



CITY of GALION, OHIO -- OFFICE of the DIRECTOR of LAW

301 Harding Way East – Galion, Ohio 44833 – Email: thomaspalmer@galion.city – (419) 777-7176

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Director of Law, City of Galion

The following Annual Report is submitted at the first regular meeting of Galion City Council in January, 2021 pursuant to Section 733.62 of the Ohio Revised Code, which states:

The city director of law shall make a report to the legislative authority of the city, at its first regular meeting in January, of the business of his office, the moneys by him collected during the year preceding, and such other matters as he deems proper to promote the good government and welfare of the city.

This report is divided into the following sections:

- A. Business of the Law Department during 2020
- B. Monies collected by the Director of Law during 2020
- C. Report of City of Galion Victim Assistance Program
- D. Other matters relating to good government and welfare of the City of Galion

Before beginning, I again share my appreciation to fellow elected officials, employees of my office, department heads, and others with the City of Galion with whom I have worked over the last twelve months. I would like to specifically mention and thank the following:

- Auditor Brian Treisch, with whom I worked for almost 7 years through November 2020
- Clerk of Council and Law Department Assistant Julie Bell, who has worked on several large projects this year
- Michael Bear, who served as an Assistant in the Law Department into early 2020

Despite the unparalleled challenges of this year, as the community and local government were beset by a worldwide pandemic of devastating proportion and I faced serious medical issues, this past year has largely been a positive one. At the same time, the work of the Department has increased this year as sophisticated legal matters have arisen, as profiled later.

A. BUSINESS OF THE LAW DEPARTMENT DURING 2020

First, some numbers that reflect some of the basic operations of the Law Department:

CASES HANDLED IN THE CRAWFORD COUNTY MUNICIPAL COURT, EASTERN DIVISION BETWEEN JANUARY 1, 2020 AND DECEMBER 31, 2020:

Criminal:

Charged under local ordinances – 32 cases representing 34 charges

Charged under Ohio statutes – 230 cases representing 287 charges

Traffic:

Charged under local ordinances – 133 cases representing 169 charges

Charged under Ohio statutes – 242 cases representing 321 charges

Total cases – 637

This is down substantially from as recently as two years ago – the 2018 Annual Report showed a total of 1,142 cases.

PROVISION OF LEGAL ADVICE OR ASSISTANCE: Approximately 100-200 such instances for the offices of the Mayor, Auditor, Treasurer, Safety-Service Director, Council President, Council members, Clerk of Council, Building Inspector, Design Review Secretary, and all Department Heads.

LITIGATION: Other than routine foreclosure actions in which the City of Galion is occasionally involved, the end of the year had the City of Galion involved in one pending action involving the foreclosure of the hotel property on State Route 598. We successfully intervened in that action, and now have mutual crossclaims against the hotel's owner that are being prosecuted through the court.

VICTIMS OF CRIME ASSISTANCE: I am spinning off this section this year into its own featured section; see below.

LEGISLATION: During 2020, this office was involved in the preparation of 100 ordinances and 20 resolutions for review by City Council.

Second, following are some of the goings-on in the Law Department during 2020:

Office Configuration

The office decreased in size in 2020 with the departure of Assistant Michael Bear, who took a Magistrate position with the Marion County Court of Common Pleas. While there was an initial attempt at replacing him, the COVID-19 pandemic caused both logistical and financial concerns about doing so.

It is my hope that this position will be filled as soon as possible, hence the budget request made and approved at the end of 2020.

The contractual relationship with the Crawford County Prosecutor's Office for prosecutorial duties that are the ultimate responsibility of this office continues to be a success and is being continued into 2021.

B. MONIES COLLECTED BY THE LAW DEPARTMENT DURING 2020

The Law Department does not directly collect money in the course of its business. To the extent that any money was collected through the auspices of this office, it is fully detailed in the reports of the City Auditor.

C. CITY OF GALION VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM REPORT

NUMBER OF VICTIMS SERVED	111
FEMALE	68
MALE	43

This represents the number of new persons served. It does not include the number of contacts with persons to update them with information (Pre-trial hearings, CPO info, Change of Plea, restitution, etc).

The majority of victims served were Domestic Violence related (Menacing, Stalking, CPO violations, etc.).

I assisted victims with applications to the Ohio Attorney General's Office Compensation Program for payment of medical and counseling bills, lost wages, etc. The average award was approximately \$1,100.00, which really does make a difference in a victim's life, especially when they are at such a venerable time in their life.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Galion city officials and employees for their support and assistance in helping persons recover from their victimization, including, but not limited to, Director of Law – Mr. Palmer; Mayor O’Leary and staff; Safety-Service Director – Ms. Ward; City Council Members – Mr. Watt, Mr. Bodkins, Mr. Ivy, Mr. Richart, Ms. Siclair-Erlsten, Mr. Fellner, Mr. Triplett, and Ms. Ault; Clerk of Council – Ms. Bell; Auditor – Mr. Baldinger and staff; and Chief of Police Saterfield and staff. So, again, I thank each and every one of you for the victims’ lives that you touch, even though you may never know it.

Jim Scott, Director

D. OTHER MATTERS RELATING TO GOOD GOVERNMENT AND WELFARE OF THE CITY

I believe that I have begun this section each year with the same next two paragraphs, both of which ring true as much as they did when I started in this position on January 1, 2014:

Section 733.62 does not specify what is meant by “other matters relating to good government and welfare of the City...” I am therefore interpreting that statement to mean items that relate to how the City has operated and continues to operate vis-à-vis adherence to the Ohio Revised Code and local ordinances.

I operate my office with my “eyes wide open.” If there were a misstep with state or local law, I would not hesitate to note the same and correct it as best I could. Throughout my years as Director of Law there have been times when we discovered a way to better mesh governmental operations with rules and regulations. This is an ongoing process as Ohio law changes frequently.

If I were to single out any aspects of City governance that have struck me positively or negatively over the last twelve months, it would be on the remarkable resilience of City of Galion administrative staff and City Council over the last nine months as the COVID-19 experience unfolded. We all found ourselves learning new vocabulary; forging new ways of conductive City business including remote meetings; delving into new programs that seemed to change guidelines on a regular basis; dealing with personal and professional concerns over health and safety; and managing to deal with intense frustration. On the whole, I would say that we weathered it quite well.

Joel Todd (Galion’s first Mayor) would be proud.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas N. Palmer