State of the City Report
March 24, 2020
This report is presented pursuant to A.C.A. 14-58-302

Please note this report was compiled and written prior to the COVID-19 crisis and was to be presented to City Council on March 16, 2020 during the March City Council Meeting.

To the City Council, City Clerk, City Attorney, City Employees, and of course, our citizens, I offer my 2020 State of the City Report.

Let me first say, the State of the City is very, very good. We made several positive changes over the past year, including changes to some of our processes, and we have worked through several issues along the way. All-in-all, I think 2019 was a great year! Attached you will also find the 2019 Financial Statements for our General, Street, and Water/Wastewater Funds. These are presented in accordance with A.C.A. 14-59-116 and 14-237-113.

As I prepare this report, I am still inspired by the words of John F. Kennedy as it rings true then, now and forever.

"Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

While having served on the City Council for 15 years may have prepared me for being your Mayor, I knew it would be a challenge taking over after an administration that had been deeply rooted for 20 years. However, with the Grace of God, a very good staff, outstanding employees, and advice from many, I truly believe we are heading in the right direction, and the future of Ward is bright.

Internally, we made some subtle, yet important, changes that affected our staff and those that utilize our facility. First and foremost, we created a new Employee Manual based on the sample provided by the Arkansas Municipal League. This new manual sets the standards by which all employees must adhere to and was approved by the City Council after a couple months of discussion. Additionally, we relocated the Reception Office to the Water Office area. This allows for better customer service for those paying their water/wastewater bills and for those obtaining building and other permits. Furthermore, all computers running on software prior to Microsoft were upgraded or replaced, stopping support for WIN7 machines. This not only helps with productivity, as all our PCs are on the same operating system and support software, it also increases security for our network. We also upgraded our WIFI system in anticipation of the Police Department, Fire Department and others using laptop...
and/or tablets, which will allow for easier, more efficient data entry. Moreover, to better aid those with physically challenges, we modified one of our main entry doors with a system that will open and close the door automatically. It is important that our facility is easily accessible for anyone and everyone. Finally, we contracted with a company to stabilize the foundation under the Police Department side of the City Hall building. This long-overdue project will ensure that end of the facility is stabilized for many years to come.

Externally, we have made strides to improve not only our own facilities, vehicles, and equipment, but we have taken more aggressive steps to encourage others to improve their properties also. As you will see in the Code Enforcement data included, there was a significant increase in the amount of citations/warnings issued in 2019. We are working diligently on making Ward safe and inviting for its citizens and those visiting and/or traveling through the area. Are there still areas in need of improvement? Yes, we have plenty of areas in the city needing attention by not only the city, but by citizens also.

Over the next several pages, I’ve summarized each major department in the city and highlighted their accomplishments, and even some areas of concern. I’ve also included an update on our open and planned larger projects.

However, before we get started, lets discuss one very important project that is on-going this very day...the 2020 US Census. Starting last week, you should have received your 2020 Census card in the mail asking you to report your April 1st census via the internet, mail or over the phone. Every ten years, a Census of the population is performed. The data collected tells us who we are and where we are going as a nation. It helps our communities determine where to build everything from schools to supermarkets, and from homes to hospitals. It helps the government decide how to distribute funds and assistance to states and localities. Another purpose of the census is to divide the house seats by population. Locally, census numbers are used to allocate state turnback funds and will also require a complete redistricting of congressional, state and local representative areas. Voting wards all across the nation, including ours, will change. The City Council and I both agree on this.... BE COUNTED.

