

STATE OF THE CITY AND GOALS FOR 2022

CITY OF STAFFORD TX

26TH OF JANUARY 2022

BY MAYOR CECIL WILLIS

Welcome, on behalf of myself and city council. Thank you to everyone in attendance and to all those watching our annual town meeting.

This event not only allows you to make suggestions but to also ask questions on items listed on the agenda. By the multitude of items listed, we hope all topics are covered.

To start off, I would like to recognize all the elected officials who have served this city along with our current council and say thank you.

These individuals have served the city well and have set and maintained the foundation that we have today. I also want to thank and recognize every city employee for the job they do on our behalf.

Here today, we have our department leaders, legal counsel, city engineer, and Stafford Centre manager to address your questions.

“How time flies when you’re having fun,” and “what a difference a year makes,” are two sayings that hold a lot of truth. A year ago today, I was privileged to give my first State of the City message as your Mayor. This was a unique time not only for myself but for our staff and community. After 50 years, there was a new face giving the message and leading the city.

I want to say how honored I am to be your Mayor. The wellbeing of the citizens and this City is my top priority and always will be.

With the change in leadership, there may come some anxiety. Looking back, it was my first month in office as your mayor when I delivered my first State of the City address. City staff was settling in and adjusting to new positions and procedures. As stated, anytime there is a change at the top, a period of adjustment and settling in has to take place. I am pleased and proud to say the outstanding employees we

have at the City of Stafford adjusted rapidly to the new administration. When I first addressed the department heads, I stated, “we all are going to have a number of opportunities to improve in the future,” and they met the task. I am pleased with the steps we have taken to move forward in the right direction for the right reasons. I will give examples later.

I also want to state unequivocally that the **“City of Stafford is alive and well.”** This comes as no surprise to myself and the overwhelming number of Staffordians. This pronouncement is made thanks to the efforts put forth by the Stafford City Council, Stafford City Staff, Stafford residents and the Stafford Business Community. These groups believe deeply in Stafford and have always stood **“Stafford Strong”**, done it the Stafford way and **We Are One!** We believe in doing things that benefit Stafford which sometimes means thinking outside the box.

First, I feel it's important to dispel some of the misinformation that is out there. There are comments that the city would need to restore property taxes and have to change the philosophies we have in Stafford. This is not true! For the 28th consecutive year we are operating without a city property tax. Simply put, we should continue with what is working and build on it and we are doing just that in a number of areas.

There is an old quote "if you think you have a good story, don't ever let facts get in the way." So, let us examine some basic facts about Stafford today:

Finances

Starting off, let's dive into the finances of the City of Stafford. This years budget process was started earlier with new objectives. This process was based on sound accounting principles grounded in making sure we were able to meet, not reduce current services nor

the daily needs of the city. The City's net position as of fiscal year end is \$66.7 million, which is \$4.7 million higher than last fiscal year.

To note, the initial approved budget for fiscal year 2021, had the projected ending fund balance of \$154,408. During the year, leaders made necessary adjustments, and the final approved budget had projected an ending fund balance of \$5,106,156. However, the year ended even better with the audited fund balance of \$4,289,598 which does not include the fiscal recovery grant of \$2,151,030. I am looking forward to more opportunities and increasing fund balances.

Our primary source of revenue in the City of Stafford is sales tax. For the past 28 months, through a pandemic and winter freeze we have exceeded the prior year period except for one month. That 1 month can be attributed to the Feb 2021 freeze.

Once you have funds, you must manage and allocate appropriately.

The overall increase in sales tax receipts for the most recent 12 months for Stafford was 17.35% (\$3,424,039) when compared to the

same 12 months period the previous year. Overall, Stafford has seen impressive growth in sales taxes since 2010, from \$12,876,354 to the most recent 12 month period in 2021 of \$23,152,834. With this being said, I'm pleased to announce that the City of Stafford ranked 56 in sales tax revenues in the state of Texas this month. Prior months since I took office we ranked between 64- 67 in the entire state of Texas.

