



STATE OF THE CITY 2014

Mayor Jill Dabbs

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Good Evening and Welcome! Citizens of Bryant, Department directors and staff, and Members of City Council to the 2014 State of the City address.

The State of the Greatest City in the center of the greatest state is strong. Bryant is fiscally Strong. Our growth rate remains steady following the same trend as it has for the past decade. Despite the recession our nation has recently experienced Bryant's population and economic growth continues to flourish.

This growth comes with a great responsibility to respect our past and embrace the future that is coming at us so rapidly.

This administration has worked tirelessly with fully committed hearts towards serving Bryant over the past year. Before I share with you the successes and challenges of this past year and the vision for our future I want to recognize the incredible team of directors I am blessed everyday to work beside. Everything we have accomplished and the challenges we have overcome is to the credit of these committed directors that help carry

out the vision and mission for the city. Each of them are professionals and experts in their respective fields.

When I was handed the gavel in 2011 I set out to do two things. Eliminate wasteful government spending at the local level and provide better services to the city of Bryant by redirecting that waste into projects that mattered to our citizenry.

I call this budgeting for outcomes. Budgeting for outcomes has led to very positive results across every department. In 2011 we cut and we cut and we cut some more. While we were cutting we improved upon everything we could from customer service to identifying deficiencies in our operations that we could change into efficiencies and worked hard to become a true government transformer.

2012 we cut more waste and implemented numerous efficiency measures across every city department. All the while we were planning, engaging the citizens of Bryant through town hall meetings and community assessments to identify what were the priorities of the citizens. Based on the data we collected we set a plan in action for 2013 for what I call an epic year in local government.

2013 was a year of Government Transformation in the City of Bryant.

We started and completed more capital improvement projects than ever done in our cities history.

Starting with the AMI Meter reading system along with a complete financial software platform change. Combining these two enormous projects together saved the city an estimated \$150k - \$200K in implementation fees.

As if that wasn't enough, in our eagerness for excellence we remodeled the dilapidated, outdated, unsecure, deplorable wing of the building that housed our finance department.

These three projects combined would have never been attempted if I had known the challenges we would face in implementation, however now that we are through that I wouldn't change a thing. Not saying I would ever do it again. What didn't kill us did make us stronger.

Other significant capital improvement projects that caused much less pain in implementation included the State of the Art 911 Center Upgrade.

Technology Upgrades across every department, one in particular I will mention is the improved technology in planning and permits that makes doing business with the city easier for business and developers to interact with city staff and requires fewer trips to city hall.

Police acquired more than two million in equipment thru the federal LESO program for less than \$5000.00 cost to the city.

The Fire department for just over a million acquired two new pumper trucks and all new air packs and turnouts. I should mention they were upgraded from an ISO rating of a three to a two.

Echo Lake Blvd is open, lighting will be coming soon.

Sheaff Ave is under construction and will be complete later this year.

Over half a million in flood improvement projects were completed in 2013.

We received multiple grants in 2013 and I attribute that to our close association and partnership with many different agencies around the state and the country.

The Jumpstart Planning Grant you have heard so much about will enable us to cast a vision for what a town center in Bryant could be one day.

1.8 million in intersection improvement funds from Metroplan will help us begin implementing the plans that come out of the Jumpstart Planning.

11K in trail grant monies

40K for a fishing pier at Bishop

50K to complete the second phase of Mills Park Pool. This will include a new bathhouse, concession and fencing.

Bryant was selected as one of the 7 cities to participate in the Sustainable Energy Program led by the Applied Sustainability Center at the Sam Walton College of Business with the University of Arkansas. This grant has led other cities such as Fayetteville to realize millions in energy savings to the local government, businesses, and residents. Look for more information on this throughout 2014.

We have been recognized statewide with numerous awards this past year.

Government recycler of the year awarded by Arkansas Recycling Coalition
Officer Scott Johnson received Officer of the year by the State Chiefs Association along with numerous other awards for his quick response after being shot in the line of duty. We are happy to report he is fully recovered and doing well.

Governor's Leadership and Fitness award for Health & Fitness Club went to the Center at Bishop Park.

And we received two City of Distinction Awards one for Technology Advancement and the other for Green Conservation Initiative.

These are all Headline Stories for Bryant throughout 2013 but we also had some negative headlines and I want to address those as well.

