

Mayor Gavin Buckley
State of the City
April 9, 2018
FY19

Good evening.

On this 121st day of my term as Mayor, I am pleased to be able to report on the State of Our City.

Together, with our four new and our four returning city council members, we have accomplished a great deal in four months.

But I would like to make it very clear, much of what I am about to say in this speech was achieved not because of us, as we were sworn into office just four months ago, but because our city's department leaders and re-elected council members, who have been working hard for years to meet goals, establish new goals, and keep improving the delivery of excellent services to the citizens of Annapolis.

First and foremost, I want my Administration to bring a new sense of **COMPASSION** to our city.

It has been important for our Administration to set the tone with a theme of One Annapolis. The long-time tale of two cities within Annapolis ends with me.

We need to move forward as a city, to make progress together, to end the us vs. them mentality. We all live in this city together.

I would like to take a moment to introduce someone very special in our community. She was supposed to be here tonight, but we just heard that she isn't feeling well, but her niece, Denise, is with us. I would like to tell the story about Ms. Margaret Allen of Eastport and how her story is the epitome of our One Annapolis theme:

Ms. Allen has lived in Eastport for all of her 87 years in a home that her father built.

She loves her home.

She also loves her church, where she worships alongside people like Alderwoman Sheila Finlayson.

Alderwoman Finlayson heard that Ms. Allen had a problem in her home – she didn't have any heat or hot water for more than two years. And unfortunately, we were having a brutally cold winter.

After a call to Annapolis Fire Chief David Stokes and the Office of Emergency Management Director Kevin Simmons, the City sprang into action to help Ms. Allen.

Chief Stokes and Deputy Chief Simmons made a well visit to Ms. Allen.

They assessed her residence, installed ADA compliant smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and started spreading the word about her need for a heating system.

Susan O'Brien, from my office, called her plumber, Mike Faro.

Mr. Faro fixed her hot water in minutes at no charge, but found that the boiler was the bigger issue.

Vic Pascoe, leader of the Eastport Civic Association, heard about this situation and set up a Go Fund Me account. Within days, Vic helped raise more than \$6,000 from our community to bring heat back to Ms. Allen's home.

The effort was nothing short of a Christmas miracle.

I would like to introduce Ms. Allen's niece - Denise Johnson, Mike Faro, Vic Pascoe, and Susan O'Brien, as well as Chief Stokes, Deputy Chief Simmons, and Mary Kate Hudson of the City's Emergency Management Office.

Let's have a round of applause for them.

Thank you to everyone for an amazing team effort. This is what I am talking about when I say we live in a compassionate city.

Our fire department and emergency management team weren't the only city employees going above and beyond the call of duty during this never-ending winter.

I'd like to share the story of Ms. Mary Ann Holmes.

Ms. Holmes called the City in January with a major water issue. Within 60 minutes of her call, Department of Public Works employee, Joseph Hanna, was at her door and took the time to listen, acknowledge, and offer solutions for Ms. Holmes' problem.

Within one day, Joe and his team solved the problem. A member of this team, Mr. Asbury Parker, helped identify the solution. BUT WAIT, there's more...

Ms. Holmes also told us that a few days later, on a Sunday night, a neighbor had a similar problem.

Her neighbor was dismayed and doubted that anything would happen and thought that it would take weeks for the city to respond.

Within a few hours, the same team was on the scene and fixed her problem too.

Ms. Holmes, Mr. Parker, and Mr. Hanna, would you please stand and show everyone what I mean when I say that Annapolis is a city full of compassion!

And by the way Asbury – I have heard that these stories are just two of many accolades you have received over the years for your outstanding work.

This city is very grateful for exceptional employees like you!

And while we're talking about water and ice, I must share this amazing story of brotherhood in our City and County fire departments.

Two years ago, Annapolis Fire Lieutenant Josh Snyder was diagnosed with Leukemia and started his battle against cancer.

A bone marrow transplant in October led to complications for Josh and he has been off work for 8 months.

But he has only used about 24 hours of leave because his fellow firefighters have helped cover his shifts.

