

**2015 State of the City Address
by Mayor Mike Henry
December 16, 2015**

Things I have learned as mayor. By: Mike Henry

If you parachute into Carbondale, you might get elected Mayor.

If you are elected Mayor, never, ever send an e-mail – to anyone.

And, if you reply to an email, sent by the person who said that you parachuted into Carbondale, never ever, ever, ever hit Reply All.

Because the next day, the headline on the Southern Illinoisan's editorial page will read "Mayor Henry's secret little meeting".

And, by the way – I have that headline framed.

Things I have learned as mayor.

It has been an interesting six months.

The citizens of Carbondale have a new mayor and three new members on your city council. - Council members, will you please stand.

We also have a new interim city manager, Mr. Gary Williams, formerly the Assistant City Manager for Economic Development, who brings a lot of energy and private sector experience to the job. - Mr. Williams

Our new Chief of Police is Mr. Jeff Grubbs. Chief Grubbs has more than 24 years of experience with Carbondale's police department and has served as Interim Chief twice before – most recently for 13 months. - Chief Grubbs

We also welcome Mr. Ted Lomax as our new Fire Chief. Chief Lomax has more than 25 years of combined experience as a Carbondale firefighter and as assistant Chief. Our Fire Department has 31 highly trained and professional employees. - Chief Lomax

Your City Council has a lot going on now through May 1st.

The City's budget is our first priority. We are currently in fiscal year 2016 which will end April 30th of 2016. The budget for fiscal year 2017 will begin May 1, 2016. That is just 4 short months away.

This year's budget process is, at best, very difficult, due to the uncertainties of funding coming from the state Illinois. There is also the possibility that the state will demand higher contributions to the state's pension system. What many of you may not realize is that at the last city council meeting we abated millions of dollars of property taxes that were put in place to pay debt service and pension costs. This has been done only recently, for the past few years, and we now pay those costs from our General Fund. General Fund revenues come from the Local Government Distributive fund, which is our share of state income taxes, local sales taxes, and from other sources such as taxes on Food and Beverage, Entertainment, Gaming etc.

Staff is currently reviewing our financial status and will be sharing that information with the council as it becomes available.

We have already received preliminary applications for funding from our local agencies and will start our evaluation process very soon.

In January, I will ask our city council to discuss the method for choosing a permanent city manager. We will be discussing when to start the process as well as whether or not we will use an outside consultant. Once started, the process should be completed in five to six months.

Carbondale can and should be the Cultural Center of Southern Illinois. Carbondale Tourism Bureau, Carbondale Community Arts, the Park District, Carbondale Music Coalition, Varsity Center for the Arts and Carbondale Mainstreet are just a few of our community organizations that are working toward this goal.

We should initiate and support activities in Carbondale like concerts, art shows, festivals and other community events. These venues need to be publicized regionally to draw in not just the locals but those from outside the city too. We should promote the SIU campus as a major cultural and activities hub for Carbondale ... plays, concerts, speakers, sports, etc. The SIU administration is already working to bring more events back to the campus.

Let me say this once more, we are committed to bringing more events and entertainment to the campus and around town. This past weekend, SIU hosted an event at Shryock auditorium that featured local musicians and benefited the Park District. And just a few weeks ago, we had a street concert that featured a nationally known artist. These kinds of events attract visitors from all over Southern Illinois and benefit our businesses as well as our students.

Our Downtown Revitalization project is good for both Carbondale and SIU. Ideally it will encourage more of our citizens and students, as well as people from out of town, to think "Carbondale" for entertainment, dining and shopping.

The downtown advisory committee continues to work with the consulting firm of Houseal Lavigne to bring forward a plan for our downtown. The consultants will present their report in early 2016 and we can expect conceptual drawings as well as an analysis of what is achievable and workable for our particular situation.

Gigabit Internet access is already available along route 13 through Carbondale and along Illinois avenue to mill street. Gradually, as the providers continue the build out and demand increases, higher Internet speeds will become available throughout the community.

We are also reviewing a proposal from Ameren and communications providers for the relocation of utility lines along Illinois Avenue to areas behind the buildings. Currently, we are completing a survey of our local businesses to assess their needs.

**This is the evolve building which is currently 95% occupied and was made possible through the use of our tax increment financing district - TIF for short. As expected, a great deal of economic activity has been taking place near this project. Storefronts are being updated, vacant properties remodeled and occupied. This entire area is becoming the southern gateway to our downtown.

**What you see here is a drawing of the Hilton hotel which is another project enabled through TIF incentives and financed by local investors. The hotel will be constructed on the site immediately south of PK's and will extend from Illinois avenue to University avenue. It will have 90 upscale rooms, some of which will be suites and extended-stay suites. We expect construction to start in March of 2016 with a completion date in the Spring of 2017.

