



February 26, 2018

VICE MAYOR TRENEY TWEEDY

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I am Vice Mayor Treney Tweedy, and it is my honor to welcome all of you and to thank you for joining us tonight. Please join me in welcoming the Honorable Mayor Joan F. Foster.

MAYOR JOAN FOSTER

Ladies and gentlemen, members of City Council, City staff, citizens and honored guests, welcome and good evening. Please rise as the members of the Mayor's Youth Council will lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance and remain standing as Morgan Gafford of the Youth Council sings the National Anthem.

MAYOR FOSTER

I am so proud of the Mayor's Youth Council. These young men and women advise me on issues affecting our youth, work to promote healthy lifestyles and volunteer in the community. They represent sophomores, juniors and seniors from our public and private schools as well as students being homeschooled. Please join me in thanking them.

Earlier this evening, we were honored to have representatives of the local arts and cultural community to share their talent with us. Lynchburg is blessed to have such a rich and diverse arts and cultural community, with everything from opera, to Rock and Roll to Bollywood! Weren't they awesome? Let's give them another round of applause.

If you would indulge me for a moment, I would like to acknowledge a few people in the room. Of course, I wish to acknowledge my colleagues on the dais behind me, Council members, Sterling Wilder, Mary Jane Dolan, Jeff Helgeson, Turner Perrow and Randy Nelson and Vice Mayor Tweedy. None of us on City Council are able to serve without the support of our families, and I want to take this opportunity to recognize them and to thank them for putting up with us, our late meetings, the phone calls in the middle of the night and the missed dinners. Please join me in welcoming them tonight. Please stand.



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I also want to recognize any of the area legislators, former City Council members, and retirees who have joined us tonight. Please stand so we can recognize all of you as well, and thank you so much for coming.

We want to thank Dr. Larry Massie for being with us tonight. As you know, when former school Superintendent Scott Brabrand resigned, Dr. Massie returned to Lynchburg to serve once again as Interim Superintendent, and we are glad that he did. We are looking forward to welcoming the new school superintendent, Dr. Crystal Edwards, to Lynchburg.

Dr. Massie and any school board members present—please stand and be recognized. Lastly, we want to recognize the men and women to my right, City Manager Bonnie Svrcek, Deputy City Manager Charles Hartgrove, Assistant City Manager John Hughes and all the men and women who make up the City's Leadership Team. These public servants work hard every day in service to this community, and we are fortunate to have leaders of their caliber in local government. They also represent the 1,200 committed employees who provide services to the community every day. Let me also welcome our new Fire Chief, Greg Wormser tonight. Thank all of you for your commitment and for your service.

Service isn't reserved for the individuals who work in government. No community can thrive without involved citizens who are committed to service. Tonight, we are recognizing five individuals from different walks of life who take service seriously. We are honored to present them with the Mayor's Award of Excellence, and at this time, I ask that our fellow members of City Council introduce them to you tonight. Council member Sterling Wilder will begin.

MAYOR'S AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Tyeast Blanding – Sterling Wilder

Doug Pugh – Mary Jane Dolan

Jeff and Sally Schneider – Jeff Helgeson

Jeff and Sally Schneider – Randy Nelson

Chris Boswell – Turner Perrow



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Ladies and gentleman, this community is fortunate to have such committed individuals working to make this community better. And Chris, I don't think I can say anything tonight to top your news! Congratulations to you and your lovely wife! Let's give all of our honorees another round of applause and thank them for making Lynchburg a great place to live, work, and play!

All of us on City Council take great pride in serving the Lynchburg community. You have elected us to make important decisions that affect your lives, and we take this responsibility very seriously. Our priority and the priority of the City's employees are to serve this community. The accomplishments we will report tonight aren't just City government accomplishments; they are this community's accomplishments as well. As we celebrate this evening, we should remember that community does not happen by accident. It takes ideas, conversations, relationships, resources and effort. It takes vision and leadership, and it takes government and its residents working together.