Last weekend, firefighters from both the Annapolis and Anne Arundel County played in a benefit ice hockey game – a game which we won! – and helped raise more than \$6,000 for Josh and his family.

Josh – I know how beloved you are by your fellow firefighters, but I would like to thank you, personally, for your service to the City of Annapolis and we all wish you Godspeed in your recovery. We need you back protecting our city as soon as you can!

I'd also like to thank Chris Dew, president of our local professional firefighters' union, for the outstanding work pulling together this fantastic hockey game. And good job beating the DC Fire Department.

Amazing things are happening all around Annapolis.

Our Recreation and Parks Department's Pip Moyer Rec Center has seen an increase in revenue during the first few months of 2018, but also – more importantly – our Youth Basketball League had its biggest in-house league yet – with more than 500 kids, ages 5-14, participating this winter in more than 160 games.

And even greater news – starting this month, our Youth Baseball League – four leagues of 23 teams – are playing for FREE – Because of the outstanding work by our Rec and Parks employees, coaches and volunteers who secured sponsorship from our local businesses not one parent has to pay out of pocket!

This also keeps our kids active, healthy and engaged in their community!

And more Pip Moyer Rec Center news – I would like to thank Recreation and Parks Director Archie Trader and his staff for their outstanding work with Emergency Management Director Kevin Simmons, Department of Transportation Director Rick Gordon, and Brian Cahalan from my office, please stand, for helping the Lighthouse Shelter during its time of crisis when they had an emergency evacuation.

Your team made it possible for these 50 citizens to safely evacuate in the early morning hours of March 3 – 1:30 a.m. to be exact – to the Stanton Center and then to eventually move to the Pip Moyer Rec Center while the Light House Shelter repaired its problems and re-opened just a few days later.

And speaking of the Stanton Center, as we know and I have already said, this winter has been brutal.

For the past five years, the Stanton Center Winter Relief program has helped provide shelter during the winter season for our fellow residents who are homeless.

Even though the Stanton Center is the “shelter of last resort,” we activated the shelter more than 60 times and have helped nearly 900 patrons,

Kevin Simmons, Office of Emergency Management, and Larry Griffin and the Stanton Center staff, We Care and Friends – thank you for your outstanding work with our city’s shelter program.

When the weather Gods finally shine some sun and warmth on our city, you may notice that our City Dock re-decking is nearly complete!

This project received 60 percent of its funding from the state’s Waterway Improvement Fund.

With warmer weather around the corner, we will unveil a plan, created in partnership with Maryland Department of Natural Resources design engineers, to install an accessible floating dock at Tucker Street on Weems Creek.

This project will help connect our natural resources to people with disabilities.

Also, I am happy to report that our Harbormaster’s revenue is up more than 11 percent – or more than \$100,000, and I expect with continued improvements to docking space and the excellent work of Harbormaster Beth Bellis and her team, we will continue to see revenue increase.

In related water news, the City’s Department of Public Works’ new water treatment plant is fully operational and the old plant has been decommissioned. The water main on Chesapeake Avenue has been replaced; and the sewer main on Shiley Street has been replaced.

Perhaps the most exciting water news is related to our escalating nuisance flooding situation at City Dock.

Thanks in part to the continued support of Governor Hogan and his inclusion of \$750,000 in his budget for our flood mitigation project, as well as the continued support of House Speaker Mike Busch and our Anne Arundel County Delegation, we have secured an additional \$1.25 million, for a total of \$2 million from the State for this important project.

This is in addition to \$3 million in federal funds requested through the Office of Emergency Management. Without this funding, we would not be able to begin the first phase of the project in November.

DPW crews have also been busy with other projects. The sidewalks and curbs on Cornhill Street have been replaced; A back-up generator for City Hall was installed; Our solar energy park at the closed city landfill will be complete early this summer; The construction of Bywater Park is complete; and

Approximately three miles of city streets were repaved.

Transportation is incredibly important to this Administration.

