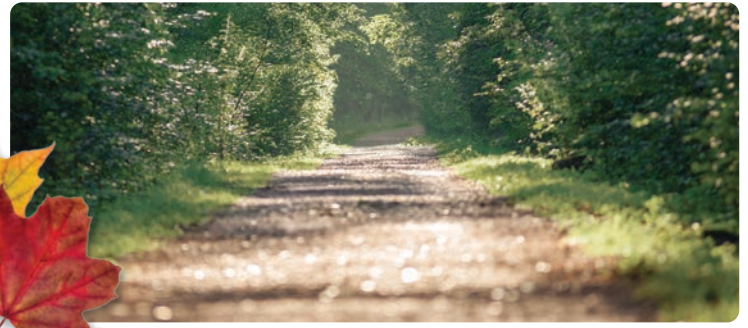
The new playground and walking trails at East River Park are now open and well received, along with new walking trails at Fortier Park. Please stop by to see these great additions to our parks.

Regarding finances, our city is in excellent shape. We began the year with a \$2.2 million-dollar General Fund cash balance and ended August with approximately \$3 million in the fund. This increased general fund will ensure our fiscal strength and stability. The administration will continue this prudent fiscal management.

In closing, I want to thank Bev and Jan Smith for their many years of service to our City Council and Civil Service Commission. Good luck in all your future endeavors as you move closer to family in the Cincinnati area.

Your public servant,

James P. Graven

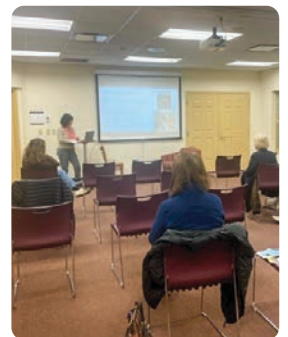


## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Without prior notice to the City of Olmsted Falls, Evergreen Packaging announced in July of this year they were closing their plant at 7920 Mapleway Drive. This facility and their successor organizations have been longstanding members of our business community. As part of a reorganization effort, the company closed several older facilities throughout the country. The city has been in contact with the State of Ohio and Cuyahoga County to help aid the displaced workers and recommend development options for the plant. The building and property have been listed for sale with a commercial real estate brokerage. The city is working with their real estate broker to market the site through regional economic development agencies and private listing agencies. Since the listing, we have had several contacts with brokers and interested parties. Our goal is to redevelop the property into an active site as soon as possible.

The Olmsted Falls Store Front Renovation Program is the first of its kind for the city and is still in progress. The goal of the program is to assist and encourage commercial property owners to enhance the facade of their properties. The city will reimburse property owners 50% of the cost of exterior repairs up to \$5,000. We received several applications. To the right is picture of the before and after of one of the properties that took advantage of the program.

The Heritage Home Program (HHP) is ongoing. The program provides low interest loans (typically less than 2%) and technical assistance for improvements to homes 50 years and older. Given current interest rates at over 7%, the program has had a significant amount of renewed interest. The goal is to preserve and modernize our older homes, which provides our community with its unique character and charm. The HHP can be reached at 216-426-3116 or [www.heritagehomeprogram.org](http://www.heritagehomeprogram.org). The photo is from a recent HHP seminar at our County Public Library.



T&S Power Equipment before renovation



T&S Power Equipment after renovation



## FINANCE PERSPECTIVE IN BRIEF FROM FINANCE DIRECTOR SWAISGOOD

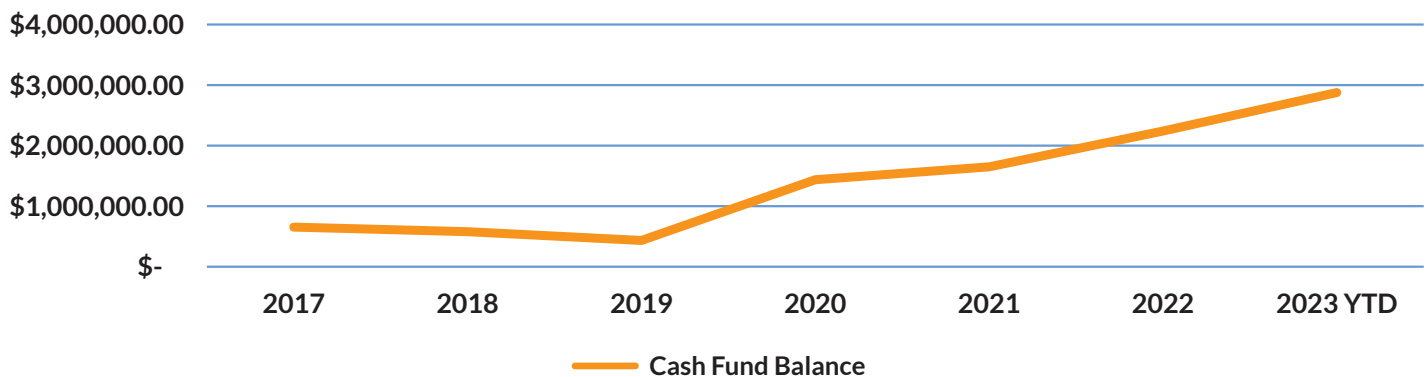
The City's financial outlook is strong, and actions have been taken to ensure the annual budget is balanced. One of the Mayor's priorities was to end deficit spending and develop sound financial policies to increase General Fund reserves for future financial stability. Over the last five years, the City has demonstrated fiscal responsibility with the establishment of a general fund reserve policy and rainy-day fund. As of September 2023, the rainy-day fund has a balance of \$200,000. The City has also taken swift action in 2023 to reserve for future retirements, as \$125,000 was transferred to the retirement payout reserve fund in 2023.