**Department Summaries**

- **Animal Shelter:** Animal Shelter Manager Kelly Zoller continues to do great things at the Animal Shelter. With the help of Kasey Patrick, they have raised the bar in terms of how a shelter should be run. Do we still have a problem with loose dogs and cats in the city? Yes, we do. Kelly and Kasey do what they can to help with this issue, but we also need your help in making sure your dogs and cats stay in a fence or on a leash when outside. Interestingly, this past year, we dealt with a pot-bellied pig that apparently had been set loose by its owner some time ago and had grown quite large. Arkansas Game and Fish was called in, but someone (or something) took care of the situation before they had a chance to catch it. For that, I’ll add, please contact the animal shelter for instruction on how to properly remove any animal(s) from your property, and do not simply release them into the city/wild. In late 2019, a Shelter Management Software was purchased and implemented at the beginning of this year, giving management a better data-picture of the shelter’s operation. Below is a summary of this and a chart by animal type. It should be noted that fewer and fewer owners are
coming to get their lost (or abandoned) pets. After the appropriate time-period, these animals are adopted out, if possible.

- **Code Enforcement:** Jason McKee continues to work hard enforcing the city’s various codes that affect each of us. One of Jason’s main tasks is enforcing rules on unsightly and unsanitary conditions in the city, including the height of grass. To aid with his efforts, we purchased a stand-up riding mower for him to use when other measures of enforcement have failed. We will continue to enforce the standards in our efforts to help keep the city clean and beautiful. As a reminder, April 25th will be our next City-Wide clean-up day. Dumpsters will be set up at the Water Operations Facility at 404 E. 2nd Street (Hwy 367) from 8 am to 3 pm. To avoid traffic issues on 2nd Street and to ensure the process flows smoothly, we respectfully ask that you line up on North Street and follow directions of those helping. More information will be posted on social media closer to the event.
- **District Court Office:** Chief Court Clerk Beth Glover and her staff continue to provide excellent service not only the court but to those they interact with throughout the day. The state’s mandated Context Court Management System has been somewhat difficult to implement, as it was originally designed for District Courts. However, once fully implemented, and once all the issues are resolved at the state and local levels, this system will improve the overall efficiency of the Court. One of the issues to be resolved involves monthly, quarterly, and end of year reporting. As such, no graph is available this year. I apologize for the inconvenience. As always, please contact the office if you have questions.

- **Fire Department:** Chief Tony Reaves has been outstanding in his management of the department since taking over last year. As the only full-time member of the department, he (and the rest of us) must rely on volunteers to answer the calls, no matter the time of day or weather conditions, responding out of Station 1 on MooreSt. and Station 2 on Peyton St. Training and safety standards for the department have been elevated, ensuring all the volunteers are continually trained and property outfitted with the proper equipment. To aid in managing the department, we purchased
new reporting software, which is linked by a tablet mounted in the Chief’s Command Vehicle, or via a desktop at Station 1, and provides more accurate reporting data and better access to pre-fire planning information. This software also works seamlessly with the state’s fire reporting software. In addition to this software, the department purchased the following in 2019:

- 6 sets of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – Turnouts
- 2 Infrared Cameras
- 10 sets of Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus with 10 extra tanks

Additionally, the spouses of Fire Department members formed a Ward Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary. This 501(3)(c) organization is the fund-raising arm of the department and is a welcome asset to the department and the community. Already active, the Auxiliary has several fundraising activities to help the firefighters and promote the department. It has been a very busy year for WFD.
• **Parks and Recreation:** Parks and Recreation Director Karen Dawson continues to grow our sports programs, as well as updating our parks. Our annual Kid’s Fishing Derby is always a great time for all, and the participation continues to grow. As a reminder, this year’s Fishing Derby will be May 16th, and more information will be released closer to the event date. In 2019, we applied to the Arkansas Parks and Tourism Department for a 50/50 matching grant, requesting funds to help build a new 200-foot ballfield, a new concession stand, and a new all-exclusive playground. As the competition is so strong for any grant, we felt that we might be awarded monies to complete at least one proposal. We were pleasantly surprised to learn we were granted $115,595 in matching monies to complete all three projects. Our portion will come from cash on-hand and in-kind labor. We hope to complete all three segments this year. All-in-all, the future of Ward’s Park and Recreation program is bright.
• **Police Department:** Under Chief Steve Benton’s leadership, the men and women of the Ward Police Department continue to provide outstanding service to the citizens of Ward, while providing assistance to Austin Police Department and Lonoke County Sheriffs Office. Together, all three agencies work hand-in-hand for the mutual benefit of all. The department received $5,800 in grants in 2019, which was used to purchase uniforms, nitrile gloves, and a new radar unit. Computer upgrades started last year to put laptops in each patrol vehicle, and that project should be completed soon. To aid in this upgrade, the City Council approved the purchase of updated Computer Aided Dispatch software this year, which will work seamlessly with our current reporting software. Once installed, this upgrade will provide more accurate data for reporting and statistical analysis. The city’s Facebook page is updated frequently with pertinent information for our citizens.

