



January 12, 2017

Residents of Reile's Acres,

I'm a proponent of transparency and am going to take a moment to share our accomplishments of the past and challenges that face us in the coming year(s). It's not feasible to get our 300 plus, voting eligible members in one location at one time to accomplish this, so I'm going to do this via email in hopes I can reach a majority of our city.

The Past (2016)

The following is a short list of accomplishments, in no particular order of importance, that your elected body and you achieved, last year.

- My goal for transparency and accountability began when we created a closed Facebook Group for Reile's Acres residents. No-one from outside of our community is a member. The goal was to open dialogue between us and make our community feel smaller by acquainting others with similar concerns, thoughts, and ideas. If you are not a part of this group, please feel free to join by going to this link <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ReilesAcres/>.
- We voted in a new Mayor, 3 new Council members, and appointed a new Planning and Zoning commissioner.
- We added curb side, no sort recycling
- We added automatic withdrawal as an option for the city bill, if you want to take part in this, the form can be found on the city website.
- We renegotiated a sewer agreement with the city of Fargo that secured our Extra Territorial (ET) area for 20 years. By doing so, we will not be landlocked, now, the city of Fargo cannot expand 45th St. to a 5 lane road, and several of you saw your city bill decrease by \$5.00 per month. As a bonus, the city of Fargo also took over the maintenance of the gravel portion of 45th St.
- The city performed routine maintenance (chip sealed) the 6th and 8th addition roads.
- We built a permanent, lower maintenance skating rink and a warming house.
- We added benches and protective fencing to the old park, ball diamond.
- We started and almost completed Phase 1 of the 9th Addition Little League Ball diamond, the only items left to complete are final grade and seeding of the outfield along with running water and power to the irrigation system.
- We hired a new Tax assessor in an attempt to make our property taxes fair, across the board.

- We hired two part-time, seasonal employees.

- The city designed, held public meetings, redesigned, held more public meetings and ultimately passed a capital improvements project that will replace and/or repair every road in the city, in the end, we had only 8 letters of opposition to the necessity of this road project.

- We were awarded \$55k by the Garrison Diversion Conservancy for phase 2 of the 9th addition park project.

- Finally, we started and almost completed the 9th addition, which already has permits issued to 8 new homes, totaling \$3.6 million.

The Future (2017 & Beyond)

I was fortunate enough to receive a legislative brief by Governor Burgum dealing with our challenges in the upcoming Biennium (2017-2019). The Governor emphasized the unsustainable property tax relief the state is providing to municipalities. The current relief amounts to a shell game of funds, one of his top priorities is to untangle the financial knot our state and cities are facing in the coming years. Currently, the state is providing us with a 12% rebate on property taxes. I get the impression the sun may set on this rebate in the next 12-24 months, I may be wrong, but I'd rather error on the side of caution. For our homeowners, the absence of this rebate would increase our taxes on average of \$400/annually or \$33/monthly, per household. This isn't a small amount of money, especially since we are asking you to fund the upcoming road project with the first bill arriving in 2018.

I'm going to attempt to sell you a bit of comfort and make a plea, at the same time. We are in a unique situation. We are fairly certain the population of our city will be increasing by about 64% in the coming years because of the new addition. Using some simple and some complex math, we have ascertained that our expenditures, with a fully occupied 9th Addition, will increase by roughly 30% (@ \$69K), we also know that having all of those lots occupied will increase our revenues by 100% (@ \$230,000), given the assessed values of the current building permits and the number of new residents. I won't get into revenue sources a great deal but, in short, they are collected from two funding streams, property value (property taxes collected) and per capita payments (State Highway and Sales Taxes paid out per resident.) With all of that being explained, one of our highest priorities, besides taking care of your 200 feet, is to market and sell lots. Doing so will ensure we do not have to raise but can, ideally, lower the current mil levy to offset a potential increase due to an expiring tax rebate.