The local economy recovered quickly in 2021 and 2022 from the global pandemic. Income tax was up over 19% in 2022 from 2021, which attributes to 65% of General Fund Revenue. In 2023,

income tax revenue is projected to increase by 3-5% from 2022. The General Fund accounts for expenses related to the City's police, fire, service, and administration that are not restricted to a specific revenue source.

Although the City's General Fund revenue has exceeded budgeted amounts for 2022 and 2023, the City continues to budget conservatively as inflation continues to put constraints on the 2023 budget. The City remains cautiously optimistic with the 2023 budget as the Evergreen plant closing is negatively impacting local income tax revenues. With the help of Federal, State and Cuyahoga County grants, the City was able to pay for numerous improvements at various parks (e.g., playground equipment and path improvements) and update police, fire, and service vehicles.

### General Fund Cash Balance – Year over Year



## SERVICE DEPARTMENT UPDATES

The service department has been busy during the summer with the following projects to improve the City.

The City was able to improve East River Park with a new playground budgeted at \$250,000 to add to the existing pavilion, overlook deck, open play areas and restrooms at the park. New walking paths were installed at East River Park and throughout the 5 acres of Fortier Park.

The department was able to replace/repair multiple concrete roadways throughout the community for \$250,000. Crews were responsible for asphalt patching and resurfacing of multiple streets for \$90,000. Preventative maintenance was performed on many streets throughout the city using crack sealant.



New Playground at East River Park

To help with snow removal this winter and beyond the department received a new plow truck.

Over 24 sewer catch basins were inspected and rehabbed throughout the City. Jet cleaning services were performed and camera inspection work of several miles of storm and sanitary sewer mains throughout the city.

The City leaf collection program runs from Oct. 15th to Nov. 30th. Please place leaves in the tree lawn area and NOT in ditches or the roadside.



## POLICE DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Connecting with our community on a personal level continues to be a top priority for our department. So this year, the Olmsted Falls Police Department has continued its commitment to community policing by fully re-engaging in our Community Contacts program post-pandemic. We have been back to actively connecting with businesses and residents all year. Through the first three quarters, we have completed almost eight hundred contacts and are on pace to reach over one thousand.

We are very pleased to continue our partnership with the Olmsted Falls City School District to have a School Resource Officer (SRO) in Falls Lenox Elementary School. Last school year, the SRO was part-time, working an average of twenty hours per week in the school. This year, the SRO is a full-time position and Officer Swope is doing an incredible job.



Matthew Shuster



Ptl. Dennis McDonald

This year, we have completed the process to initiate a Lateral Transfer policy for Civil Service hiring of Police Officers. In the coming months, we are excited to hire officers through this program to bring qualified, experienced, and trained officers to our community. We have hired one new officer this year through our traditional entry-level civil service process. Matthew Shuster comes to us with over eight years of experience and knowledge, and we are excited for him to continue his career here. He has completed his Field Training Officer phase and is doing an outstanding job for our community. We did have one retirement this year. Ptl. Dennis McDonald leaves us with over eleven years of service to the City. We thank him and wish him well in retirement.

## MAILBOX REPLACEMENT POLICY

Unfortunately, in the normal course of snow plowing damage may occur to mailboxes. If the accumulated snow being removed damages the mailbox it is not the responsibility of the City of Olmsted Falls to make permanent repairs. The City will, however, make every attempt, as soon as snow removal is complete, to do a temporary repair to the mailbox so that mail may be received.

In the event that any mailbox is damaged as a result of negligence by the City, that is any mailbox which is actually hit by the truck or snowplow blade the City will replace it. It will be replaced with a treated 4 x 4 post and a treated 4 x 4 extension. The actual mailbox will also be replaced with a standard mailbox. The City will NOT replace any specialty mailboxes.



This summer, our police cruisers were updated with new Mobile Data Terminals (MDT's). This technology allows our officers to communicate more efficiently and effectively with our Dispatch Center as well as complete some work while still in a cruiser out in the community. These MDT's replaced units that were nine to twelve years old.

A common concern in the community that we are aware of is speeding, particularly in developments and neighborhoods. To help us combat this, the City has purchased two additional speed limit signs that advise motorists of their vehicle speed. We now have four speed signs. These signs are movable and are spread out throughout the City and rotated through the developments and main roads. These signs DO NOT generate traffic citations, nor do they collect vehicle or owner information. However, they do record data such as time, day, and speeds so that we can run reports to assist us in determining the best allocation of resources when it comes to enforcing speed ordinances and codes.