Also, in 2019, the Ward Police Department was the first department in the state to join the national campaign “Seek then Speak”. Led by Detective Sergeant Castleberry, this campaign helps sexual assault victims and their support people gather information, explore options, and take action. Each option helps victims better understand what happened, explains their rights, and links them with resources and support. For more information visit [https://www.wardarkansas.org/seek-then-speak.html](https://www.wardarkansas.org/seek-then-speak.html).
In addition to routine police work, our officers also provide house/business watch and extra patrol, when requested.

- **Probation**: Officer McNair manages those assigned by the Court to work off their fines in a fair but firm manner. To aid in management, she launched a Probation Facebook page that better connects with the Community Service Workers (CSW) and passes on opportunities for them to work off their fine. It also provides positive encouragement to all.
CSWs are required to pay a $20 probation fee for each month they are on probation.

- **Street**: Superintendent Randy Staley and his crew work tirelessly to keep drain ditches flowing as best as possible, while maintaining the city streets and keeping the city’s equipment and vehicle fleet working. This is not an easy task to begin with, but especially not when considering the age and wear of some of our equipment and vehicles. Additionally, his crew assists the Park and Recreation Department with helping to maintain the fields and setting up for special events.

During 2019, the Street Department cleaned out approximately 10,000 feet of drainage ditches, made 20,000 square feet of street repairs, and made 1,500 feet of road shoulder repairs. Crews hauled and laid 63.48 tons of hot mix asphalt and 98.56 tons of cold mix, along with hauling and spreading 247.88 tons of gravel.
• **Water and Wastewater:** Under the leadership of Superintendent Bruce Jones⁠¹, and with the help of Water Office Manager Brittney Gibson, Water Foreman Randy Taylor and Wastewater Foreman Jeff Meese, our Water/Wastewater system continues to operate within the guidelines set by the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) and the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ).

The ADEQ Consent Order issued several years ago which caused us to build a new Wastewater Treatment Plant was removed in May after determining all the necessary requirements had been met. The Wastewater Treatment Plant continuing to operate efficiently with an effluent discharge that continues to be clearer and cleaner than previous years. Even though the plant is automated, preventative maintenance is a continuance process which our guys take very seriously. Taking care of the plant and all the lift stations that move wastewater from your house to the plant is a never-ending process. To help make sure the system runs as efficiently as possible, and as a reminder, please be mindful of what you flush and do not flush anything other than bodily waste and toilet paper. Do not flush feminine products, baby wipes, diapers, cloths, etc. Even if the label says disposable or flushable, these products do not break down well and end up clogging the system.

Our Water Operations Section continues to work hard to ensure you have fresh clean water delivered to your home or business. As with most water systems across the country, leaks and even breaks in our water lines happen from time to time. Some leaks or breaks are caused by someone’s mistake (like digging without calling 811 first) or just because of the age of some of our lines coupled with the ever-shifting earth. As most know, there is a continuing problem in the Ward Water system with pinhole leaks developing in some homes. These leaks, which are concentrated in an area near the Rolling Hills Country Club, are a source of frustration for both the homeowner and me too. I continue to work closely with the appropriate State and Federal agencies trying to determine the cause of these pinhole leaks. To date, no cause has been discovered. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is not isolated to our area. This same issue happens across the country from time to time and no known cause has been determined. Lots of theories have been floated, but nothing points to a cause. Let me assure you that our water is safe to drink and it alone is not the cause of pinhole leaks.