Rolling along those three miles of newly paved streets, as well as numerous other city streets, are City Transit buses with newly installed electronic fare boxes. Our transit fleet will also be adding three new small transit buses soon and we have applied for grant funding to add an additional three buses in FY 19.

Thank you to our Department of Transportation employees, led by Rick Gordon, for their continued outstanding service to help connect our communities and our families to each other and to their jobs.

And thank you for adding stops at Harbor Center and the Social Security Administration to better serve our community.

We cannot protect our physical environmental and our social environment without investing in our transit system.

Our staff in Planning and Zoning has also been hustling.

In the coming month, we will complete the Cultural Resource Hazard Mitigation Plan and introduce it to the City Council.

This is a one-of-a-kind plan in the Country and helps build a plan for resiliency for the City of Annapolis.

We will complete our work on the Forest Drive/Eastport Sector study and draft results and recommendations to address issues affecting the quality of life in these communities, including traffic, land use and environmental issues.

The Permit Office has been working with property owners to issue permits that are energizing redevelopment of several properties – including: the old PNC bank at the top of Main Street, the former MAIF building on Forest Drive, and the office building on Giddings Street in West Annapolis.

The former Butterworth Building, located on Washington and Clay Streets in the Annapolis Arts District, will be transformed by the Bowman Community Development Corporation, and will provide affordable housing for veterans, artists, and others, as well as offer renovated commercial space to help create entrepreneurship opportunities for the Clay Street neighborhood.

Thank you, Theresa Wellman, for your hard work on this project.

Planning and Zoning has also assisted the property owner of the Harbor Square mall with the Historic Preservation Commission's process for approving a mural on Dock Street.

This project will jumpstart the repurposing of that retail space into an arts cooperative called The Cannery.

The Cannery will not only be a place that showcases local artists, but also serves as an incubator for our thriving arts, tech and start-up community.

The building's use will be maximized for the benefit of the entire city, creating jobs and teaching young entrepreneurs about social enterprise.

And since it's a City Council meeting, I cannot break years of tradition and not talk about The Market House.

To our City Council members and also our Planning and Zoning Director, Pete Gutwald, and his team – because of you and your hard work – this spring, we will finally unveil a new, re-imagined Market House, that will once again be the heart of our historic city.

From one hot topic development project to another – the Eastport Landing project – I would like to thank the property owners, the leaders of the Eastport Civic Association, and the City for working together to successfully complete an unprecedented, three-day mediation. You worked through the issues that were important to residents, and helped resolve those issues and comply with zoning laws.

The Office of Law has also been working diligently with our Human Resources Department and our police and fire unions to negotiate in good faith, a multi-year contract that *hopefully* will allow our outstanding public safety employees to continue providing excellent service to our residents while also creating predictable budget projections. These negotiations will help ensure that public safety will never be compromised.

Our Administration also will focus on **CONNECTING** our **COMMUNITIES**. We are not just focused on the downtown/City Dock area. Our city is amazing because of our neighborhoods – like Parole, Bloomsbury Square, President's Hill, Homewood, Admiral Heights, Newtown, Fairwinds, Hunt Meadow, and others.

We are creating bike paths to connect our communities and to move people throughout the city more efficiently and safely.

We are holding meetings in our communities to learn first-hand what each community's priorities are and to show them our city is here to help them achieve their goals.

An amazing example of our communities pulling together residents, city officials, elected leaders, and others is Eastport Working Together.

The program started after a tragic shooting in Eastport in September.

The Annapolis Police Department and Bishop Craig Coates have done an excellent job of bringing community stakeholders together for in-depth conversations about the future.

A sewing club was started with many people donating sewing machines – More people than expected are participating. A group of young kids have started both a line of clothing and a mentorship program.

A nursing program is being started, in partnership with HACA and the City, with the goal of enrolling residents in the nursing programs at Anne Arundel Community College.

Eastport Working Together has been an incredible and rewarding experience and will be a model for other communities in our city.

I would like to commend Police Chief Baker, Sgt. Amy Miguez, Patti Norris, and Lieutenant Kevin Krauss for their outstanding work with great community leaders and engaged Annapolis residents, and of course, HACA Executive Director Beverly Wilbourn.