In addition, the total revenues for the year increased by \$2 million which represents an increase in sales tax of \$2.4 million and a decrease in other areas. The total expenses for the year decreased by \$2.7 million as a result of responsible actions taken by leaders. Also, of note the City's pension liability is 95.34% funded.

I would also like to share that the city's financial audit was completed earlier than prior years. In addition, the City's external audit firm, Whitley Penn, has awarded us a clean and 'Unmodified' audit opinion, which is the highest rating that can be given. This means that the external auditors were satisfied with the City's financial position, and

all statements met the requirements set forth by regulations and standards demanded by the Government Accounting Standards Board.

Additionally, we have earned an A+ stable long-term debt rating from S&P Global, and this consequently allowed us to issue CO bonds at a lower rate and attain more investor confidence due to the City's general creditworthiness.

Personnel

Our City Team continues to grow. Currently we have 151 full time positions, 61 part time positions bringing our total to 212 positions.

Infrastructure & Development

Pertaining to what the city is doing and what private investment is doing.

Infrastructure

We are happy to announce that the multimillion dollar Cash Rd extension project was completed in January 2022. This was a project between the City of Stafford, Stafford SEDC and Fort Bend County mobility bonds. This project greatly improves East/West traffic flow. Second project is Trinity Drive. which is to be completed early 2022. Trinity drive was also a project of the city, Stafford SEDC and Fort Bend Mobility Bonds. This extension provides a southern mobility into and through the Grid development.

The Annual Street maintenance program will be initiated in the first quarter. This includes sidewalks, street surface and Inlet improvements.

Other items to look forward to are, Tree trimming, clearing trees limbs hanging over our street right-of-way. We will also start replacing vegetation that was affected by the February 2021 freeze.

The TXDOT Median project on Murphy Road has taken off and started on January 3rd, 2022. This project will be done in multiple phases and

will extend between US 59 and Highway 6 and has been in planning by TX Dot since 2013.

Drainage system improvements

- **TXI Ditch Improvements including detention pond (Stafford, Fort Bend and Missouri City taking the lead)**
- **Cangelosi Ditch (Working with Fort Bend County and Missouri City on potential improvements)**
- **Stafford Run (City and Fort Bend County reviewing options)**
- **We are also consulting with Fort Bend County drainage department to improve flow and capacity on all our major drainage channels.**

City Assets

- **Swimming Pool filters and sewage line is being replaced.**
- **Civic Center Infrastructure carpet, painting and refreshing is planned.**

Developments

The Fountain shopping center is under new ownership with new additions planned.

The Cash Rd Expansion has led to the following developments

- **Kirkwood Industrial**
- **USA Gloves. When production starts, they will be largest supplier of nitrile gloves in the United States. They will sell both wholesale and retail.**

Continued development at the Grid

- **Costco Business**
- **Kelsey Seybold Clinic**
- **7/11**
- **Amegy Bank**
- **Variety of restaurants**

Redevelopment along Primary Corridor

- **Weatherford Farm (Murphy and Greenbriar)**
- **Main St. Plaza (90A and Brand Ln)**
- **Avenue E on Main**

Residential Reports

- **The GRID**
 - **Phase II of JLB Apartments completed, Phase III Permitted**
- **Fountain Park Village**
 - **68 Single Family Homes @ the corner of Dairy Ashford and Fountain Lake Dr.**

SMSD

SMSD which is a component entity of the city is the crown jewel of Stafford. This community has always known the importance of a quality education. I won't relive its history but have observed that we may finally be on the verge of achieving all our aspirations and dreams of having a premiere District. The facilities, programs and

commitment from top to bottom seem to be in place; including the Stem Academy and the Dual Credit Program with HCC.

Department Reports

As I mentioned before, I am pleased with our departments and all the amazing work they are doing for the City of Stafford.

Our Police Department led by Chief Richard Ramirez managed to maintain the City Crime rate without significant increase through the struggles of COVID. The department was able to close out a cold case murder investigation that resulted in an arrest and grand jury indictment. This case was presented on Cold Justice on the Oxygen Network to a national audience.