Our Water Office, led by Manager Brittney Gibson, works hard by not only taking payments, but also by processing all the paperwork needed for turning water on/off and workorders for issues with water/wastewater. As mentioned, the Reception Office was relocated to the Water Office area. Previously, requesting a permit required a visit to both offices; however, now, this can be conveniently done in one location. Plus, with the additional personnel in the Water Office, more customers can be assisted, and there is less disruption due to absences. Unfortunately, I will note that the employees in the Water Office often catch the wrath of angry customers over water bills, the fees charged, and many other complaints. While it is understood how people get upset over

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⁠¹ Discovery Channel’s Man v. Bear Champion
issues, it is important to remember that these employees do not set the policies, nor the rates. I respectfully ask that, if you are an upset customer, please do not take your frustration out on the employees of the water office. You are more than welcome to ask to speak with Bruce or myself.

In 2019 we launched a separate website for the Water Department. This website can be viewed at https://water.wardarkansas.org/. With the launching of this page, water bills can be paid on-line, plus patrons can sign up for email alerts to be notified in the event of a water outage, boil order, etc.

The following graphs show how many gallons of water we purchased, sold and the water loss (leaks and old meters); how many new customers and new meters were added; how many late notices were sent out and payments processed; and the amount of bad debt collected.
Current and Planned Mayor Projects

1. **(OPEN) Hwy 367/319 Intersection Improvement**: This project was originally designed 12 years ago and has been through many changes since. Originally designed to be a roundabout, it was then engineered to add a left-hand turn lane going south toward Austin with a pass-thru lane, and a right-hand turn lane going north toward Beebe. Around three years ago, ARDoT Railroad Engineers got involved and decided since that intersection is rated as the 8th worse (in terms of the road layout with the railroad) in the state, it needed signaling. Then ARDoT Highway decided there should also be a left-hand turn lane on Griffin St. The project is now estimated to be $1.4 million. In February of this year, Metroplan pledged $525,000 to the project which would be combined with $200,000 by the city and $200,000 by the county. ARDoT is expected to pledge
$525,000 to the project, and if approved, all funds will have to be obligated by September of this year with construction starting in the Spring of 2021. Hickory Street will remain closed during this process and will be permanently closed when construction is complete.

2. (OPEN) SRTS III: Originally approved in 2017, this project will extend our sidewalk program down Industrial Drive and into the park. It will also extend the sidewalk down Green Apple from Peyton to Weatherwood, and then to Moon Rd. We anticipate permission to send this out for bids any day now. The federal monies allocated to this project is $220,000.

3. (OPEN) Vacuum System Renovation: In June 2019, we were notified that we had been awarded a $200,000 Community Development Block Grant, which will remove 17 houses off the vacuum system. Construction engineering for this project is on-going, but we anticipate completion in 2020.

4. (OPEN) Park Improvement Project: In November 2019, we received a $115,595 matching grant from the Arkansas Parks and Tourism Commission. These monies will be used to build a 200-foot ballfield, a new concession stand, and a new all-inclusive playground at the park on Peyton St. This project is projected to be completed in 2020.

5. (PLANNED) Drainage Study: In September 2019, Notice of Intent was issued to the Arkansas Natural Resources Committee, requesting $20,000 to conduct a drainage study on the NE quadrant of the city. If approved, the city will be responsible for paying 25% ($5,000) for the study. The state has approved our request but we are waiting on EPA’s approval.

What does the Future Hold?

It is my intent and desire that we will continue to move the City of Ward forward for the betterment of all our citizens now and in the future. As I conclude this report, I would like to remind you that the 2020 US Census is underway. It is our hope that everyone takes the time to participate in this every 10-year process. Participation is very important to all. You count! Be counted! Together, we can make a difference.

