



# STATE OF THE CITY

Bryant, AR

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Mayor Allen Scott

# 2019 State of the City Address

*Bryant, Arkansas*

## *Introduction*

Ladies and gentlemen, I would first like to thank you for having the confidence to elect me Mayor. Today I am presenting to you, the 2019 State of the City Address. Before I begin, I would like to thank several people that have been instrumental in making our city what it is today.

First, I would like to thank our esteemed City Council. Your service to the residents of Bryant is invaluable.

Secondly, I would like to show appreciation to the City Department Heads and their employees. They are the glue that holds Bryant together, and for that, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I would also like to thank the local businesses and their owners for having the foresight and tenacity to be located in Bryant. You are a vital part of our economy and we appreciate you - and the Greater Bryant Chamber of Commerce for supporting you.

Thank you to the Bryant School District for being one of the top school districts in the state and being the reason many of our residents choose Bryant. Without you, we would not be where we are now.

I would also like to thank my beautiful wife, for without her support, love, and advice, I would not be where I am today.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank the residents of Bryant for being a part of the city. You are the reason we exist and we are here to serve you.

I can report to you today that the state of our city is strong and we will continue to grow stronger. There have been incredible accomplishments occurring over the past year, with even greater projects and opportunities planned for 2019, and beyond.

## **Animal Control**

In 2018 the online pet licensing and donation portal was opened. Thanks to collaboration with other local organizations a free mobile clinic to reach underserved areas of the community was hosted in our area. Internally, there was restructuring of business processes to increase efficiency and communication between the City and the Department. The Bryant Barkway was opened to see if an off-leash area was appropriate for our city as the planning, design and fundraising of the Bryant Bark Park continued.

The Bryant Dog Park Committee was reestablished. This group of volunteers were very busy raising funds, as well as educating the community on the dog park project. In 2018 they hosted our annual Spring and Fall Mutt Mixers, a successful t-shirt sales fundraising project as well as attended Fall Fest and Puppy Up events. Since its first meeting, the committee has raised nearly \$8,000 toward the Bark Park Project. One of the predominant goals for the Animal Control department is to start, and hopefully complete, is the initial construction on the Bryant Bark Park, which will be located at Alcoa 40 Park. The park will be initially constructed and opened in phases.

Bryant Animal Control was also successful this year, taking in 866 animals, with 633 of those being adopted, rehomed, relocated, transferred to another shelter or carried over to the next year. The department hosted the following events: Spay Day, Co-hosted the Spring & Fall Mutt Mixers, Barking Lot Sale, Homeless Animals Day, and the Whiskers in Wonderland Holiday Pet Adoption Event.

The Animal Control Department has set many goals for 2019. These include re-establishing Saturday hours, as well as certifying two animal control officers. The Department will update the website to provide a greater range of services and information online. There are also plans to update the animal control ordinance this year with council approval, as well as complete the Adoption Trailer Build. This will allow the transport of shelter animals to adoption days that are hosted by local organizations. A jump start of the Shelter Volunteer Program is being organized, as well.

## **Police**

During 2018 the Bryant Police Department and 911 center were busy protecting the citizens and businesses of Bryant. The 911 Center answered over 7,500 911 calls and over 9,000 non-emergency calls. They also entered 2,001 warrants into the system. In addition to the calls, the Center also dispatched 13,192 Police Department calls, 2,563 Fire and Medical Calls, and 391 Animal Control Calls.

The Police Department responded to 13,192 calls for service in 2018. Some of the most notable statistics include the fact that the department over 550,000 miles. They also responded to 1,386 accidents, 880 business alarms, 578 residential alarms, 460 disturbance calls, 454 welfare checks, 444 motorist assists, 977 suspicious person/activity calls, 275 thefts, 364 shoplifting calls, 275 reckless drivers, 500 assists to other agencies or departments, 6,398 extra patrols, and conducted 2,075 property checks. In 2019, the department issued 10,442 citations and 7,222 warnings during traffic stops. They also served 1,988 warrants and 1,110 subpoenas.

In addition to all of these actions department personnel found the time to participate in or conduct a number of community events. These included conducting a Citizen Police Academy, National Night Out event, Santas with Badges Christmas event, Putting Kids' Feet First program, as well as conducting two Drug Take Back events. The School Resource Officers also conducted numerous class presentations.

