

On Wednesday, February 10, 2021, at 8:33 a.m., the Dayton City Commission met in regular session, remotely through electronic means, at City Hall.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Whaley called the meeting to order. She said due to the current COVID-19 order, we are conducting the meeting remotely through electronic means. To protect the safety of the community, during the state of emergency related to COVID-19, in-person citizen comments will be suspended for City Commission Meetings.

Citizens interested in making public comment related to calendar items, are asked to do so in writing. Items related to a calendar item will be included in the meeting records under Communications and Petitions.

Citizens who wish to make the City Commission aware of an issue not related to the Commission Meeting Calendar, may also do so. These items will be distributed to the Dayton City Commission for reference.

For complete information on how to submit a comment, please visit [daytonohio.gov/CoronaResources](http://daytonohio.gov/CoronaResources) or call 937-333-3636.

### **INVOCATION**

Commissioner Mims gave the invocation.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Whaley led the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **ROLL CALL**

Roll call was taken and Mayor Whaley, Commissioners Joseph, Mims, Shaw and Fairchild were present. The Clerk of Commission, Ms. Rashella Lavender, and The City Manager, Ms. Shelley Dickstein, were also present through electronic means.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Mims made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 3, 2021, meeting. Commissioner Fairchild seconded the motion. The previous meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

### **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Mayor Whaley asked the Clerk of Commission, Ms. Lavender, what is the nature and order of business for this meeting.

Ms. Lavender said, “Mayor Whaley, the sole order of business today is to present the Annual State of the City Address. Each year, a Dayton City Commission meeting is set aside for the purpose of reporting the state of the city, highlighting some of the accomplishments of the year past, and remarking on initiatives for the year ahead. I am informed that you will present your remarks and will then adjourn the meeting from the podium.”

### **STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

“When I delivered my state of the city speech one year ago, I said that 2019 had been the most challenging year I had faced as the mayor of Dayton. While I still believe that is true, little did I know what 2020 had in store for our community and our country.

In 2019 we faced down tornadoes, a hate group rally, a mass shooting, and the murder of one of our police officers.

Yet each of these crises actually brought our community closer together. We organized tornado cleanups. We celebrated Dayton’s diversity. We held one another in the Oregon District. We lined the streets for a fallen hero. Through it all, we were united in our pain – and in our resilience.

But then came 2020 and a new type of disaster. The twin crises we’ve faced over the last year are both about disconnection. The disconnection caused by a pandemic that forces us to be away from our lives and loved ones. The disconnection between people who look different, driven by our history of racism.

While the challenges of 2019 brought us together, the challenges of 2020 threatened to drive us apart.

All of these problems are big, and structural – beyond any of our individual control. But I do believe – still – that we as a community have the power to make change. And I do still believe, that as a community, we can get through anything.

The pandemic has been a period of incredible pain and suffering. Hundreds of lives in our community have been cut short by COVID-19. Thousands more continue to struggle with the awful virus. And even more have been faced with immense economic hardship and uncertainty as measures to stop the spread of the disease shut down our economy.

But this crisis has also brought out the best in people. People in Dayton stepped up, just like they always do. Our healthcare workers took on the herculean task of healing us when we were sick. Our frontline workers – like our first responders and grocery and food service workers – risked their lives to keep the rest of us safe. We owe them all an immeasurable debt of gratitude.

From my role at the city, it was clear how the community was pulling together to help those in need. There were – and are – weekly calls convened by the United Way to coordinate resources to make sure they get to those most in need.

Public Health – Dayton and Montgomery County has done an incredible job both coordinating a response to this crisis in our community. Barely a day went by in 2020 when Public Health was not on the news or online telling us how to stay safe. People didn't always like the message they were giving, but Commissioner Cooper, Dr. Dohn and their team kept doing what was right to make sure our community made it through this crisis.

Across the country and here in Dayton, African Americans were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and the ensuing economic crisis. I am proud of our community's willingness to not only acknowledge this reality but act on it. Early in the pandemic, I began hosting weekly zooms with Public Health and clergy, many of whom pastor congregations in West Dayton.