Do we have a perfect community? I think we can all agree that we do not. Like any other city, we have our challenges, areas that need improvement, issues that must be addressed and barriers we must tear down. But despite our imperfections, I am proud to say that we are Lynchburg Strong, and when we work together, we become that much stronger.

It is critical that we act strategically, that we plan wisely and that we are willing to tackle the difficult issues. We are strong when we come together to address community concerns, and we are strong because of our diversity - not just because of our similarities.

For a few minutes, the Vice Mayor and I want to want to talk about a few of the accomplishments of 2017, and acknowledge some of the issues that are before us.

City Council, working with staff, decided there were key areas that, when linked with service areas, create a Great Place to Live, Work, and Play. Those areas are Vibrant Community, Natural and Built Environment, Safe Community, Economic Development and Excellent Government.



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What does all of that mean? Let's talk about an element of a vibrant community—healthy and active living. In 2012, we became a Let's Move City, and we never could have guessed that the campaign would be so successful that we would receive five gold medals and become one of only 78 communities in the country to reach that goal and to be invited to the White House for former First Lady Michelle Obama's last harvest. Last year, the Virginia Municipal League awarded the City and the Live Healthy program with the 2017 Innovation Award in Community Health and the prestigious 2017 President's Award, which is given to the best of the annual award recipients. We want to thank all our partners, especially the Central Virginia Health District, the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance and Centra Congregational Health for working to make this achievement possible.

Our Parks and Recreation Department also plays a huge role in healthy and active living. In the 2015 Citizens Survey some of you told us that in certain areas we weren't doing enough, so the department began to strategically change that opinion. The outcome was a plan to better serve the community. Last year, they were awarded five state awards, including one for their Hill City Hoops program. They also worked to ensure that the programs and activities being offered were meeting the diverse needs of the community they served. In the 2017 Citizens Survey, you let them know they were on track with a significant increase in the satisfaction ratings. We thank the department for seriously considering your opinion and working diligently to turn it around. Congratulations to the department and to the director, Jenny Jones.

As cities go, we are pretty old with a proud history dating back over 200 years. Like all old cities, we have to deal with our infrastructure issues. Public investment in infrastructure may not be exciting, but it is a critical component of planning for expected growth and attracting new businesses to the community as well as encouraging existing businesses to stay and to reinvest. Reinvestment in our infrastructure is an ongoing struggle as each year our needs seem to outpace our resources. However, we saw a number of important projects completed in 2017. Phase I of the Downtown Utility & Streetscape Project was completed within the \$8.5 million dollar budget. This project included upgrading water, storm, and sanitary sewer lines, along with improvements to the City streetscape. The parking deck at the Community Market was also replaced, and in the process, we learned a new term—



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subterranean void! Although the work was already planned, it got started a little sooner than anticipated when a sinkhole appeared in the deck. But the project has resulted in a much more stable and attractive parking area.

Late last year, we also saw the start of the \$9.6 million dollar Main Street Bridge Replacement Project. This project is scheduled to be substantially completed later this year. But work isn't just happening Downtown. The McConville Road project was completed on time and within budget—terms we love to hear! And the much needed \$12 million dollar Wards Ferry Road/Logans Lane projects got underway last year.

While these infrastructure improvements are critical, we know that they can also be inconvenient, messy and sometimes frustrating, but the end results are safer roads and facilities, upgraded utility systems and more attractive gateways.

City government isn't the only entity investing in this community. The Lynchburg business community continues to lead the regional economy with significant capital investment and job creation. In Fiscal Year 2017, Lynchburg companies invested over \$80 million dollars in new capital and created 322 jobs. Commercial building permits in 2017 totaled more than \$155 million dollars in real property investment.

Last year around this time, we were happy to announce that Convergys, the largest customer service provider in the United States and the second largest provider globally, was making a \$4.2 million dollar investment in a facility here in Lynchburg. Just this afternoon, Covergys announced it is opening and hiring at their new facility and when fully operational, will create up to 400 new jobs. We are happy to have the company's Site Director for Lynchburg and his lovely wife with us. Please join me in welcoming Andrew Tisoskey and his wife Tanya. Welcome to Lynchburg, and thank you for investing in this community.