In 2019, the Bryant Police Department will continue identifying ways to make the department more efficient and responsive. This includes developing plans to better respond to emergency situations such as disasters and active shooter drills, as well as strengthening and growing relationships with area departments to better serve and protect the residents of the city. Focus will also be given to evolve and implement additional training of our police officers.

## **Fire**

In 2018 the Bryant Fire Department has seen several great accomplishments. The greatest being the opening of two new fire stations. Fire station 2, located on Northlake road and Station 3 located Reynolds road also knowns as the Hill Farm area. These stations were constructed to replace the "temporary" stations that the Fire Department had been using for the past *20 years*.

Perhaps of most importance to the residents of Bryant is the fact that the Fire Department achieved an ISO 1 rating. This is the highest rating that can be achieved by a fire department and less than one half of one percent of stations nationwide have achieved this goal. This rating results in savings on the local business and residential fire insurance premiums and happened thanks to the leadership and partnerships across several city sectors, including the Bryant Fire Department, Bryant Water Department and the Bryant Communications/911 Center.

In 2019 the Department will propose additional equipment upgrades and replacement as well as a training facility on the south side of town. This will allow the Bryant Fire Department and surrounding departments to have a space readily available to train personnel. It is of utmost importance that our firefighters are trained in the most modern fire fighting techniques.

The Bryant Fire Department's long term growth and role within the community will be extremely important over the next 10 years. The fire department must grow and be able to increase resources to keep up with the growth of Bryant to be in a position to adequately provide the highest level of customer service to our residents. We want to continually add to the value the community receives from their fire department by finding ways to engage the residents which we serve. The price of a great fire department to be adequately staffed, equipped, and trained is not cheap. The increased growth Bryant has experienced and will continue to experience over the next 10 years should help to justify and hopefully help fund these expenses.

Currently, there is only one fire station on the North side of Interstate 30. This is the area of the city that is currently experiencing the most growth and increase in population. One fire station cannot provide adequate coverage to the area North of the Interstate with an increasing population, further justifying the need for an additional fire station in the Hwy 5/Hilltop RD area. As the City expands towards the North, the distances from these residences will be too far from fire stations, and if at least one additional fire station is not added, our current ISO Class 1 could suffer from fire protection being spread too thin, resulting in higher insurance premiums for all residents and businesses. My 5- 10 year goal is to establish two operational Command areas for our City, by having 2 stations and a Chief Officer North and 2 stations and a Chief Officer South.

### **Code Enforcement**

In 2018, Bryant Code Enforcement took on an additional role. That role was the collection of the newly passed Advertising and Promotion (A&P) tax. As part of this new duty, the department had to receive training on a new piece of software, the Business Tax Module. Additionally, the department identified every business for which the A&P ordinance applied and delivered the application and permit to each of the businesses. Code Enforcement now collects these fees monthly. Finally, the department has continued to conduct inspections on new construction to ensure that the construction is being completed in accordance with regulations. This has been a huge job as there are numerous large construction projects that are ongoing.

In 2019 emphasis will be placed on additional training of the staff to ensure that the staff can meet the increased demands that are, and will be, placed on them. As growth continues in the city and the demands on our staff increases, we will be evaluating the need for additional staff.

## **Finance**

This was a banner year for the Finance Department. The 2018 Budget book was awarded the Govt Finance Officers Association's "Distinguished Budget Presentation Award." This was the first time that the city has received this award. The 2016 and 2017 financial audits were also completed in 2018. The 2017 audit represents the first time that the audit was completed in the year following the year being audited.

The finance department coordinated with Code Enforcement, the A&P Committee and Council, in implementing and establishing accounting practices for the A&P Tax that was passed by Council in 2017. Bryant is totally surrounded by cities that already had an A&P funding mechanism in place well before the city implemented it. The Department also worked with the Fire and Parks Departments to establish Amendment 78, financing for vehicles in those departments. This provides a much better way to manage the fleet of vehicles in the future. Additionally, we created and maintained bond requisition documentation for bond projects in the Parks Department, Fire Department, and Street Department. The projects in the Parks Department, as well as the projects in the Fire Department, are 99 percent completed. The only bond project not completed is the Bryant Parkway, which I will discuss later in this report.

Looking forward to 2019, the Finance Department has set several goals. The first is to complete the 2018 Audit in a timely manner. Secondly, we plan on obtaining the "Distinguished Budget Presentation Award" for the second straight year. The department is also going to evaluate the finance staff positions and workloads, and determine the feasibility of a new position with a focus around purchasing. Collaboration will continue with the other departments to create and/or improve their 5 to 10-year departmental plans.

