

Tribune Chronicle

Girard mayor reflects on year

GIRARD — Mayor Mark Zuppo said with city officials, council and department heads working together, much was able to be accomplished in his first year in office.

“We were able to do a lot this year. We made a lot of accomplishments and solved a lot of problems while trying to move the needle forward,” Zuppo said.

He said what he is most proud of is being able to bring ambulance service back to the residents after a 20-year absence. The ambulance service ended when the city was in fiscal emergency.

“I wanted to see the ambulance service returned, making it better for the community. I started with safety and the ambulance service. Many of the senior citizens I have spoken to are very pleased,” he said.

The city spent \$500,000 to get it restarted.

Zuppo said the city will be “*soft billing*” for the ambulance service to people’s insurance companies.

The department has an ambulance and a backup ambulance that respond to calls in two to three minutes. He said if there are three ambulance calls at the same time, then someone may have to call a private company if the two ambulances are out on calls.

Zuppo said the next big event was getting a new water agreement with Niles.

“We negotiated a 20-year contract and now we are getting the best rates of anyone who does business with Niles,” he said.

Zuppo said the city did have to address a \$1.618 million debt by borrowing money to pay off the amount, and water rates had to be increased to recoup the money that was spent.

As for safety, the city purchased three new police cruisers to replace aging vehicles and installed Flock license plate cameras throughout the city. The cameras alert police of vehicles entering or exiting the city that were involved in some type of crime, such as robberies.

“Youngstown and many other communities use the Flock cameras. It helps communities connect as a region to help us crack down on people who are breaking the law,” Zuppo said.

The city also has a traffic officer who travels the city looking for violations such as vehicles parked in front of fire hydrants, on the wrong side of the road, too close to an intersection or parking the wrong way.

“We plan to also begin posting ‘No Parking’ signs next year,” Zuppo said.

Violators are receiving warnings right now.

Zuppo said the city was able to complete the salt barn off U.S. Route 422 for \$320,000 and made many improvements at the parks with help from council, which increased the budget for parks and recreation.

“Council recognized the need to up the budget for recreation. The funds come from income tax,” he said.

Park improvements included new pickleball courts, a Christmas in the Park at Tod Park, and the city maintaining baseball, softball and soccer fields, which was previously done by volunteers.

Zuppo said the city has digitized the infrastructure inventory, including waterlines, valves, fire hydrants, and storm and sanitary lines.

The city is also in the process of updating the pump station off Tibbetts Wick Road to improve efficiency, with the project to be completed in 2025.

Zuppo said 30 manholes were repaired throughout the city to make them level with the street surface.

What the mayor said has really helped the city in 2024 was the hiring of grant writers KO Consulting.

“That was the best money we have ever spent. KO Consulting has helped us get grants for the Wellman Theater, pump station, radios for the fire department, and cemetery,” Zuppo said.

He said a firefighter has helped get grants for safety forces.

The city has contracted with MS Consultants to update the zoning department and zoning ordinances and review the city’s comprehensive

zoning plans.

The city recently negotiated three new contracts with local unions representing city employees.

Zuppo said for the first time ever, the employees are contributing to their health care costs.

As for health care insurance, the city was able to address previous issues of 25% to 30% of employees being in collections since they were not receiving their health care bills and thus were not being paid, costing the city \$840,000.

He said the mismanagement of the health care insurance during the previous administration cost the city.

Zuppo said the city is working with a new health care company and is spending much less with better coverage.

The mayor said he is already looking at future projects in the new year with work on the Wellman Theater to make it usable in the future for programs and events.

Zuppo said a marijuana dispensary will open in March at the site of the former Family Video.

The city was able to bring the Mad River Poker Club of the Mahoning Valley to the city at a former Dollar General store off Churchill Road.

NEWSLETTER

Today's breaking news and more in your inbox

Email Address

I'm interested in (please check all that apply) *(Required)*

Daily Newsletter

Breaking News

Obituaries

Are you a paying subscriber to the newspaper? *(Required)*

Yes No

SUBSCRIBE