There was much debate and discussion over travel and training in 2013. This constitutes less than .7% of our entire operating budget. There is a perception that if one must travel for training they must also be vacationing. Most of this training budget was spent on non-discretionary, mandated, required by law training.

It is our responsibility to insure our officers and firefighters, are trained and ready to go while in hopes they never need that training.

Some training is for the purpose of lowering our workers comp claims by improving our safety performance rating, which we have excelled in over the past few years. Other training is to renew required licenses for many of our dedicated employees for the scope of service they provide to the city .

Discretionary training comes in the form of benchmarking other cities against our own to measure how well we are performing.

Municipal meetings to keep up with the changes in law and best practices
Agency meetings that are often how we in fact find many of our grant opportunities.

The return on investment in our people and for our city far outweighs the upfront cost of training. I can assure you that I oversee all training requests and each year we weigh the value of the knowledge and opportunities gained for our city against the cost of the training.

At the end of 2013 and until now you may have heard the sky is falling and the city of Bryant is under poor management and we could possibly be broke. I am hear to tell you none of that is true. We underwent a software platform change, had employees, unable or unwilling to stick at it till the end and as a result we had a few months without a clear picture of where we stood financially. Thankfully we have a great team of directors. They were charged in August 2013 as we started the implementation to be conservative, don't spend outside their budget. Because they did just as

they were asked, every single department came in under budget for almost half a million dollars with the exception of parks. A review of what caused their shortfall in meeting the budget revealed we under budgeted for some expenses, over estimated some of their revenue, and they had some unanticipated maintenance issues. A plan is in place to insure this does not happen again.

The city's cash reserves at the beginning of 2013 were about eleven million dollars, we ended with a cash reserve of about 9 million. We budgeted to use reserves to do many of these capital improvement one time projects I mentioned a few minutes ago.

One million was for streets. This was money set aside from the 2008 street bonds we are paying interest on and were committed for the purpose of building Sheaff and Echo Lake Blvd.

Half a million was budgeted in the 2013 general budget for stormwater improvement projects which we completed.

The other half million that makes up the 2 million reduction in reserves was due to a budgeting error. We budgeted to pay a fire and a police bond payment out of designated when in fact it should have been budgeted and paid out of general. This was a clerical error that was corrected in December and the impact to the general fund was $-\$550,000$ and to the designated was $+\$550,000$

So, as you can see, with council's approval, we did choose to use a portion of our reserves last year for worthy projects, and we were also able to do multiple other projects without utilizing our reserves. We could not have completed these meaningful projects if we had not started with cutting the budget and living within our means. Don't you wish we could get Washington to do this!! This is exceptional news and a story many other cities wish they could tell.

The sky's not falling we are just getting a lot done, very quickly and efficiently, and for those who like government to operate slowly this makes them very uncomfortable. Time is money and if government is wasting time I can assure you they are wasting money.

In summary that is what we accomplished last year, the challenges we faced, and a snapshot of our fiscal health. So the only question left to ask is, where do we go from here.

We must continue to sustain the best public safety department in the state of Arkansas. We are a model city other cities look towards when trying to improve their own cities.

We are in the planning phase for two new replacement fire stations that were approved for funding by the voters in November.

A quarter of a million in flood improvement projects will be completed in 2014. Ordinances and planning approval processes are now in place to insure we do not create additional flooding as we continue to develop.

A growing city must always be planning for the future and the infrastructure that is needed.. We will continue to update the master water/waste water plan and follow that plan to insure Bryant has adequate water resources for future generations.

Sheaff Ave will be completed in 2014.

We are working towards acquiring right away to continue that connection from Woodland to Prickett and have applied for federal funding through the federal transportation department.

The State Aid program awarded the city of Bryant \$250,000 for overlaying

and widening Springhill Rd.

There are plans in the future to connect Echo Lake Blvd to Hilltop and the state is planning to widen Hwy 5 from Reynolds to Springhill.

Currently right a way acquisition is under way for the Alcoa Rd expansion. Some of these are already funded projects and some are awaiting funding.

I committed in 2011 I would seek funding for a safe improvement to our two most overly populated roads. Springhill I already mentioned and Boone Rd.

The estimated cost to rebuild Boone Rd is ten million dollars. Following numerous public hearing, living room meetings with residents, and city council workshops and meetings it was agreed if a roadway could be constructed within the existing right away, while improving the safety and the drainage issues along Boone Road then a ballot question would be put forth to the voters to call the 07/08 park bonds, refinance them in order to access sixteen million in funding for the purpose of rebuilding Boone Rd. and investing the remaining six million into our park system for specific capital improvement projects.