Our own Office of Economic Development is working to bring creative solutions to strengthen the community's economy. One way they are doing this is by launching a new Co-Starters program that equips aspiring entrepreneurs with the insights, relationships and tools needed to turn business ideas into action and turn a passion into a sustainable and thriving business.



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This program and others help people turn dreams into reality and in turn, bolster our local economy. Several graduates of the Co-Starters program are with us tonight. If you are a graduate of Co-Starters or one of the facilitators, please stand. Thank you for following your dreams.

And now, please welcome Vice Mayor Tweedy back to the podium.

VICE MAYOR TWEEDY

Thank you, Mayor Foster. As you can tell, we have had a pretty eventful year.

When we talk about the economy, it's clear that an important part of a thriving City is a strong downtown. A strong downtown becomes the heart of a city, and we all know how important it is to have a healthy heart.

In the past 13 years, the private sector has invested approximately \$74 million dollars in the redevelopment of downtown buildings and nearly 900 residential lofts have been developed. There are currently more than 5,300 employees working daily in Downtown Lynchburg. Many of the buildings that have been dormant for years are now being renovated into living and commercial spaces. We are all anxiously following the progress of two downtown jewels—the Academy Center of the Arts and the Virginian Hotel.

In order to ensure the overall well-being of a city, we must have a safe community and I am proud to say that this community is blessed with concerned and involved citizens as well as excellent public safety professionals. Each year, the American Red Cross recognizes what they term as every day, ordinary people making extraordinary contributions by putting their needs aside to help others in our community. Last year, the Lynchburg Chapter of the American Red Cross honored two Emergency Services employees, Piper Van Deperre and Stephanie Cutlip, with Community Hero Awards. When a call came into 9-1-1, Stephanie provided the frantic caller with instructions on how to perform CPR on a child and she quite possibly helped to save that child's life. When Piper received a call, she gave childbirth instructions to the caller and was on the telephone with the family when the baby was born.



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Stephanie has moved on to become a deputy with a neighboring locality, but Piper is with us tonight. She was just recently promoted to the position of Emergency Programs Specialist. Thank you, Piper for your quick thinking and for your professionalism.

Last year, our Police Department received its ninth consecutive accreditation award. The designation is given to law enforcement agencies who exhibit the highest levels of professionalism and transparency. The Community Action Team, or CAT, is continuing to establish strong relationships in our neighborhoods. The faith based organization, One Community, One Voice is working in partnership with the CAT team to provide positive activities for young people and strengthen communications among the residents and police. Their work is an excellent example of how citizens and police can collaborate and make this community safer.

In addition to gaining a new chief this year, the Fire Department completed renovation of one of the City's oldest traditional fire stations, making it more state-of-the-art while preserving the historic façade of the building. The department also launched a mobile app, Pulse Point that empowers individuals with the ability to provide life-saving assistance to victims of cardiac arrest. In fact, the City launched three apps— Pulse Point, the City's Passport Parking app and the Lynchburg City app. We hope you have downloaded them and found them helpful.

Lynchburg is a unique city in the region with our own story, our own challenges, and our own strengths to share with the world. The Mayor and I have chronicled a few of last year's accomplishments and believe me, it was difficult to narrow the list because we are blessed to have a community that works hard to make sure we remain a great place to live work and play.

In a few weeks, the City Manager will present her recommendations for the Fiscal Year 2019 budget. I know she and her staff had to make some hard decisions and likewise, so will City Council. Those decisions must take into account the type of community you, the citizens, wish to call home. We must take a look at everything—there are no sacred cows! We need all voices to be heard and we encourage you to participate in community meetings and outreach.



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Unfortunately, our state and federal governments haven't kept up with the way our world is changing, and too often, the burden has fallen on local government and our citizens. As we deliberate during the budget process, please know that the seven members of City Council, regardless of party affiliation, liberal, conservative or middle of the road, care deeply for this community and we like you, want the best for it but we need your voice in order to make the right decisions.