During my campaign, I challenged this city to work on building the trust of its communities. To this end, we have started a number of initiatives to do just that.

The City has begun a Citizen Police Academy and legislation is moving thru the process to create the first ever Police Advisory Board.

The Citizen Police Academy gives Annapolitans a chance to experience some of the training police officers receive, and the Police Advisory Board will be a venue for residents to give guidance to the Chief on important issues and be another conduit of communication back to the community.

I also encourage graduating high school students from the City of Annapolis to apply for the second annual APD Scholarships. Three \$1,000 scholarships were awarded last year.

All of this hard work by the men and women of the Annapolis Police Department has resulted in significant decreases in crime.

Overall crime in the City of Annapolis is down 33 percent in 2018 compared to 2017, when you compare the first three months of each year. Violent crime is down 24 percent and property crime is down 35 percent. Of significant note, burglaries are down 51 percent and theft from autos also is down 57 percent.

Sadly, the potential for gun violence still plagues not only our city, but our entire nation. But I believe that better community focused policing, as well as community engagement, may finally be turning the tide on gun violence.

Two weeks ago, our city had one of its largest crowds ever to gather at the State House for the March for Our Lives Annapolis event. The event was created, organized, and brilliantly planned by a team of teenagers, led by Mackenzie Boughey and including Maddi Meyer, Kelsey Giorgio and Maya Roglaski.

These young leaders are here tonight in Council Chambers for a presentation following this speech. But I would like to ask these young women to stand up now and be recognized for your outstanding work and for restoring our faith in our society.

I hope this is just the beginning of these girls' public service and I hope to see you running for office - Because I know with more women in public office, we will reduce gun violence.

Your efforts and the efforts of young people across this nation are inspiring to us all. Please never stop marching, walking out, or protesting – until change finally happens. I have complete faith you will succeed.

I am in awe of your courage and commitment to making our schools and communities stronger and safer for everyone. Thank you.

One of the best ways we can reduce violence and crime is by helping ALL members of our communities find a good job.

While I am pleased to announce that the City's unemployment rate is now only 3 percent – a significant drop from the past few years – we still need to do better to help those who need a good, stable job.

I would like to thank our Economic Development Director Hollis Minor and her colleague, Hope Stewart, who have been partnering with multiple organizations, as well as our county and state resources, to offer assistance to those looking for employment, as well as businesses looking for employees.

In the past four months, Hollis and Hope, along with support from multiple City departments, have helped 53 new, brick-and-mortar businesses open their doors – This is a sign of a stronger economy, but also a lot of hard work by our city staff.

We will continue to promote our economic centers of not only downtown, but also West Annapolis, Parole, SOFO and others.

Another top priority of my Administration is **COORDINATION** – not only between our city departments, but coordination between the city, county, state and federal partners.

We must do a better job of identifying and applying for millions of dollars in grant programs. I am pulling together a grant writing ninja team to find, apply, and hopefully be awarded critically needed grant funding.

Another example is our multi-jurisdictional partnership to stop the opioid and heroin epidemic plaguing our communities, here in the city, across Maryland and our country.

We must look at the opioid addiction issue not as a moral failing, but as a disease.

Under former Mayor Pantelides' leadership, the City began an intense partnership with our county and state leaders to implement an emergency response to the epidemic. We will continue to serve on task forces and come together to find creative solutions to this problem.

One excellent example of this multi-jurisdictional cooperation is the Bed Finder Project. I am incredibly proud of the work that our Office of Emergency Management is doing on this national award-winning program.

Deputy Chief Simmons, along with OEM's Mary Kate Hudson, and our phenomenal GIS guru, Shawn Wampler, and with support from Barb Smith and her IT team, created this program to bridge the gap in treatment time for individuals seeking assistance at Safe Stations.

They partnered with Anne Arundel County and treatment providers to make this happen – and –

In fact, this team will be recognized this summer in San Diego at a tech conference for their unprecedented efforts using GIS technology. By the way, they beat out about 100,000 other projects worldwide for this award.

