

State of the Village March 7,2022

Member of Council, residents of Silver Lake, good evening. Today I am pleased to report on the State of the Village, with particular emphasis on some of the important events of 2021, and a quick look at some of what may occur in 2022. We both have important jobs here tonight; mine is to talk, yours is to listen. I only hope I can finish mine before you finish yours. This is the 17th year in a row, thanks to your strong and much appreciated support, that I have had the duty and honor to deliver this yearly address. As is often the case, I have to admit that I had a hard time getting a start on it and trying to figure out exactly what I needed to say. But, as Mark Twain once said, “the secret of getting ahead is getting started”.

So let me start by listing, in no particular order, some of the major accomplishments of 2021:

1. After more than 2 years of discussion, after 2 years of meetings, and, yes, after 2 years arguing and controversy, Council passed a new Riparian ordinance. This new ordinance clarified some ambiguities and inequities that existed in the previous ordinance. It clearly defined homeowners’ and Village responsibilities, and set appropriate guidelines for the protection of the shorelines of both Silver Lake and Crystal Lake, as well as the Cuyahoga River. The right of any homeowner to do what he/she wants to do on his/her own property was not abridged, and existing alterations to any property, provided such alterations were done legally, were grandfathered in via the legislation. All properties, whether they lie in the Estates or outside of it, were treated equally under the law. This new riparian ordinance was unanimously and strongly supported and advocated by the Village Planning Commission. I am

both proud and appreciative of Council's decision to support this legislation.

2. We have great employees in the Village. Unfortunately, the compensation for the work they do has often not been commensurate with the duties they perform, or reflective of their importance to the Village. In 5 out of the last 8 years, our employees received 0% increases in their wages. Surely we needed to do better. And then we did. And Council agreed. At the end of last year, Council awarded our employees the full 2021 social security COLA of 5.9%. We still have ground to make up, but this is a welcome start.
3. Our monthly sewage treatment bills from Summit County are usually in the \$20,000 to \$25,000 range. Yet in October, November, and December of 2020, we received outrageous sewer bills from Summit County totaling more than \$250,000, or more than 3 to 4 times what we are normally charged. We were given ridiculous explanations for the charges, one being that a tanker truck full of discarded restaurant grease dumped the grease into one of our sewers. Really? One truck? It would have taken a fleet of trucks many days to have accomplished that. And do they think we would not have noticed? So we fought it. The sewer charges actually originated with the City of Akron, then were passed along to us by Summit County. As it turned out, both the County and Cuyahoga Falls also received extremely high, hard to justify, bills. So, through the combined efforts of Village Treasurer Sean Housley, Village Solicitor Bob Heydorn and Cuyahoga Falls Law Director Janet Ciatola, we attacked the issue. After months of work, we won. The outrageous charges were revoked, normal and usual charges were re-instituted, and paid, and the Village was spared a wrongly incurred expense of well over \$200,000.

4. Complaints about the condition and effectiveness of the Route 8 sound wall have been voiced for many years now. The wall is in pitiful condition. There are holes in it, cars have driven through it, and panels have fallen down. It is unsightly, and too low as well as too short. I have contacted ODOT many times asking for the wall to be upgraded and repaired, but with no success. Then, one day late last summer, ODOT informed that it is the responsibility of Cuyahoga Falls, not ODOT, to maintain that wall. Why they did not tell me this years ago, I'll never understand. Given this new information, I did meet with Cuyahoga Falls Mayor Don Walters to discuss our concerns. He promised to look into it. Knowing the kind of man he is, I'm confident that our concerns about the wall will soon be fully and appropriately addressed.
5. For the second year in a row, we joined the cities of Munroe Falls, Stow and Cuyahoga Falls in a clothing drive for the homeless. The generosity of our residents was overwhelming. Thank you for helping make the lives of these people in need somewhat more bearable during the cold winter months.
6. Last October, Reverend John Schluep approached me with the idea of Silver Lake sponsoring a Witness Tree. A Witness Tree is one where dog tags commemorating deceased veterans who have died by their own hands are hung on branches of the tree. Statistics show that each day, approximately 22 veterans commit suicide, clearly a very sad and regrettable thing to happen. Each day from November 1 to November 11, Veterans Day, a ceremony was held at the tree outside my office, on which we hung dog tags. On the dog tags were written names of veterans who have taken their own lives. The dog tags serve as witness to the plight of these veterans, and to let them know they are not forgotten. Each day several people attended the ceremony, and took an active part in it. On