Although I think we made some good progress in cleaning up the city and enforcing our ordinances, I believe we can still do better. However, it takes all of us to clean up and help keep our city as clean as possible. I will be asking civic organization and churches to step-up and help with periodic clean up drives. Highways 367 and 319 are in the heart of the city and are the most traveled streets in the city. At the very least, these routes should be kept in better condition. We, together, need to work harder on that.

We also need to work together to bring more businesses into the city. Businesses must have revenue to stay so it is incumbent on all of us to support our local businesses every chance we get. In that regards, our Planning Commission is re-working our zoning laws to help attract more businesses to open in Ward, or remain in Ward, with better zoning that is more conducive to the business community.
We work for you...the taxpayer. It is our responsibility to provide you the very best services we can with the resources we have available. We do so, day in and day out.

Ward continues to be a GREAT place to live, but your city cannot do it alone. We partner with several organizations that help make Ward a better place to live, work, and play. Below are a few examples:

- Arkansas Municipal League
- Ward Chamber of Commerce
- Central Arkansas Planning Development District
- Mid-Ark Water Alliance
- Metroplan
- Local Churches
- Boy and Girl Scouts

Last year was an OUTSTANDING year for the City of Ward...but wait, the best is yet to come. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, call City Hall at 501-843-7686 or on my cellphone at 501-743-2501. You may also email me at mayor@cityofward.com.

Charles "Charlie" Gastineau
Mayor, City of Ward

Attachments:

1. 2019 General Fund Financial Statement
2. 2019 Street Fund Financial Statement
3. 2019 Water/Wastewater Financial Statement
### Bonded Indebtedness

| Amount | Date of Last | Par Value | 
|--------|--------------|-----------|--------|
| $1,709,183 | 1/1/2018 | $1,709,183 | 

### Balance General Fund, December 31, 2019

| Expenditures | 
|--------------|----------------|
| $1,709,183 | Balance General Fund, December 31, 2019 |

### Financial Statement January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019

**City of Ward, Arkansas**

-Ward of Arkansas

Mayor

This fact in writing the appears and sets a date and hour within which it (s) days that the record will be available for inspection and copying.

Ward of Arkansas. If the record is action, on in square and direction, or not available at the time a citizen asks to examine it. The custodian shall certify.

All financial records of the City of Ward, Arkansas are public records and are open for inspection during regular business hours in the Ward City Hall.
City of Ward, Arkansas Water and Sewer System
Financial Statement January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019

Income
Water Revenue $ 2,174,838
Sewer Revenue 903,471
Meter Installation 25,152
Connection Fees 104,780
Delinquent Fees 79,743
Lonoke White Fees collected 236,063
Write offs and Adjustments (17,411)
Interest income 15,937
Other Income 44,957
Total Income $ 3,567,530

Expenses
Salaries Wages and Benefits $ 835,258
Repairs Maintenance & Supplies 240,607
Utilities and Telephone 190,197
Other Operating Expense 454,725
Purchased Water 302,498
Franchise Fees 76,456
Lonoke White Fees 264,840
Depreciation 356,499
Interest Expense 358,288
Total Expenses $ 3,079,368
Net Income $ 488,162

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<th>Bonded Indebtedness</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Date Last Payment</th>
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<td>City of Ward, Arkansas Water and Sewer System Water and Sewer Revenue Bonds</td>
<td>$ 11,947,764</td>
<td>12/28/2056</td>
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</tbody>
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Honorable Charles Gastineau, Mayor
City of Ward, Arkansas Street Fund
Financial Statement January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019

Balance January 1, 2019  $ 214,059
State Aid  291,603
Road Tax  48,093
Vehicle Maintenance & Service  66,187
Transfer from General Fund  75,000
Other Income  2,318
Total General Fund Available  $ 697,260

Expenditures
Salaries Wages and Benefits  $ 235,669
Repairs Maintenance & Supplies  110,954
General and Administrative  15,527
Street Work  3,312
Street Lights  46,072
Capital Outlay  8,300
Total Expenditures  $ 419,834
Balance Street Fund December 31, 2019  $ 277,426

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Honorable Charles Gastineau, Mayor