Our Fire Department headed by Chief Larry Di Camillo responded to 4, 023 calls for service in the community, an average of over 11- incidents per day. Ranging from fires to medical calls, to motor vehicle accidents, rescues and other incident types. The Fire Department

achieved an average response time of 6:01 minutes from dispatch to time of arrival. Of these incidents, the breakdown was 2,242 medical incidents and 1,781 fire related incidents. Of all the responses by the department, 32% were simultaneous, meaning more than 1- incident ongoing at a time. Further, the department provided outside assistance to other agencies a total of 165 times while receiving assistance 40 times.

The City Secretary Office, headed by Ms. Nici Browe serving in an interim capacity, is appointed by the Mayor with confirmation by Council. The City Secretary and staff provide administrative support to the Mayor, City Council and city staff. Prepares and posts all legal notices, agendas and meeting notices, documentation for and recordings of Official City Council minutes, ordinances, resolutions, and other related business as well as maintains official city records and over sees the records management retention program. The City Secretary serves as the Municipal Election Administrator and

coordinates municipal elections through the county. This past year has been a full and challenging year; however, this office has achieved many successes and has continued to provide excellent service to the Mayor, Council, Boards, Commissions and of course the Citizens of this city.

Under new leadership and with a renewed vision, the City's Finance department led by Ms. Alka Shah has seen a stellar turnaround at the tail end of the pandemic. We have revitalized the department's processes and strategies to closely align with our operational goals and streamlined many financial policies and procedures for the effective management of Stafford's finances. Without a doubt, the greatest achievement of the Finance department is the restoration of the General Fund balance to a level above what was present pre-pandemic. The Finance director developed the City's first ever Financial Management policy, which requires the unassigned fund balance to be equal to, or above, three months of normal recurring

operating costs based on the current year's budgeted expenditures.

We have proudly exceeded this requirement by over 6%. We are also very pleased to have a balanced budget for FY22, and this also includes a fund for contingencies totaling over \$750,000 embedded in the budget. The City of Stafford is on the right fiscal trajectory, and the accomplishments of the Finance department will support Council's operational endeavors.

Ms. Susan Ricks is our director in charge of the Stafford Centre, Civic Center and Recreation programs. The Stafford Civic Center has been a landmark in Stafford since 1986. The Civic Center has booked many events over the past 35 years and continues to book a multitude of diverse events now. It showcases three tiered levels with a stage and balcony. Theatre style, we can accommodate up to 900 guests.

Banquet style we can accommodate up to 300 with a dance floor. We have weddings, receptions, concerts, cultural programs, plays, body building competitions, comedians, graduations, business meetings,

conferences, tradeshows, parties, dance recitals, and host SMSD events.

The Stafford City Pool opened in 1984 making many Stafford residents happy to have a cool, refreshing, and fun activity for their family. It opens on Memorial Day weekend each year and closes on Labor Day weekend. We host Stafford Swim Team and SMSD Swim Team each year. Stafford Residents can purchase a pool tag for the entire season for only \$15 per person. You can also take swim lessons at the pool for a private party. So come make a splash and enjoy the cool water on one of our hot summer days.

It has been a challenging two years for Stafford Centre due to the pandemic. However, thanks in large part to the multi-purposefulness design of the Centre, we fared much better than most. While ticketed events and the venues that rely solely upon ticket sales closed their doors, Stafford Centre safely hosted numerous social, business and national dance competitions by strictly adhering to local and CDC

guidelines for the safe operation of public facilities. Many of these events not only generated revenue for the Centre, but brought new visitor spending to our City. Speaking of revenue generation, the City received great news from the Small Business Association when we were notified that our grant request in the amount of \$856,000 was approved and more than zeroed out our 2020-2021 Stafford Centre operating losses. I would like to mention that Congress is contemplating a second round of grant monies for public assembly venues. Rest assured, if there are monies available to the City of Stafford, we will take all necessary steps to acquire additional funding for the City. 2022 brings the promise of a diverse lineup of shows to the Centre including Chinese, Indian, Persian, and mainstream performances. I kindly ask that you logon to staffordcentre.com to find something that appeals to you, and support our mission to bring quality entertainment to our great City.