the final day, November 11, about 75 people participated. John tells me that this was by far the biggest turnout for this sacred ceremony in Summit County. We will continue to participate in this Witness Ceremony next year, and hopefully it will become an annual event. We hope, also, that we can end this tragedy of veteran suicide, and that our country find a better way to bring these veterans home, a way that will help them integrate successfully into society.

7. We started a new program where we honor our police officers for service above and beyond the call of duty. Last October, we honored Lt. Dave Childers, Officer Michael Hudson and Officer Ed Beverage for their quick and professional actions that saved the life of a Village resident. We further recognized Lt. Childers for his outstanding work in revamping and creating new policies in agency employee recruitment and hiring practices and procedures, and for policies in determining the use of force, including the use of deadly force, in confrontational situations. We are very proud that his work has been used as a model for many other police departments.
8. We partnered with Stow and Cuyahoga Falls to commit to construct a Veterans Bike Trail along the railroad tracks running through these 3 communities. The trail itself, at least that part of it that will be in Silver Lake, will probably not be constructed until sometime in 2027.
9. We joined with Summit County to explore the implementation of a county-wide broadband system. This system will allow all Summit County municipalities to be always in contact with each other, especially in times of emergency. Eventually it may also lead to internet access for residents at rates cheaper than now offered by the major suppliers.

10. The Charter Review Commission, composed of Chairman Terry Steel, John Schluep, Rebecca Brockmeyer, David Via and Carol Steiner, met to review our charter, and to suggest changes to it. They suggested 8 changes, 7 of which were approved by Council to go forward as ballot issues, all 7 of which were approved by the voters.
11. We ended the year with a balance of 2.6 million dollars in our general fund, and an overall balance of all funds in excess of 4 million dollars. As always, we were very careful of how we spend your money.

In addition to what I have already mentioned, we also conducted business as usual. We purchased new service department equipment, specifically two new trucks. We bought a new police cruiser. We renewed our commitment to our seniors by again offering the senior snowplow program. We updated our computer software and phone systems. Our service department workers did their usual excellent job in keeping our streets clear of ice and snow. We appointed new people to some of our standing committees - Sara Snook and Brad McBride to the Park Board, and Mike Caserta to the Shade Tree Commission. We hired a new service department worker, Brad Harter, and welcomed to the department new police officers Ed Beverage, Nick Flasco and Michael Hudson. On Election Day last November, voters returned Dann Nivens, Therese Dunphy and Matt Plesich to Village Council, and voted in a new member, Phil Kaplan, representing District C. Speaking of Council, my congratulations go out to Bill Church for having been re-elected Council President.

And with the County getting the pandemic issues a bit more under control, let me mention a few other things to look forward to in 2022.

One of the best things is that the Garden Club once again intends to sponsor a Festival this year. We've not had one for 2 years, and have really missed this fun-filled day. Mark your calendars, Festival returns on July 16.

The Easter Egg hunt returns this year also. With the Easter Bunny present, this day has always been a day for fun and food for the youngsters. The Silver Lake police department enthusiastically and happily brings this event back to the Village on Saturday, April 9.

Another car show is on the horizon. For every year since 2016, except for the initial pandemic year of 2020, Brandi and Scott Croghan have treated us to a fabulous car show. Every car show has been great, every show bigger and better than the year before. I'm positive that the 2022 car show will again prove to be an exceptional one.