Through these calls, we have worked to overcome inequality in both information and access when it comes to vaccines. These faith leader's candid feedback, suggestions, and questions have been invaluable. Based on feedback from clergy, Public Health is setting aside a quarter of the vaccines they receive to go to locations in West Dayton and Trotwood. Following Public Health's lead, Kettering Health is hosting vaccine clinics in churches. Just last week I was able to visit one of these events at Grace United Methodist Church on Salem Avenue. It is only through efforts like these – where government, community leaders, and the healthcare system are working hand in hand – that we will finally defeat this virus.

Through it all, our guiding principle has been keeping the people of Dayton safe. This has included stepping up when the state or federal government was unwilling to lead. I was proud that Dayton was the first major city in Ohio to institute a mask mandate, nearly a month before the state of Ohio. This was controversial at the time, but I am confident we saved lives. We also worked to make sure every person in Dayton had access to a mask – passing out nearly 375,000 masks at rec centers and fire stations.

I know for many of us, there has been some silver lining in this pandemic – being forced to stay home has given us all the chance to spend more time with our families. While I am obviously eager for this to be over, I know I will also miss having dinner every night at home with my husband, Sam. But I also know that many families must face the cold, painful truth of a seat at the dinner table left empty by a loved one.

Which is why, as we reach the beginning of the end of this pandemic, we must redouble our efforts to make safe decisions about this virus. I'm often reminded by Dr. Dohn that tight rope walkers usually fall in the last three feet of their walk. It is easy to become complacent, but the risks are just too dire and the end too close.

Of course, this pandemic isn't just a public health crisis. It is also an economic crisis. Thousands of our residents have lost their jobs or seen their hours cut. Many businesses have been forced to close – some forever.

It is not enough to simply go back to the way things were. We must build something better.

We must ensure that unlike the recovery from the Great Recession, this COVID recovery makes our city more just and more equitable.

I convened an Eviction Task Force in 2019, long before the present crisis. Over the last year, that group has met frequently to focus on keeping people housed. Members of this task force have stepped up to protect tenants from unnecessary evictions, and to make sure our neighborhoods are not destabilized by a wave of evictions when the COVID crisis is over.

Miami Valley Community Action Partnership has moved an incredible amount of money this year to keep people in their homes – far more than ever before. In six months, they provided \$8 million in rent, mortgage, utility and emergency assistance dollars to Dayton area families.

Advocates for Basic Legal Equality has gone to great lengths to protect tenants facing eviction in court. They represented Daytonians in eviction proceedings during the crisis, sometimes helping prevent evictions at the very last minute.

I am also thankful for the many responsible landlords who have worked with tenants, helping them apply for assistance and stay in their homes. Dayton Municipal Court played an important role as well by pausing all eviction proceedings during the peak of the crisis.

Last summer, my colleagues on the City Commission passed an ordinance requiring landlords to provide tenants with receipts upon receiving rent and a cap on late fees levied against tenants.

We are now working on an ordinance that mirrors one in Toledo called “pay to stay.” Currently, if a tenant is late with their rent but provides payment once their landlord begins eviction proceedings, the landlord can still continue to push them out. Under this new proposed rule, tenants who pay their back-rent, late fees, and court costs would be allowed to stay.

Beyond addressing the pressing needs caused by the COVID crisis, we must also take this as an opportunity to correct long-standing wrongs in our community. Black-owned businesses are sorely underrepresented for as multi-cultural as our community is. And we know that Black entrepreneurs were hit especially hard by the COVID crisis.

Instead of just working to get back to normal, we want to grow a more equitable and representative business community moving forward. To that end, we are partnering with Accelerator for America and Mastercard to develop strategies for how we can support Black entrepreneurs. Dayton is one of just seven cities to receive support from Mastercard through their “In Solidarity” effort, which is aimed at reducing racial disparities. As the recovery unfolds, we want to make sure that Black business owners are poised to receive its benefits.

Nearly everyone has made unprecedented changes to their lives to help one another stay safe from the virus. And countless people have done small acts of kindness by checking on their friends and neighbors to help alleviate the isolation that we all felt, and many continue to feel.