Last year, the Mayor and I stood before this podium and together spoke to you about a problem in this community—the 24% poverty rate that exist in this city. Together, we issued a call to action, and we asked you to work with us to reduce poverty and help create pathways from poverty to progress. At this time, I would ask the Mayor to join me here at the podium.

MAYOR FOSTER

In May 2017, we held the first community meeting at E. C. Glass High School, and over 600 of you attended, and hundreds of you signed up to be a part of addressing the issues. That night was the first step in bringing awareness to this community about poverty.

VICE MAYOR TWEEDY

Since that first meeting, nine work groups have been working to create action plans with goals and success measures. Those groups are Community Education and Awareness, Child Care, Education, Food Disparity, Legal System, Transportation, Health and Mental Health, Workforce Development and Housing.

We know there are some in the community who are skeptical about the Poverty to Progress Initiative. For some of you, we may not be moving fast enough. A certain amount of skepticism can be healthy, but if you take nothing else away tonight, know that progress is being made. Are we going to solve this monumental problem in a year or even five years? The answer is no. But we have successfully put the problems of poverty in this community in the forefront. "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." We have taken the first step, and I am excited to see the progress.



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MAYOR FOSTER

In the few minutes we have left before you tonight, we want to tell you about some of the progress that has been made. We know that transportation is a barrier for many people in poverty. The Greater Lynchburg Transit Company has conducted a survey of its riders and is looking at ways to have shorter routes for the urban core that will enable riders to get to employment sites and other locations in a timely manner.

Many people in poverty have to spend over 30% of their pay on housing. This is prohibitive and an added stressor. The Lynchburg Community Action Group has employed a housing navigator who will work with both landlords and tenants to ensure people have safe and affordable housing.

Affordable healthcare is a concern for all of us, but for people in poverty, the cost can be another barrier, and preventative care is often not a choice for them. The Community Action Network has led the way in creating a network of healthcare providers and organizations that prioritize health and compassion over bottom lines and is working to break down the barriers that keep individuals from getting the care they deserve. The new community health center on Fifth Street is a game changer for health care, especially for our citizens in poverty.

VICE MAYOR TWEEDY

From the findings of national studies to the frightening statistics about the school-to-prison pipeline, the invaluable role of early childhood education is hard to ignore. That is why the Poverty to Progress Education work group is taking steps to make it easier for parents to register their children for Pre-K. On March 10, they will be holding its first Pre-K registration event at James Crossing. This is just the first of other events of its kind to bring information to parents and to encourage them to register their children and to start them on the right path. We could go on and on, but we wanted to share just a portion of the work that is being done. Be clear, Joan and I are certainly not trying to take credit for everything being done. However, we do believe that one of the most important outcomes of the community conversation about poverty is that there are organizations and individuals that are beginning to think differently about poverty and what they can do to assist in bringing people out of



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poverty. We have had the honor of meeting with a number of faith-based groups who have decided that they have not been doing enough in the community to address poverty and that it is time to set aside differences of ideologies and denominations in order to work together and to make a real difference. We applaud them for what they are doing and for what they are proposing.

There are collaborations and conversations happening with groups that have really not connected before like workforce development, the legal system and re-entry with the goal of reducing recidivism and helping people live successful lives after being incarcerated.

I remind people all that time that there is no roadmap for this work, no blueprint that we can follow. We will have successes and we will have learning moments. What is important is that, as a community, we have said that this will be a City that is a great place to live, work and play—for everyone!

MAYOR FOSTER

I believe some of the facilitators and participants from the Poverty to Progress work groups are with us tonight. If you are, please stand so we can acknowledge you and thank you for all of your hard work. (Applause)

As we come to the end (I know you all want to get to the reception), I would like to ask one thing. Stop a moment and look around this room. We are different races, different backgrounds, different orientations and different beliefs, but there is a tie that binds us all—we are Lynchburg! And together, we will continue to move forward and achieve even greater things. We are Lynchburg Strong!

Thank you for your time and good night.