Still more good news. The Silver Lake Historical Society will again be offering several programs throughout the year. Their programs have always been interesting and informative. Many of them deal directly with Silver Lake, like the vintage homes in Silver Lake or the Native American tribes that once lived here. Others deal with things like women in the air corps during World War II, or not-so-well-known facts of the Civil War. The SLHS held its first program of the year on January 20th. Be sure to catch its next one; it will be next week Thursday, March 17 at 7pm. Bob Zimmermann will be the featured speaker.

Several months ago, the thought entered my mind that Silver Lake should be the sight of a Veterans Memorial. I formed a committee composed of John Schluep, chairman, Barb Oldham, Bob Steiner, Mike Thorson, Denny Stoiber and Rosalie Goshen. The committee has met several times already, and soon decided that instead of a Veterans' Memorial, something more was needed. Surely something that honored veterans who have died in service to our country, but also something

that honors **all** veterans who have **ever** served, as well as veterans still serving, and, just as important, a group of people that also make tremendous sacrifices serving our country, the families of veterans. So, the idea became, not a memorial, but rather a Veterans' Tribute Garden, a serene and solemn place to pay our respect to, and to show our appreciation and admiration for all veterans and their families for the service and sacrifices they make for all of us. Our goal is to dedicate the Veterans' Tribute Garden on November 11, 2022, Veterans' Day. The VTG will not be one paid for by your tax money. It will be privately funded, and will rely on your generous financial support to become a reality.

We have much work to do as we continue to upgrade and improve all things in the Village. As has happened with an issue or two in the past, I know that not everyone will always agree with all that we attempt, and we may face some vocal opposition. But as President Barack Obama once said, "The cynics may be the loudest voices – but I promise you they will accomplish the least". Let me tell you of some of the work in store for us in 2022.

We have finally committed to making the needed upgrades to Englewood Drive. These upgrades include new water lines, sidewalks, curbs, and a safer and wider new street. Flooding control measures - a new storm sewer, an underground catch basin and green infrastructure bioswells – are also part of the project. We are very appreciative of the City of Stow's participation in the project by allowing us to direct half of the sewer drainage into its basin at Wetmore Park. Without Stow's permission to use Wetmore, the project may not have been able to take place. We are also encouraged by the fact that Stow's administration and City Council are considering other ways that may further increase its

participation in the project. I'm happy to say that work on Englewood began last week.

We will be installing new water lines on Outlook Drive, and will repair part of the sanitary sewer on Silver Lake Boulevard. We will purchase new and needed equipment for the service department, including a front-end loader and a brush edger. We will also purchase a new police cruiser.

The subject of constructing a sidewalk on the south side of Kent Road from Thomas Drive to Church Street will also be up for discussion. This sidewalk is necessary because residents living in the Colony allotments have no safe way to cross Kent Road if they want to walk to the school, the lake, or other areas of the Village north of Kent Road. Even a walk to Village Hall or to our recreation area is real challenge. We need also to begin serious discussion on possible ways to reduce or eliminate troublesome flooding on Chautauqua Drive.

Let me conclude by telling you that the Village is in good shape, both financially and physically. We are so because of the excellent employees we have, the support of an informed and hard-working Village Council, and the support of you, our residents. I am thankful every day that I have the honor to work with these people. Now in my 17th year as mayor, my love for this Village, and my desire to continue to move it forward, remains as high as it was in year 1. Your support is the reason we can do the things we do, the reason why we can provide the services we provide, and the reason Silver Lake is, and always will be, a most desirable place in which to live and raise a family. As I've said many times before, I love being mayor of Silver Lake. I am both proud and humbled to have received that honor. I am a lucky man, and have received many blessing in my life. I have a loving and supportive wife, one who has stood by my side for 42 years, one who is constantly challenging me to

be the best man I can be. I have wonderful and responsible children, and beautiful, yet rambunctious, grandchildren. I have a faith in God. And I have friends. John F Kennedy once said, " We must find the time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives". In addition to my family, you, residents of Silver Lake, have made that difference.

Thank you.