Finally, the evaluation of future investment strategies for the city is of utmost importance, so that when the city makes investments it is maximizing the potential yield and minimizing the exposure to risk.

## **Parks**

The Parks Department has been bustling over the past year. In 2016 the citizens passed a bond issue allowing several park improvements. I am happy to tell you that these improvements are now completed. Phase 1 construction of the all-inclusive playground at Mills Park is complete and now children of all abilities have a place to play in Bryant.

As part of the Mills Park Improvements, new handicapped accessible bathrooms were constructed. All too often bathroom improvements only take into consideration the needs of a parent with small children; however, these bathrooms were also designed to allow parents of older children with special needs to have a place to assist their children with dignity.

The Center at Bishop underwent a major renovation, as well. This renovation made the entrance lobby more useful and user-friendly. Additionally, meeting areas on the first floor and second floor were modified so that they could be used for a wider variety of activities than in the past. A room to house the cardio equipment was also included in the upgrades to the Center.

Another completed bond related project was the design and construction of the parks administration building which now houses the Parks Offices and Grounds Shop. Work is also underway to develop and implement a long-range equipment plan.

In 2019 the Bryant Parks Department plans on completing a Comprehensive Master Plan which will include the plans for the revitalization of Ashley Park, Alcoa 40 Park, and Wilbur D. Mills Park. This revitalization is to include new lights at Ashley and Alcoa 40 Parks, as well as upgrades to the restrooms and concessions at both locations. There are also planned upgrades to the fields at the Alcoa 40 Park, as well as the development of indoor batting and pitching facilities at Ashley.

This will make the Bryant park system the Jewel of Central Arkansas. The major goal of these improvements is to make Bryant the premier destination for softball and baseball in this area.

It is no secret that sports tournaments and sports activities lead the tourism industry here in Bryant and the parks department are working hard to build on that. On top of planned facility improvements, they have been actively pursuing new activities and sports to attract additional people to our parks. These include pickleball, disk golf, Movies in the Park, and others.

## **Planning**

The Planning Department assists developers and city policymakers in guiding the current and future physical development of Bryant. During 2018 The Department accomplished several changes to the city code. In addition, the new iWorqs Planning Module was implemented. This module assists in the organization of planning documents, comments, and communication between departments and developers making the process more efficient. Additionally, there were a number of zoning code changes. This is a normal process since the city zoning code is ever evolving.

Updating the Comprehensive Growth Plan was also started, as well as developing pattern zoning in the Heart of Bryant. Finally, implementation of the Walk, Bike, Drive plan continued. Planning also worked diligently to get the necessary approvals so construction could begin on several school-related projects, as well as the Encore Heart Hospital.

In 2019 you will see the Planning Department continue to update the Comprehensive Master Plan, while also making some much-needed changes to the Commercial Zoning Code. This is necessary to ensure that the city develops in a manner that is best for the residents. Additional

implementation of the pattern zoning will take place in the Heart of Bryant, as well as update of the Bryant Subdivision Code.

## **Public Works**

The Public Works Department is composed of the Construction and Project Management Division, Customer Service Management Division, Pumps, Controls, and Meter Services Division, Street Division, Stormwater Division, and the Water and Wastewater Departments.

The Construction and Project Management Division managed over 30 projects during 2018. Additionally, they provided major project oversight on the Heart of Bryant Project, and The Highway 5 utility relocation project, and several projects associated with the Bryant Parkway. The Heart of Bryant and the Highway 5 utility relocation were completed in late 2018. The department also completed over 5,700 utility locates related to ongoing projects. Bryant Parkway Oversight, often referred to as project 3, from Highway 5 to Hilldale/Hilltop was also completed in 2018.

Entering 2019 they will continue their oversight on several major projects including those associated with the new Bryant Parkway, which will connect Interstate 30 to South Reynolds Road. Also, the revision of the Water/Wastewater Construction Specifications will continue.

In 2018 a new Customer Service manager was appointed, as well as streamlining the billing process. In 2019 the goal is to implement an automated phone payment system. This will allow consumers more options to pay their water bills. In Pumps, Controls, and Meter Services, they implemented a grease management system at the lift stations, upgraded many lift stations with new pumps and controls, implemented water meter telemetry upgrades, and implemented a new inventory control policy. In 2019 the goals include upgrading lift systems as needed, monitor and upgrade pump and control systems as needed, and continue a high efficiency of meter reporting.