The City of Stafford Human Resources Department led by Ms. Shanell Garcia is centralized for all departments within the city and is responsible for a variety of core organizational functions which include employee relations, benefits, employee training & safety, recruiting & on-boarding, and performance management. Human Resources managed the revision of City Personnel Policy & Procedure Manual which was implemented in 2021. Many employees and their families were plagued with COVID-19 and while collaborating with other Departments, the city was able to stay on top of the everchanging trends to help keep our employees safe in the work place. Human Resources is striving to increase continuous and efficient communication through the “HR Corner” which was introduced in 2021, an email newsletter that has key reminders, updates and beneficial information that employees can access in one place.

In 2021 Human Resources hosted or helped coordinate a number of fun or educational employee events such as:

- **Vaccine Clinic**
- **TMRS/Social Security Seminar**
- **Ice Cream Social**
- **Employee Appreciation Lunch**
- **Veterans Day Recognition**
- **Family outings at Skeeters Games**

The Multimedia Department, led by Ms. Carolyn Entricht, accomplished the following: Collaborated with SMSD on the “We Are One” campaign, stepped up social media presence and activity on Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, YouTube, LinkedIn, twitter. Navigated through pandemic with 80 televised meetings this year (reg, special). Continued news production thru pandemic which now has HCC back to assist. Emergency Operations thru hurricane watches and freeze informing citizens. The department hired a new

Multimedia Communications specialist, Ms. Norma Salcedo, for social media, newsletters and web content. Special events in Stafford were highlighted on social media, web, TV, thru postings and video vignettes and news stories. The website redesign has also taken off.

The Multimedia Department has the following goals in mind.

- **Complete/Implement new website design**
- **City App**
- **City/business collaboration on website**
- **Increase meaningful content for citizens on TV/social media/web through strategy.**

The Development Services department headed by Miss Tatyana Lutenschlager has the following goals and objectives in mind.

Development Services which is comprised of Permits & Inspection and Planning & Zoning strives to provide the best customer service for both residents and businesses who seek to pull permits or develop in the city. The Planning and Zoning oversees current and long-range

planning through the review of construction plans, specific use permits and zoning amendments while permits and inspections issue construction permits and ensure compliance with all applicable building codes and city ordinances. They aim to make the development experience seamless from initial pre-application meeting all the way to final occupancy. They ensure that all construction happening in Stafford meets all the rules established by City Council to provide orderly growth, development, and redevelopment. In the year 2022 Development Services will aim to make the process 100% digital in hopes to better serve all customers. COVID has not stopped development in the City of Stafford. Major development and redevelopment has occurred in the past couple of years. Planning and Zoning department is currently working on updating the comprehensive plan.

The Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining the streets, drainage, parks, buildings, vehicles, landscaped and non-

landscaped right-of-way and properties owned by the City of Stafford and the Stafford Municipal School District. Public Works also comprises engineering which is responsible for managing Capital Improvement Projects, engineering plan review and platting.

2021 was full of challenges including the winter storm and the close call for several hurricanes. Public Works crews performed admirably to ensure the safety of citizens and city resources.

The Stafford Code Compliance Team headed by Mr. Scott McElrath is made up of Animal Control, Consumer Health, Residential Rental Inspections and Code & Zoning Enforcement. The year has been challenging but very rewarding at the same time for the Code Compliance Department. Stafford Animal Control finished strong in 2021 by partnering with Fort Bend Animal Control and the Houston Humane Society and not to mention the re-energizing of the Stafford Humane Committee to help support Stafford Pets. Fort Bend Animal Control will assist Stafford's Feral Cat Population by supporting

Stafford's TNR efforts with affordable spay and neuter service, along with other pet health events throughout the year. Houston Humane Society (HHS) supplied over 6000 lbs of pet food for Stafford's first Pet Pantry in December. HHS wishes to hold more Pet Pantries in 2022 and will be providing Pet Health events as well. The above-mentioned programs would not have been made possible if it weren't for the dedicated service and the ideas brought forth by Animal Control Officer Pete Ramirez. We will also be adding an additional humane officer very soon.