But truly caring for and respecting our friends and neighbors also means coming to terms with the systemic racism experienced by African Americans. The protests following the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor last summer have made the reality of black peoples’ experience in our country impossible to ignore. Unfortunately, it took these tragedies for many white people to finally be forced out of their comfort zone and take notice.

We are in a pivotal moment. I believe half of our city has begun to wake up to the reality that the other half faces on a daily basis. This process is painful, and long overdue, but it is critical to us building a more just city that works for everyone.

I am heartened that so many organizations in Dayton have been willing to confront the impacts of racism head-on. From Montgomery County to the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce to Dayton Metro Library and more, organizations have stepped up to declare racism a public health crisis. And I believe that for most these are more than just words – our institutions are taking a good, deep look within to determine how they can eliminate racial biases and promote racial equity.

I am optimistic that we are in a real moment of transformation for our region, and our nation. We have a long way to go to right the many wrongs that have faced our Black neighbors. But I feel confident that we are finally on the path.

Issues of policing are some of the most complex I’ve ever encountered. Police have incredibly difficult jobs. And as we in Dayton know better than most, they are willing to put their lives on the line to save others. Most police officers I know were drawn to the job because of a sense of duty and a desire to serve others. Most are good and decent people.

Yet our criminal justice system is broken. And the racism that pervades ALL of our systems in America is present there as well. Policing itself is not the problem – its bad outcomes are symptoms of a much larger one.

The policies that drained wealth out of Black communities created the toxic brew that police and Black residents are swimming in today. Austerity policies that have gutted social and mental health services have cut many of the life-lines that could help our most vulnerable residents live to their fullest potential. Without these crucial services that can help people achieve stability, other parts must try to fill the gaps.

I hope that is what white people in positions of power take from this current moment. We owe it – literally owe it, I believe – to our Black neighbors to ensure that Black families have the same opportunities to live healthy, safe, and prosperous lives as we do. And it is going to take real investment – real, hard choices about how we spend our resources to get there.

All that is to say – it is going to take far more than reforming the police to deal with our most pressing racial equity issues. But that is not an excuse not to fix what is within our control.

The five police reform working groups we established this summer are each tasked with looking into one area of policing: oversight, use-of-force, training, recruitment, and community engagement. Each is chaired by a City Commissioner and a community leader, and are made up of police, Public Defenders, Community Police Council members, and representatives of Black and immigrant communities working through tough issues. More than 100 community members have volunteered their time and energy on these working groups. This is by far the most diverse community engagement process I have ever been a part of.

The groups have not shied away from having some really hard conversations about day-to-day interactions between police and the community. While many of these conversations are uncomfortable, they are the only way to uncover opportunities for change. And they are the only way to work toward greater trust in both directions.

These working groups have spent hours and hours looking under the proverbial hood of the Dayton Police Department and are deeply examining existing policy and practice. They have brought in experts from around the country to share best practices and to guide policy recommendations. Dayton Police have been actively engaged in these conversations, giving feedback and real-world experience to help the group land on the best solution.

The process has already led to a number of major policy changes that I believe will make Dayton more safe for police and residents alike: a new de-escalation policy and emphasis on de-escalating situations, rather than responding with force. A new auditor position will ensure internal investigations are done appropriately. All DPD officers will be issued and required to use body worn cameras when responding to any citizen call. We will begin to divert non-violent crisis calls to a non-police responder so that police will not be forced to act as social workers and people experiencing mental health crises or addiction get the help they need.

And we will place a new emphasis on recruiting officers that reflect our community - not just in terms of race and gender, but also in terms of background and experience. This change in particular will be up to the voters: the recruitment working group is recommending a change to the city charter that will allow us to take these kinds of characteristics into consideration when hiring new police officers.

There are also numerous smaller things. This includes a more comprehensive and accessible complaint process, a community orientation for new officers so they can learn more deeply about the people who make up Dayton, and a requirement that police track every time an officer points a gun at someone, which will allow us to see if there are disparate instances by race.

There is so much, it could take up the whole speech. We will have much more to say as we begin to wrap up this process and work to educate Daytonians about the changes.