**This is a conceptual drawing of a new Multi Modal center for Carbondale. Amtrak is a vital resource for SIU, helping students access Carbondale more easily. This center would also be used by taxi and bus services. We anticipate that it would include a restaurant as well as retail shops. Construction would be funded primarily through Federal and state grants and both Congressman Mike Bost and Senator Durbin have provided support. Centers such as this one have recently been completed in Bloomington-Normal and Champagne-Urbana.

Heartland Women's Healthcare has started construction on their most recent facility located on east Walnut Street. This project, also with local investors, replaced a dilapidated apartment building and is a tremendous improvement to that part of town. The building will have medical facilities as well as a restaurant and retail shops.

We are also working on a comprehensive Bike Plan that will extend throughout the community. SIU tells us that there a record number of bicycles on campus and a growing number of our citizens are bicyclists. Plans are nearly complete for a Bikeway on the East side of the tracks that will connect the Campus with Route 13 and we have recently completed a dual use sidewalk-bikeway in front of University Mall.

We are in the process of installing Financial Software that will significantly improve our accounting system and also provide the public with extensive on line options for financial transactions and other interactions with the city. Currently, we must compile many of our reports manually. The new system will produce them automatically. This upgrade will occur over the next 18 months.

Our Police Officers are the most visible of city employees and have the most interaction with our citizens, so I want to spend a little time talking about the department.

We have recently installed a new Records and Evidence Management System for our Police Department. This system streamlines the Department's reporting and data entry systems and thus, makes us more efficient. With this system, we can track every call for service from the time it is received until the conclusion of the investigation. This investment in the Police Department infrastructure totaled over \$100,000 and illustrates the commitment that we, as a City, place on public safety services.

Chief Grubbs has re-evaluated Police enforcement priorities and made adjustments that increase the presence of police officers in our residential districts. Neighborhood-based patrols have been re-established as one of the top priorities for the police department.

The efforts of our police officers, resulted in the reduction of crime in the Arbor District by 38%. For this year, our community-wide crime index has been reduced by 14%, which is a twenty year low. Of significance in the preliminary reports is a 53% drop in the crime of Robbery and a 41% drop in the crime of Burglary.

Chief Grubbs has revitalized Community Policing and Outreach programs to place a priority on citizen input and then addressing concerns in ways that enhance the partnership between our citizens and their police officers. Some of the highlights include initiatives with our civic organizations, our business community and SIU. New and re-established programs such as the Citizen's Police Academy, the Police & Community Together Halloween event at Attucks Park and the Community Christmas Store are an important part of our Community Policing initiative.

During this holiday season the Community Christmas Store will provide Christmas gifts to over 100 children in our community and by partnering with SIU Athletics on a Coats for Kids program, the store will provide over 150 children with new winter coats.

School Resource Officer Barry Bayles was named the recipient of the Charles Leming Student Council Service Award. This award is highly regarded because it is given by the Student Council on behalf of the students.

It is important for you to know that our police officers are among the most highly trained, well-educated, dedicated officers you will find anywhere. I hope you will join me in supporting the efforts of our officers for the work they do to make our community safer.

Carbondale is a university community. As they grow and prosper, so will we.

Myself, Randy Dunn, President of the SIU system and Brad Colwell, Chancellor of SIU Carbondale are committed to a new spirit of cooperation between the City and SIU.

The City, Chamber and University have regular monthly meetings and once in a while a special meeting.

President Dunn and I participated in a fundraiser for McLeod Summer Playhouse as the Blues brothers (Ronda Dunn played the nun with the ruler). Personally, I think she got a little carried with the ruler – reminded me of third grade.

And for the first time ever, the Mayor and the Chancellor, along with our wives, drove together in the Lights Fantastic Parade.

These informal events provide an opportunity to build relationships that make it much easier to collaborate on issues that will improve both the City and our great University.

Here are a few items regarding SIU Carbondale that I would like to share with you:

- According to U.S. News and World Report, SIU Carbondale is among the top 100 public national universities in the country.
- This year, SIU moved up 36 spots in the annual rankings – one of the largest jumps of any university.
- In the 2015 Forbes magazine list of “America’s Most Entrepreneurial Universities” SIU Carbondale is 27th among the nation’s 50 most entrepreneurial research universities –That is a jump of 10 spots compared to the 2014 rankings.

- In January 2015, SIU Carbondale received the 2015 Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching; one of just 361 colleges and universities among more than 4,000 nationwide to earn the recognition for its commitment to service and outreach.
- U.S. News and World Report, Military Times and Military Advanced Education magazines recognized SIU's strong commitment to serving veterans and active-duty personnel.
- The university's "For the Community" website, at www.forthecommunity.siu.edu, is a one-stop connection to all of the educational, recreational and entertainment opportunities **open to the public** as well as special programs, exhibits, and facilities and services available for public use.

In conclusion, I will say what I have said many times before –

Together we will make Carbondale the city that you and I, our children and our grandchildren are proud to call home.