## **Streets**

The Street Department had many major projects they were working on in 2018. They cleared the Right of Way on Snooks Lane in anticipation of Project 3 of the Bryant Parkway from Hilldale/Hilltop to Highway 5 which has now been completed. Construction of Parkway Project 1, from I-30 to Shobe Road, is also underway. Preparations began for a new road from Debswood to Evans Loop including acquiring right of way for the project were started, and the Heart of Bryant Highway 183 improvement project was completed. A number of smaller repair projects were finished, as well.

In 2019 you will see the conclusion of a few of the projects mentioned earlier as well as additional project planned to be underway. The largest of which will be the bidding and construction



startup of much anticipated Parkway Project 2 from Shobe Road to Highway 183. At the time of writing this, FAA approval is pending. It is anticipated that the approval will be granted by summer and construction can then begin, with completion expected in 2020.

Intersection improvements are planned for the Hilldale/Hilltop-Parkway, Highway 5 and Parkway, and Highway 183 and Hill Farm Road. These include signalization and other improvements. Anticipated completion is in 2019. Additionally, a management plan for road, culver and drainage improvements are under development.

The Stormwater Department resolved several much needed projects in 2018. The Jon Street Drainage improvements were completed, as well as the Richland Park Basin and Lavern Drainage improvements. The Richland Park and Lavern projects included increasing capacity and redirecting stormwater to reduce the risk of flooding. There were also drainage improvements completed on Forest Drive. In addition to these projects, the department continued to maintain the city ditches for drainage and flood prevention.

In 2019 there will be continued work on flood mitigation, as it related to stormwater easement clean out throughout the city, as well as drain inlet and culvert repair or replacement. The iWorq modules will be improved to improve public outreach, employee, training, and code enforcement. Inspections of construction projects will continue to ensure compliance with stormwater regulations. The city stormwater webpage will also be maintained to encourage community involvement in public stormwater training programs.

## **Water/Wastewater**

In 2018 the Water/Wastewater Department was busy. They replaced approximately 4,000 feet of force main throughout the city, as well as inspected and cleared over 140,000 feet of the collection system pipeline. The utility relocation was also completed for the Highway 5 widening project. There were over 1800 work orders that were processed in 2018 as well, of these 74 were after-hours call outs. Also, the wastewater treatment dewatering facility construction was completed and the system is performing as anticipated.

Goals for 2019 in the water side include the replacement of water lines within Indian Springs, the restructuring of current operations for quality, efficiency, and improved maintenance. Additionally, the implementation of the IWorqs inventory control module to produce real-time water reports is planned. The goals for wastewater include continued inspection and necessary repairs as specified in the Consent Action Order. Also, the restructuring of current operations for quality, efficiency, and improved maintenance are planned. They will continue to upgrade lift stations and infrastructure as needed, with the revision of the water and wastewater specification standards.

## Conclusion

Finally, I would like to take a moment and mention several things that I hope to accomplish starting this year and extending over the next 4 years. First, I plan to strengthen communication between city administration, council, and residents through regular meetings to keep people informed. I also plan on collaborating with the Greater Bryant Chamber of Commerce to attract new businesses and Industry to the area through an improved strategic economic development plan. The city policies and procedures will be updated to create a more efficient city government. They will continue to improve public safety through innovative and modern techniques.

You will continue to see improvements to the infrastructure, specifically stormwater, water, wastewater, roads, and the park system. These projects are currently being identified and prioritized based on funding and greatest need. They will also be pursuing all avenues of alternate sources of funding for these projects, such as grants and matching funds.

Salary reviews are also underway for our employees. Some departments, such as public works and parks have already identified job positions that required updating and increases in pay were applied. We will continue to look at all positions across the board to see if additional salary increases are needed. This review is necessary, so that we can stay competitive with the surrounding area and attract, and keep, the best employees.

We are evaluating the possibility of restructuring several departments to improve the efficiency of service. In the past, IT services were contracted out, but we are in the process of hiring a new employee, so that those services will be in house. In addition, I plan are cultivating existing relationships with organizations such as "Keep Bryant Beautiful" to assist them in growing their volunteer base and help address the apparent increase of litter seen across our community. You will also see improved relationships between Bryant and surrounding communities. The stronger we grow as a region, the stronger our individual cities become.

In closing, I believe you can be proud of where we are today. The state of our City is strong thanks to the hard work put in by city employees, city council and the residents of Bryant.

As always, I welcome the input and effort of all residents who continue to expect more from the great City of Bryant and this administration.