Another common concern for residents is overnight parking. There is a year-round overnight parking ban between the hours of 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. on all dedicated city streets and approved private streets. Also, as we approach the winter months, please remember that parking snow bans take effect once the first snow accumulation of two inches takes place. This is to allow for safe and effective snow plowing.

We would like to remind citizens that the best way to safely dispose of most types of unused or expired medicines is through our Drug Drop Off box located in the lobby of the Police Department at 26100 Bagley Road, lower level. Before disposing of prescription medicines, be sure to remove all personal information on pill bottle labels and medicine packaging. All medicines dropped off at our take back locations will be destroyed. Please, no syringes or liquids are allowed in the drop box.



As a last reminder, please have your dogs registered with the county by way of a license. Not only is this the law, but it is also a lost dog's ticket home! When a dog has its license attached to its collar, its assigned license number is all that is necessary for us to identify the owner. You can purchase a Cuyahoga County dog license online at <https://cuyahogadogs.com/en-US/Dog-License-Portal.aspx> or at any of over 30 neighborhood locations, including our own Drug Mart at 8191 Columbia Road.





## FIRE DEPARTMENT UPDATES

The Olmsted Falls Fire Department held the first annual “Kids Academy” on July 31st. Twenty children participated in several aspects of firefighting which included Search and Rescue, Aerial Ladder Operations, Fire Engine Operations and First Aid. Our firefighting friends from Cleveland Hopkins Airport brought a Crash Fire Rescue Truck for a demonstration and gave a class on its operation. We also had scheduled a helicopter landing from University Hospitals Air Medical, unfortunately they were summoned to an emergency in Toledo and were unable to attend this event but were able to attend Night Out for Safety on August 1st.



University Hospital Air Medical

Olmsted Falls Fire Department was awarded the American Heart Association’s 2023 Mission Lifeline Gold Award. This is the third year in a row that Olmsted Falls has achieved EMS Gold. A big thank you to all the firefighters from Olmsted Falls for your continued dedication to excellence in the pre-hospital care of our citizens.



Firefighter Collin Hutkay pictured with his father Roger Hutkay a 26 year veteran of the North Olmsted Fire Department

I would like to welcome our newest full-time firefighter, Collin Hutkay. Collin graduated from Olmsted Falls High School and is also an Assistant Coach with Olmsted Falls 8th grade football team. He is an excellent addition to our staff and is a great role model for the children of the Olmsted Falls School District.



Junior Fire Academy

## LEGAL UPDATES

The Administration of the City of Olmsted Falls has consistently taken positions aimed at both limiting the City’s exposure to legal liability and to resolve pending legal actions in a manner that best serves the interests of our residents. The City recently resolved a several-year-old lawsuit on favorable terms.

On January 23, 2019, former Olmsted Falls mayor Ann Marie Przybys Donegan filed a lawsuit against the City. In her written complaint, she claimed that the City should pay her for unused vacation time, unused sick leave, and unused personal time, despite the fact that Ms. Przybys Donegan was an elected official rather than a city employee. Her complaint sought damages exceeding \$25,000 and she wanted the City to pay her attorneys’ fees associated with the litigation she commenced. The City strongly disagreed with her claims.

After extensive litigation, the Court of Common Pleas issued a ruling on January 18, 2023, granting Ms. Przybys Donegan only a fraction of the damages she demanded – four years after she filed the case. The Court granted her claim as to vacation time, only. She threatened to appeal that ruling.

The City disagreed with the Court’s decision to give Ms. Przybys Donegan any money. The City considered filing its own appeal

and felt confident that it would prevail on appeal. Ultimately, it was decided that for purely cost-benefit reasons the City would be willing to resolve this years-long litigation by accepting the Court’s \$8,435.20 judgment. This was an effort to finally conclude the case on terms that were favorable to the City. The costs in terms of both money and time associated with further protracted litigation and appeals far outweighed the cost of accepting the modest judgment amount.

Additionally, the City is a party to three other cases pending in the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas, which are all proceeding in due course. The case of Melis v. City of Olmsted Falls is settled in principle with the Court removing the case from its active docket on June 16, 2023. City of Olmsted Falls v. Ted Bowman is a foreclosure action filed subsequent to the City obtaining a monetary judgment against the defendant in a prior action. This pending case seeks to enforce the judgment liens the City has already been awarded. Finally, the case of Daniel Gilles v. Ann Marie Donegan remains pending. The plaintiffs in this case allege several causes of action, including defamation. The City is one of three defendants. A trial date had originally been scheduled for March 25, 2024, but the Court has since cancelled that trial date with a new trial date to follow.



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Economic Development staff has published the Report to the Community in cooperation with the Finance Department and Mayor's Office. Additional copies are available at City Hall and in digital format at [www.olmstedfalls.org](http://www.olmstedfalls.org).



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