The Consumer Health Team has had an outstanding year working with area Restaurants, Grocery Stores, Commercial Food Warehouses and Day Cares to ensure that our business partners are following the State of Texas Food Establishment Rules. The Consumer Health Inspectors, Mrs. Marcia Fouts and Ms. Elena Abraham, take great pride in the service they provide to this community and they are to be commended for a job well done. Code Enforcement and Rental

Registration Officers have been working diligently with commercial and residential property owners to ensure that their properties are in compliance with the International Property Maintenance, Zoning and City Code of Ordinances.

The Street, Parks and Vehicle Maintenance Division is headed by Mr. Otis Brown. Their main goals are to give the best of service possible to the Stafford citizens, schools, city pool, Civic Center, Stafford Center, Police Department and Fire Department and help maintain the Courts and administration buildings in the city. They also help to maintain the Streets, Drainage, Traffic Signal, Street lights, and right-of-way. They received the honor of Public Works First Responders this past year in the State of Texas under the leadership of the Mayor and City Council. Their goal is to continue to give the best of service to Stafford Citizens.

The Information Technology Department, led by Mr. Ryan Young, is an internal service department. IT's responsibly is to provide the

technology tools that allows the other departments of the City of Stafford to function more efficiently. This technology provides access to outside resources, information collection, and ease of use applications that allows City staff to function in a modern world. The Information Technology Department has recently initiated a project to completely restructure the network architecture of the City of Stafford. This is part of an initiative to rebuild the City's technology infrastructure in a more efficient manner. One that follows industry standards, and best practices.

Judge Debra Sinclair presides over the Municipal Court and Ms. Nicole Nguyen, along with the deputy clerks, facilitate the daily operation of the court. The court reopened its doors for all in-person proceedings with Arraignment, Pretrial, Judge and Jury Trial dockets in June 2021. Due to the ongoing challenges regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the Stafford Municipal Court Department continues to require citizens to wear masks inside the courtroom and temperature checks are

scanned upon entrance to the court building. The Court Department has also installed plexiglass dividers to protect citizens and court staff during open court sessions. The Court Department has decreased docket size as an additional measure to provide safety. The Court Department will continue to maintain and implement these procedures and any additional procedure that will maximize the safety of the public and staff. The Court Department also continues to have access to use Zoom to accommodate out of town defendants and other citizens as it becomes necessary.

Besides our great full-time and part-time employees, we have contracted professionals to assist us. I would like to acknowledge them and thank them for their service.

Contracted Services

Mr. Art Pertile with the law firm Olson & Olson. This firm has served us for many years and in my opinion is a premier municipal law firm.

Mr. Bob Jones of Jones Engineering Solutions has guided us through mobility, drainage & other infrastructure issues for years.

Mr. John Pitts and his firm are our eyes and ears for the city as well as SMSD regarding legislature actions in Austin. It also may be noted that the city funds his firm to look after and protect SMSD in legislative matters.

Another person that is vital in our team is Mr. Lawrence Vaccaro. Mr. Vaccaro has served this city on many occasions. He is vital and integral in the operation of this city.

Ms. Patti Worfe our former economic development director is assisting us with promoting and attracting new business.

I personally feel we are fortunate to have assembled these individuals to protect the cities interest.

We also have the Stafford Economic Development Corporation under the presidency of Councilman Wen Guerra. This organization of 7 community members is appointed by city council and is a component

entity of the city. Their task is to help promote Economic Development in Stafford. Thru the years this group has taken their assignment very seriously and I want to express our appreciation to each member.