This is hard and slow work. This process has not been easy – and nor should it be. The issues we are facing have been decades in the making and deeply impact the lives of many of those involved.

But we are seeing change – not just in policy, but in how Dayton Police and community volunteers relate to one another on the committees. Research shows the best way to build trust between police and community is to work to solve problems together. We are doing that in Dayton.

Nearly the entire city organization has devoted resources to this effort, from the Dayton Mediation Center who facilitates the meetings, to the Budget office who is working to track policing data. This has truly been a herculean effort, at a time when capacity and resources are already stretched.

But that is how our staff has behaved throughout all of the crises of the last few years. Even as the world shut down around us, our staff continued to serve their neighbors by picking up the trash, providing emergency services, and much more. Although our budget and our staff capacity was strained, I was amazed by the commitment of City of Dayton employees to keep pushing to keep our city moving and growing.

I believe that the crises faced by our city over the last several years also shows the need for full-time elected leadership. When I ran for mayor, I always knew I would treat it as a full-time job because I believed that was what the city needed.

When the framers of the 1913 city charter created the position of mayor, they never could have conceived of the reality of what the job looks like today. They never could have imagined that national philanthropic dollars for local initiatives are often focused on political leadership, and mayors in particular. They wouldn't have known that Dayton is at the center of a large region, and its interests are not always the same as its neighbors'. And they certainly never would have imagined a woman or an African American, particularly one who didn't come from means, in this role.

The role of mayor deserves someone who can put the time into it that it requires in our current moment. It also cannot be left only to people who are independently wealthy, are in retirement, or like me – choose not to have children. We need to make sure the best person for the job, no matter their other life circumstances, is able to step up.

The Charter Review Committee is currently reviewing a proposal to make the mayor of Dayton a full time job that is compensated competitively. I am in full support of this proposal and hope Dayton voters will have the opportunity to weigh in on it this spring.

While much came to a pause during COVID, investment into our neighborhoods continued unabated. And two projects that many people thought could NEVER be done will come to life this spring. In the next several months, Daytonians will be able set foot in Gem City Market and the Dayton Arcade.

Although these two projects are very different, they both demonstrate something amazing about our community: even when told it would be too hard, it couldn't be done – Dayton did it anyway. By the end of this year, Daytonians will be able to shop for groceries on Salem Avenue in a store they built and they own. And a grand old building that has sat empty and rotting for thirty years will become a center for innovation and buzzing again with activity.

And other parts of our city are about to see new life. Dayton Public Library broke ground on the new West branch at the Wright Factory site late last year. The library, along with the planned museum from the National Aviation Heritage Area, will transform that part of West Third Street into a destination for neighborhood residents and tourists alike.

Investments in education continued as well, albeit in a much different format than before. Preschool Promise quickly pivoted to help support online learning for our youngest students, creating innovative programs like play boxes that parents could use with their children. With the assistance of What Works Cities, a national economic mobility initiative, Preschool Promise was able to hire an attendance specialist who came up with creative strategies for keeping parents and kids engaged even while stuck at home.

In last year's state of the city speech, I talked about the Great Dayton Flood as a metaphor for the crises we had faced and our city's ability to overcome those challenges. The same metaphor would still be true for our city today. Rather than getting a break after 2019, the flood just kept coming.

But that's the thing about being resilient. You don't get to turn it off – it doesn't go away. It does not break. You don't stop being resilient because the crises pile up. And that is what I know to be true about Dayton. Our grit and perseverance will overcome any challenge and we will come out stronger than before. I have no doubt in that.

I also talked about the flood in my speech in December 2012 announcing my candidacy to be your mayor. That's a tough historical reference to get away from when you're a politician in Dayton.

It's not lost on me that this will be my final State of the City address, although I am not sure that has really sunk in yet. Being the Mayor of Dayton is the best job I've ever had. But being truly committed to a community also means knowing when you need to make space for new leaders and new ideas.

The resiliency I have seen in our city over the last two years has shown me that those new leaders and ideas are here in Dayton and ready to step up. I can't wait to see what they have in store.

Thank you."

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:58 a.m.

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**Nan Whaley**  
**Mayor**

**Attest:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Clerk of Commission**