Let's give Kevin, MK and Shawn a big round of applause.

Another example of multi-jurisdictional partnership was the effort to rid Weems Creek of derelict boats and to solve some major safety issues happening in the creek. I am pleased to report, that because of the leadership of County Councilman Chris Trumbauer, working together with County Executive Steve Schuh, and state partners, we changed the jurisdiction of the waters of Weems Creek to the City's Harbormaster Office.

Because of this, our Harbormaster, Beth Bellis, was able to remove 13 derelict boats from the creek and make major public safety improvements. We will continue to support her efforts to make the waters of the city safer and more enjoyable.

In fact, working with Harbormaster Bellis, and our local environmental organizations, we will make our waterways swimmable and fishable again.

As I mentioned earlier, many of these success stories are not because I am the new mayor, but because of years of dedication of city employees and community leaders.

I am committed to supporting these employees in their everyday efforts to improve service to our taxpayers.

We are also working to restore CONFIDENCE in our Housing Authority of the City of Annapolis. HACA is no longer on the troubled list of HUD programs. This is due to the leadership of Beverly Wilbourn, her team at HACA – its board and employees - and their dedication to the families we serve in public housing.

HACA is on track to be financially balanced and headed in a new direction under new board leadership. At our next City Council meeting, we will hopefully confirm two outstanding nominees to the HACA Board.

Together with Beverly's leadership, we will begin the redevelopment very soon of Newtown 20 and other communities that desperately need reinvestment.

One of the most important things we need to address tonight is the introduction of the Fiscal Year 2019 budget.

The FY 19 operating budget is one that restores fiscal discipline to the city. A budget that doesn't rely on BORROWED money – a budget that is responsible and demonstrates good governance.

It addresses many of the weaknesses noted by the bond rating agencies in their most recent evaluations of the city's finances.

Here's the bottom line – We need to get our house in order. This is not an easy or politically expedient decision to make, but kicking the can further down the road will not work anymore.

Specifically, this budget: Eliminates the structural deficit; Fully funds our required public safety pension contributions for the first time in TEN years; and funds the 12 firefighters brought onboard through the SAFER grant and includes money to upgrade fire apparatus. It also increases funding to reduce our \$50 million liability for retiree health insurance; and

Appropriately uses pay-go funding, NOT BORROWED MONEY, for vehicle replacements, road maintenance and sidewalk repairs; Just to name a few.

Do you realize that for years, we have been borrowing \$2 million a year to maintain our streets, adding to our debt, plus paying interest fees.

Pay-Go funding for projects will reduce the City's debt burden and save interest costs over many years to come for city taxpayers.

While I would like to avoid raising the tax rate – especially four months into my term – it would be fiscally irresponsible for us to keep ignoring our structural deficit, our unfunded liabilities, and our infrastructure needs.

The time has come to deal with our fiscal reality that we have been handed, and this budget does just that.

In the past, there was a lack of political will to make the hard decisions.

If we fail to make these decisions, we will have to ask ourselves questions like: Which fire stations go unstaffed? Which communities suffer from increased response times from law enforcement and first responders? Or which streets continue to deteriorate?

All you have to do is drive a few blocks in this city and you will know that our roads and sidewalks need some love.

Drive by the Fire House on Taylor Avenue and you'll see a huge patch on the roof that has been leaking for a decade.

Not too long ago, the City needed a line of credit to make payroll and most purchases by the City were made on a cash-on-delivery system.

This will be our future again if we do not act now.

I would like to thank Bruce Miller and our Finance Team, who have worked hard to get us back on the right track.

Tonight's budget will include an increase in the property tax rate to achieve these budgetary goals.

The City can increase revenues only by expanding the tax base, raising the property tax rate, or increasing fees.

Unlike the County and State, the City has limited revenue streams.

This is the first time the City has raised its property tax rate since 2014, but every year, our expenses have gone up.

For about a \$1.50 a day per household, this tax rate increase will help put our City in a sound financial position.