So now lets focus and put into perspective the facts I just stated. Stafford is truly alive and well and we are moving forward into our next opportunity. Our business model is still working as set in place by those that preceded us. This past year \$136, 000,000+ in commercial evaluation was added. \$1,800,000+ in public projects were added. Multiple residential areas are also being added. We are starting a redevelopment phase within the city which further increase our tax base in all areas. We need to understand we are a complete city not a bedroom community. The tax base created by the City of Stafford is the majority component of the taxable value for SMSD and WCID 2. The more successful we are, the broader tax base they will have. So

now let's look at the goals I have for 2022 to advance our city even more.

G O A L S F O R 2 0 2 2

GOAL NO. 1. Diversity

Stafford is a very diverse community. That is something we are all very proud of being. As a community we must continue to embrace and promote that diversity. Together as a community we can continue moving forward for the benefit of all.

GOAL NO. 2. Increase our fund balance

Continue to move forward with the steps that have been taken to increase our fund balance. Every family and every organization knows the value of a reserve fund. In government it is vital not only for our daily operation but it is critical for the rating agencies.

GOAL NO. 3. Mass Transit

Mass Transit is vital not only for the region but for our city. We have advocated and promoted commuter rail for a long time. I want to recognize and again thank Congressman Al Green for his strong advocacy along with us and others. It appears to me that we now must look to other options to promote Mass Transit other than just commuter rail.

GOAL NO. 4. Mayor's Community Council and Mayor's

Youth Council

Last year I advocated a Mayor's Community council and Mayor's Youth Council. Baby steps were taken. Hopefully, this year we will be able to implement both. These two groups will help inform and introduce government operation to our citizens and help train future leaders.

GOAL NO. 5. Quality Development

Quality development and redevelopment is vital to our future. We are presently reviewing our city comprehensive plan with city council, planning and zoning, the Stafford EDC and SMSD. All the stake holders and rule makers who will implement and benefit from the end results are sitting at the table. The public also has the opportunity to comment at each meeting.

GOAL NO. 6. City Operations

Many functions with the city have been modified and streamlined to provide for a smoother operation. We have a great staff who have suggested several steps that have improved our operation already. I believe we will have additional opportunities in the near future.

GOAL NO. 7. SMSD and HCC Collaboration

Continue the steps taken between city, SMSD and HCC that have served us well. This past year we reworked and approved our arrangement regarding SMETV. The city and SMSD worked on a video

“We are One” to show everyone we are united in elevating education for Stafford residents. We have often said “as SMSD goes so goes the city and vice versa.”

Before I wrap up, I want to recognize several staff members who assisted me and made this evening’s event possible. Ms. Alka Shah, Miss Tatyana Luttschlager, Ms. Susan Ricks, Ms. Norma Salcedo, Ms. Carolyn Entricht and the great team from HCC.

C O N C L U S I O N

Now, what lies ahead of us? I believe based on the facts we presently have, together we will continue to successfully move Stafford forward. In this day and age, the world is changing and evolving at a pace many of us have never seen in our lifetime. Today’s society is still trying to figure out who or what they want to be.

The pandemic has tried to totally change our lives and life styles. In many cases, it has succeeded, however, as history shows, the human spirit will always win out.

From my personal observation, we, as a City, have continued to move forward. We have all been affected by this pandemic. The business community continues to take positive action and make adjustments in order to preserve and help the community. Working together, we can and will continue to accomplish great things that will benefit all of us. There are great opportunities out there. As a united City we can seize those moments of opportunity and gain headway into new programs and ideas.

The sales tax data that was presented tonight showcases the success of the business community's efforts. We will continue to assist the efforts of our business community when and where we are able and protect the residential integrity at the same time.

This Mayor and this City Council understand our obligation to this City and the people who have elected us. We will continue to move forward to promote and try new programs and ideas based on solid principles and facts and not whims. We will not be deterred or distracted in pursuing what is best for Stafford and its citizens. The citizens of Stafford have entrusted each of us to do the job we were elected to do.

As mentioned earlier, “We Are One”! Now let us, TOGETHER, MOVE FORWARD INTO 2022.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cecil Willis Jr.", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned to the right of the printed name below it.

Cecil Willis Jr. Mayor