This issue will have four questions on the May Primary Ballot. If you support a better Boone Rd. and improving our parks system then it will be a yes vote on all four questions. *This measure failed to pass in May 2014 by 70 votes. There are no plans at this time to improve Boone Rd. This will come when the people of Bryant decide it should come. If you want a better Boone Rd contact your alderman.*

The Bryant parks system continues to improve, future improvements include phase one of Mills Park pool being completed before Memorial Day. Phase 2 will begin at the end of the summer season.

Improved entry ways to our parks and beautification projects led by our parks committee and Keeping Bryant Beautiful are in the planning stages.

There are plans to expand our trail system continuing to better connect our parks to our neighborhoods and schools. Also, there was a three-county wide announcement that the Southwest Rails to Trails project will be pursued with anticipation of completion in the next decade. This trail will connect downtown Little Rock to Downtown Hot Springs and will likely be a private/public partnership when it comes to funding. This trail will skirt just south of Bryant but will still be an amenity to our city we can look forward to in the future.

A new dog park at Alcoa park has been designed, the dog park committee is working to raise the monies to fund this park expansion.

How can we get more done? Acknowledge we share a common vision for our city.

The Vision for Bryant

“The City of Bryant will be a model city, rated as one of the top smart growth cities in America. Other cities seeking to be healthy, vibrant communities will choose Bryant to benchmark and model their efforts towards similar results. “

Please join me and this administration in reaching for this vision by carrying out this mission.

Mission Statement

“The City of Bryant’s mission is to embrace smart growth, serve with integrity, create open dialogue with our citizens, and conduct our government business efficiently. Smart growth will meet the needs of our citizens, while honoring our past and creating sustainability for our future.”

Just to list a few of the amazing organizations and programs developed by

visionaries in which you can be involved in to make a worthwhile difference in your community is the Chamber of Commerce, Keeping Bryant Beautiful, Women In Networking, Imagination Library, BEE Coalition, Mayor's Youth Advisory Council, Lions Club, Rotary, Bryant Boys & Girls Club, Bryant Senior Adult Center, Our numerous churches and faith based organizations, Community Gardens, Bishop Park Activities, City Festivals, BONAfide for neighborhood improvement, recycling, sports organizations, schools, city committees, and your local government. There are certainly others but as you can see there are plenty of ways to get involved in Bryant to make a positive difference.

Please visit the city website and fill out the new community assessment <http://ar-bryant2.civicplus.com/index.aspx?nid=1114> and participate in your local government. What gets measured gets managed and I want to know what you think and how we can do it better. Also visit the transparency portal located at the bottom of the home page for updated quarterly reports, city budgets, year to date financial and more.

<http://ar-bryant2.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/Index/85> We will continue to advance our use of the website and provide you with the information you find important.

Thank you for the honor of serving as your Mayor. I am proud to say much more than what we set out to accomplish a little over three years ago will be completed within this year. And I look forward to all that is ahead.

I want to recognize a few others who make the cogs of local government move a little faster and a lot more efficiently than what is perceived to be possible in this profession. My assistant, Dana Poindexter, thank you for all that you do! You learned on the fly how to keep up with me at the pace I like to keep. You are a master at managing my calendar and keeping me where I need to be and when I need to be there.

I cannot say enough to all our city department heads and employees for

the jobs they do on a daily basis. To you, I am very grateful and the City of Bryant is grateful.

City Clerk Heather McKim, the cities keeper of the records is instrumental to ensuring our city government is transparent and accessible. I cannot thank you enough for your soft spoken wisdom and attention to detail.

I thank you City Council for your lack of patience, frustration, and restraint to not strangle me. I recognize my robust aggressive leadership style with a smile gives you trepidation. Our challenges, have not discouraged me from serving the citizens of Bryant. My heart of gold for this city has been refined by fire and as iron sharpens iron you have sharpened me. And I thank you for that.

In the tradition of saving the best for last, I extend my deepest gratitude and all my love to my husband, Allan our two beautiful daughters, friends and family for your unwavering support and love.

I thank everyone for listening tonight. It is my hope you continue to find me worthy of being your Mayor. I do enjoy serving you. Thank you and God Bless!

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