Budget deficits cannot be solved with just one solution.

Over the coming months, we will also be digging deep to identify ways to expand our tax base and identify where we can cut costs.

I know that getting our fiscal house in order also means taking a hard look at what we do and how we do it.

This is the primary reason I have nominated Teresa Sutherland to be our new city manager.

It's widely accepted that no one can scrub a budget better than Teresa.

But more importantly, after 20 years of service as the County Council's chief policy advisor, Ms. Sutherland brings an expertise that will allow us to evaluate what we should and should not be doing, how we can do business more effectively and efficiently, and how, within the structure of city government, we can move forward with a collective vision for the City of Annapolis.

I know that the City Council members appreciate Teresa's expertise and I have no doubt, under her guidance, we will improve fiscal responsibility.

Thank you, Teresa, for joining us tonight and I have faith that the City Council will enthusiastically support your nomination during this evening's Council Meeting.

I would like to thank everyone for indulging such a long speech this evening.

Not only do we have a lot of success stories to share, but also many challenges ahead for our City. I urge people who are here tonight, watching on television, online, or who will read about the State of our City in tomorrow's paper or on social media –

if you care enough to listen to me speak for entirely too long – I urge you, if government and public policy is of any interest to you – please consider applying for many open positions on our City’s boards and commissions.

These 24 Boards and Commissions play a vital and CRITICAL role in shaping our city government.

We need your voice, expertise, and shared love for our town.

We especially need women and people from diverse communities to apply, because our city will be stronger if it truly reflects the diversity of our population.

We have a lot of exciting things happening in the coming weeks – the Yacht Club will move into its new “old” home at the Spa Creek bridge – creating an opportunity to re-imagine City Dock.

Imagine instead of a 150-car tarmac parking lot that rolls storm water right into Spa Creek – Imagine a centerpiece park, maybe a few blades of grass for picnics, maybe a spray park for kids to enjoy in the summer or an ice rink in the winter - creating a community gathering spot for everyone in this city.

Imagine in the empty space of the old Phillips Building, we have a beautiful boutique hotel, in scale and in keeping with our historic architecture.

The old Fawcetts building will soon be bustling and hopefully, any day now, we will hear about the new tenants and another exciting waterfront dining attraction.

The summer concert series will begin, we will name a Poet Laureate for the City, and soon, will announce an amazing lineup for the Annapolis Rising festival that celebrates our City’s amazing music history.

And finally, I would like to commend all of the city departments – Fire, Police, Emergency Management, Public Works, and Recreation and Parks, as well as our partners at the Naval Academy – who came together to help pull off an incredibly busy winter season during our first four months –

Your efforts to get the word out about events and traffic through our Prepare Me Annapolis app and social media helped keeping everyone informed!

Our first ever Inauguration parade and celebration, followed by the Military Bowl, the Martin Luther King parade, the NHL Hockey Game, the largest St. Patrick’s Day parade ever, the tremendously successful Annapolis Film Festival, the March for Our Lives, and others...

Thousands of people descended on our city for these events, selling out hotel rooms, and filling our restaurants, pubs, and locally owned businesses resulting in millions of dollars of economic activity.

And we heard very little complaints about traffic or noise – in fact, we have received tons of positive feedback about these events and how they not only bring together communities, but showcase our city.

I greatly appreciate the patience and support of these neighborhoods that hosted these events.

And finally, I promise, my last thought – our nation is in turmoil on a national level.

A few months ago, I was in D.C. for the U.S. Mayors Conference.

I realized after meeting mayors from across the country –Republican, Democratic, Independent – whatever – that when it comes to the most local level of government – nobody cares about the letter behind your name on the ballot, the bottom line is the trash needs to be collected and streets need to be plowed.

Mayors have the unique opportunity to roll up our sleeves and work together to solve problems here at home - where people care about each other.

Mayors and city councils can be the change agents.

Thank you for listening and I look forward to working together to help Annapolis – Maryland’s CAPITAL City – to be the BEST city in Maryland to call home.