What's my point here? Marketing our City and this neighborhood is guiding 2017 and beyond for us. Word of mouth is the best marketing tool we have, please take every opportunity you can to talk highly of our city and encourage your friends and family to become one of our neighbors.

How are we going to do this?

We need to be every bit as attractive to families as our neighboring cities. We have an absolute gem of a city, but the price tag of these lots (which are actually a steal of a deal when you compare our product and price to our neighboring cities) make buyers anxious. It's our vision to create a park in the 9th addition that is unlike any we have. At the same time, we also want to modernize and make safer and more inviting, the parks we already own and utilize. On top of that, we want to use as little of your property tax dollars as possible to accomplish this. The city council is doing a bang-up job securing grants. We have been granted \$55k to date and will find out in late February if we are receiving an additional \$75k. You can view our conceptual renderings here <http://www.reilesacresnd.org/parks/>

and email me or any other council member ideas you have that we may not have considered.

Phase 2 of the 9th addition Park will begin this spring, here's what we have planned. Parts of this plan are dependent on future grants and donations.

- Plant roughly 70 - 100 trees around the new ball field, boulevard as well as the older parks that had over 30 dead trees removed this summer by our part-time staff.
- Install fence topper and pitching mound
- Build dugouts
- Build concession stands/bathroom/equipment storage facility using city leaders and volunteers. (all one building)
- Build a standalone/sensory playground area for all ages and abilities.
- Build a sledding hill using over 6,000 yards of overburden from the street project, this saves us money and adds a neat amenity to our parks and recreation opportunities.
- If time and money permit, build 1st phase of a 50 + space, parking lot. Possibly 30 parking spots, this year.

Maintaining our infrastructure will show potential buyers we take care of our assets. The street projects will begin this spring, it's believed we'll have an early May start. As of today, the schedule looks like Adams Drive, Bakers Lane and the 46th Street corridor will be first. It's hoped that the remaining roads will begin July 1st and finish no later than October 15th. All of this will create some logistical issues with parking, home access, garbage and mail services. We will be working closely with the engineer and contractors and will be posting advance notices of upcoming issues via email and the community Facebook Group. If you have a spouse who did not receive this email, we would encourage you to share their email address with us by simply emailing it to cityoffice@reilesacresnd.org

The More You Know...

I'm grateful for all who share their concerns regarding roads, grounds, and public issues. It's nice to have the Facebook Group to share these concerns and it alerts us of shortcomings and potential blind spots. Lately, the hot topic is snow removal, we have two very fine residents who I'm personally grateful for, who tackle our post storm, snow removal. Wally and Kevin do this for a song because they are passionate about their city and mindful of our budget. Both of these gentlemen also have careers that take them away from the city during normal work hours. Your city council, auditor and I take care of roundabout, cul-de-sac, and general blow in situations that occur while these gentlemen are unavailable, we also spray for mosquitos on Friday nights, build hockey rinks, warming houses, and accomplish general maintenance on winter equipment. I don't tell you this for accolades or to gripe but to inform you that we are trying very hard to make this city a better place without costing all of us a lot of extra tax dollars. All of the aforementioned could be accomplished by an outside entity and possibly in a timelier manner than we are able to. In 2014, the first month I became a councilman, I commissioned a survey to explore what you liked, loved, disliked, and hated about our city...bottom line, you like a lot of services and aren't too excited about paying for them, we get it, us too. We feel we are accomplishing the objectives laid out by you, both the city council and planning and zoning commission members have made several personal sacrifices to accomplish this, we ask that you bear with us when the roads aren't pristine immediately after you arrive home, when

the roundabout is slick and almost impassable, and when Friday night the mosquitoes are overbearing. We'll get to it, I promise.

FINALLY! On February 22nd 2017, we will have been in charge of our own destiny for 40 years, at 9:00 a.m. on this day, Cass County officially recognized us as an incorporated municipality. This is a big deal and I think we need to find a way to celebrate, throughout the year. If you have any ideas, please share them with us.

Thank you for all of the constructive guidance and kind words in 2016.

Respectfully,

Shane J. Amundson