

July 26, 2018

**STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS 2018
FREEPORT, FLORIDA**

Good Evening and Welcome, I am glad you re hear tonight to show your interest in our beautiful city.

In 2014 I stood before you and said "Business as usual" is not something that would be heard at city hall, that we needed to examine every city service and determine whether it should continue as is or explore to see if there is a better way of doing things and I asked the community to seize the moment to move our city forward. There comes a time when we must make a choice between repeating ourselves and choosing to grow. There were many opportunities on the horizon, but few items fixed into the cities future.

We must make our city government transparent to the citizens and make basic upgrades to the existing policies in place and implement new ones. Today the path of our city is clear with Walton County being the third fastest growing county in the state. Today we celebrate- Our population is growing, our schools are all rated excellent (A Schools), Property Values are rising, and we have added community activities such as the Mayor's Ball to help the less fortunate families during the holiday season, the city annual Festival "Bayfest"- a day of fun and entertainment for the community, the Spring Arts & Crafts Festival/ Eggstravaganza for all the children as we celebrate Easter. The plans we are making and the actions we are taking lead to a strong Freeport. Over this past year we have made progress with the renovation and repair of our great parks facilities so that the citizens can enjoy what we have to offer as a city. The city has been on the move to update the city hall's facilities with a new Website which is more user friendly and provides more information to the users about the city, a new telephone system more up to date and new computer system along with a new billing system.

We are a city to which businesses want to move to, which brings in new jobs and convince to all of us who reside here. Over the past year we have done several ribbon cuttings for new businesses and developments in our city.

Hard work over these past few years have positioned our city well for future growth and development, greater visibility, more jobs and conveniences, more residents and more visitor than ever before.

We must double our efforts within the city to finish the work that remains. In neighborhoods across Freeport, our investments will continue to strengthen and anchor existing institutions, while paving the way for new housing to be built and entrepreneurs to build their dreams. The city is very much aware of the need for affordable housing in our area and have been working with developers to bring this project to fruition. While todays economy has much improved we all understand the struggles that one may have in our area with being able to rent or buy something that will fit into their budget and be compatible with the salary they earn in our area, but with continued focus on this very important project it too will become a reality.

While economic growth is on the rise we must be cautious of our city budget and weigh in on the projects which are in the best interest of the city, while upgrades of existing facilities are very important and we are currently working on the Wastewter Facility upgrading the existing the plant which is now at 50% capacity we are also searching for funding to build a new facility as we continue to grow, we also must think about the future and the new requirements that is necessary to continue with the growth of the city. The city council developed a Capital Improvement Plan listing the ranking of projects in order over the next 5 or so years, this process determines our goals and aspirations in terms of community development- it expresses and regulates public policies on transportation, utilities, land use, recreation and housing and at the top of the list is infrastructure for the increased development especially along the 331 corridors where most of the growth of our fair city will take place. The city has signed the One Walton Agreement working with the City of DeFuniak Springs and Walton County working together with how to obtain funding for the infrastructure project which would be beneficial to all entities. As we move Freeport into the future we are working on branding for our city and creating a place that visitors of the area would want to visit, move here or bring a business here. We are working on new Welcome to Freeport Signs to increase the visibility and help with project of beautification for our area. Through the availability of a grant we are also designing a project to enhance the center of town leading out to the 331 Corridor, which will make the area more interesting and inviting. We are very proud of our community and we have had many volunteer groups help with various projects throughout, FAYSA, Friends of

Freeport, Freeport Insider Group and the Freeport Merchants Association along with The Town Planters Society have all been a great help to the city with many needed tasks.

We are a great city. The state of Freeport is strong, and it will be stronger when we all share its richness. We have accomplished a great deal over the past 5 years so let's keep the momentum going. Tonight, I would like to thank all the council members who have served over the past year including the ones who are no longer a part of the city council for all your efforts in helping Freeport what it is today and helping with the decisions which make our fair city so special and being proud of what has been accomplished, you should all be proud of what we have to offer and what the future brings to all of us- again thank you for the opportunity to serve you, God Bless America and God Bless the City of Freeport.